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PANDEMIC

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BACKGROUND

ANGELA XIAO | PAGE EDITOR

We should have seen this coming.

For years, experts have been warning about a disease capable of shifting the world's balance. In 2018, the World Health Organization (WHO) placed 'Disease X' on their priority diseases list, which consists of diseases and pathogens that pose the greatest public health risk because of their epidemic potential and lack of sufficient countermeasures.

'Disease X' is not a specific disease. Instead, it represents a hypothetical pathogen that has the ability to cause a serious international pandemic. Peter Daszak, a disease ecologist, said, "Disease X, we said back then, would likely result from a virus originating in animals and would emerge somewhere on the planet where economic development drives people and wildlife together. Disease X would probably be confused with other diseases early in the outbreak and would spread quickly and silently; exploiting networks of human travel and trade, it would reach multiple countries and thwart containment."

Previous epidemics echo the severity of the WHO's concerns. Almost exactly a century ago, the Spanish Flu of 1918 surfaced in Boston. Public gatherings were shut down, and masks became a common accessory in day-to-day life. By the time the pandemic concluded, millions of people were infected, with thousands of others perishing.

In the century since the Spanish Flu ravaged the world, many other epidemics have emerged. In 2002-2003, SARS threatened global health as it spread rapidly across China, and in 2009, Swine Flu infected millions, running rampant across the world. However, none of these outbreaks reached the mass destruction that scientists have predicted. Epidemiologists have warned that if proper precautions were not set in place, a pandemic would devastate the world.

Now, after years of ignoring warnings and desperate pleas for action, another deadly pandemic has emerged: COVID-19.

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that is transmitted from person to person. "The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes," said the

CDC. However, it is now known that COVID-19 can also be spread through contact with a contaminated surface. "It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads," the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said.

Because of COVID-19's high rate of transmissibility, both the CDC and the WHO suggest that the best way of preventing illness is to avoid being exposed to the virus at all. Therefore, hand-washing and social distancing are the best ways to protect oneself. The CDC said, "Buy groceries and medicine, go to the doctor, and complete banking activities online when possible. If you must go in person, stay at least 6 feet away from others and disinfect items you must touch."

Recently, the CDC also recommended wearing a cloth face cover when in public. However, the face cover should not substitute for other protective measures, such as social distancing and practicing proper hygiene.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough and shortness of breath. Despite these clear symptoms, an individual infected with COVID-19 can pre-symptomatically transmit the virus. The WHO says, "The incubation period for COVID-19, which is the time between exposure to the virus (becoming infected) and symptom onset, is on average 5-6 days, however can be up to 14 days. During this period, also known as the 'pre-symptomatic' period, some infected persons can be contagious. Therefore, transmission from a pre-symptomatic case can occur before symptom onset." The virus's ability to pre-symptomatically transmit makes it especially dangerous, as those infected with the virus can spread it for days without the knowledge that they have contracted the virus.

On Dec. 31, 2019, Chinese authorities in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province, confirmed that they had been treating dozens of cases of pneumonia with an unknown cause. Just a few days after that, Chinese researchers linked these mysterious cases with a new virus, which would later be named COVID-19.

Within weeks, the virus spread rapidly across Wuhan, China, and into other countries. By the end of Jan. 2020, COVID-19 cases were confirmed in Japan, South Korea, Thailand and the United States. Chinese authorities shut down the origin city of Wuhan, stalling domestic transportation and cancelling planes and trains exiting. Ten days later, on Jan. 30, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency.

By the end of Feb. 2020, COVID-19 cases had been reported on every continent except for Antarctica, highlighting the severity of the virus. 🌐

"If you must go in person, stay at least 6 feet away from others and disinfect items you must touch."



A cashier scans groceries behind a plexiglass barrier. | JASON ARMOND / LOS ANGELES TIMES

TESTING

For many, the most problematic and frustrating area of the US's flawed response to the COVID-19 outbreak is testing.

Currently, the coronavirus test consists of a doctor swabbing a patient's nose with a thin, long swab to reach the nasopharynx, the upper part of the throat, which sits just behind an individual's nose. These samples are packaged according to guidelines set by the CDC and then sent to a laboratory, where scientists test the samples for the presence of the coronavirus. Many laboratories in states such as New York or New Jersey, two areas hit especially hard by the pandemic, are overwhelmed with samples each day.

In such cases, tests taken in these states will have to be packed into dry ice and shipped across the country to another laboratory. This leads to test results coming out days later than they usually would, due to the time the samples take to be transported.

Once in the laboratory, scientists spend hours performing the process of polymerase chain reaction to examine the genetic material of each sample received. Because COVID-19 has a unique DNA sequence, scientists will be able to look for that particular sequence in each test and then diagnose patients. Unfortunately, this process requires many materials that are not currently in high supply, limiting the number of samples a laboratory can process each day.

Dr. Lan Yang runs the Laboratory of Micro/Nano Photonics Research Group at Washington University and has been developing a portable piece of technology that will be able to sense virus particles down to the molecule. "I have two mirrors facing each other. Light [will bounce] back and forth. We call that a resonator because a resonator is defined as such a structure where light is confined in a physical volume," Yang explains.

The distance light must travel to make a roundtrip around the resonator would be about 100 microns. Light, which moves at a speed of about 3.00×10^8 meters per second, would be able to cover this distance in about 3.33×10^{-13} seconds. Even without doing the math, one can tell this amount of time seems incredibly short.



A new COVID-19 vaccine is tested.
MONICA HERNDONER / TNS



A COVID-19 test is conducted via car.
HYUNDAI / TNS

And it is. If you divide 1 second by this value, you will get an answer of 3×10^{12} . This is how many roundtrips around the resonator light can make in one second.

"Whenever a virus particle passes through the structure, you [will] see a change [that] indicates the presence of the virus," said Yang. "When [the particle is] captured, then [you] will see changes in the output."

To make the technology effective, Yang developed it to only indicate a change when interacting with a virus particle. The device is about the size of a human hair, so to be portable, it must be packaged so the sensor will not be damaged. The overall package is about as large as a cell phone, and the device is also able to be connected to an app called 'Micro Cavity,' contributing to its convenience.

TREATMENTS

Plasma transfusion has recently been in the spotlight as a potential COVID-19 testing method. The century-old treatment proved effective during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic and the 2002-2003 SARS outbreak.

To effectively carry out this treatment, medical professionals require the plasma of patients who have already been infected with the coronavirus but recovered fully. Once a patient has recovered from the virus, they have built up an immunity and will have COVID-fighting antibodies in their plasma: the clear, fluid portion of an individual's blood.

When another infected patient is given convalescent plasma, the antibodies will be able to assist their immune system in fighting off the virus, helping them to recover quicker.

The actual treatment is far more complicated than it seems. Plasma from different donors will vary in its amounts of antibodies, making it more difficult for scientists to determine how much plasma must be given to an infected patient.

There is also a risk of a patient's body reacting negatively to the unfamiliar plasma being injected into their system. Allergies and lung injuries are examples of severe, but still possible side effects.

Despite these complications, this emerging treatment method has shown promising results.

In January, a team of researchers in China performed an experiment involving plasma transfusion. In the pilot study, ten patients (six male, four female) with severe symptoms of COVID-19 received the plasma transfusion treatment and reported their symptoms either improved or completely disappeared one to three days afterward.

Before and after CT scans of the patients' chest areas showed whatever masses were present in their lungs had been absorbed by the body after the plasma treatment.

Further research is being conducted across many medical institutions in the United States. Despite this, plasma transfusion is only viewed by scientists as a way to quickly provide treatment for patients for the time being, as there is no developed cure yet.

SCIENCE

VIVIAN CHEN | PAGE EDITOR

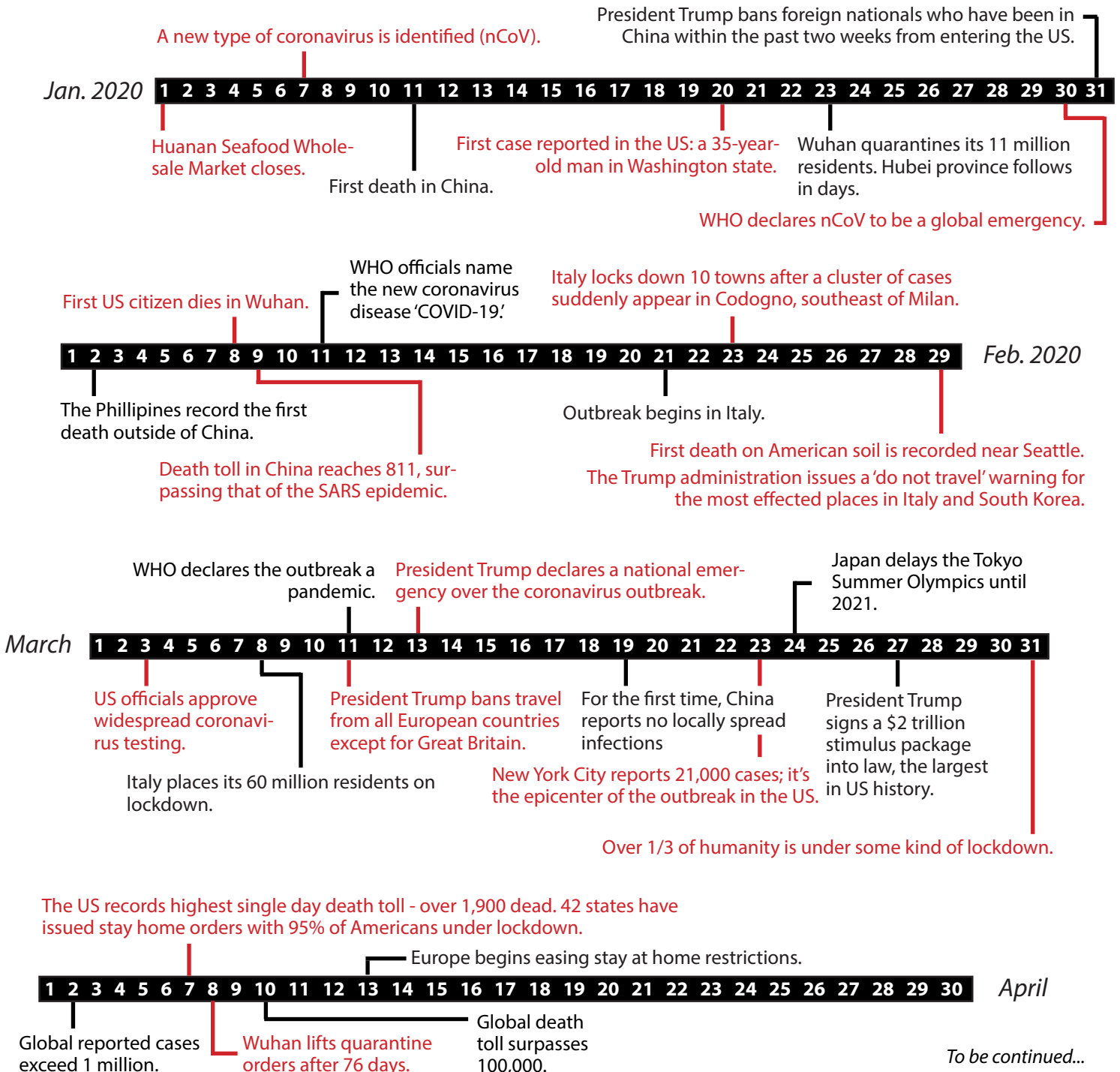
THE RACE AGAINST TIME

An overview of the global response to COVID-19.

YIYUN XU | COPY EDITOR

Dec. 30, 2019: China releases first official reports of 27 patients infected with unknown viral pneumonia.

Dec. 31, 2019: China informs World Health Organization (WHO) about 41 patients sickened by the novel coronavirus, most of them connected with the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan.





ECONOMY & POLITICS





A CHS student sits outside Half and Half, a Clayton business currently closed due to COVID-19 | ELLA CUNEO

Barren streets, shuttered windows, empty restaurants. This post-apocalyptic concept has become a reality in light of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Unemployment is at an all time high and is only expected to rise in the coming weeks due to stay-at-home orders keeping both consumers and “non-essential” workers from leaving their homes.

Following Governor Mike Parson’s order on April 3, Missourians have been confined indoors since the 6th. As such, businesses across Missouri have been facing the full extent of its effects.

With people being encouraged to stay at home, restaurants across Clayton have been forced to close their doors until the period of social distancing is lifted. Those still operating only offer delivery or curbside pickup.

As of March 2020, unemployment rates in the St. Louis area reached 4.4%, an increase of 0.9 from the previous month.

“When this all hit, we immediately started to figure out ways that we could push out information to the businesses,” said Clayton Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Ellen Gale.

The Clayton Chamber of Commerce, an member organization which works to connect and help businesses in Clayton grow, has been working tirelessly during the pandemic to aid many of the businesses struggling to stay afloat

One of the Chamber’s main focuses is to keep people patronizing small businesses. They encourage restaurants to sell “relief cards” — gift cards which can be used after the pandemic as a means of making money during the shutdown.

The Chamber also works to publicize businesses during the shutdown. A daily email is sent out to all members highlighting a single member. “We do that for free for all these businesses, we highlight them because we really want to do everything in our power to help them now so they’re there for us later.”

“The old ways to start aren’t going to work anymore,” said Gale. “And I’ve been really im-

pressed with the new way the Clayton Community has come together. And the city as a whole too, understanding how much these small businesses mean to our community.”

On Facebook and Instagram, a new hashtag, #314TOGETHER, has been the source of aid for many small businesses looking to move to online platforms.

Created by Experience Booklet and The Women’s Creative, the hashtag serves as a means of communication between local small businesses, as well as a way for them to support one another.

Despite the detrimental effects the pandemic has had on many small businesses, some local businesses have seen an uptick in demand.

As gyms and other fitness facilities are closing, many people are turning to alternative ways to exercise. “Right now, everybody wants a bike. Kids bikes, family bikes, so the demand is insane,” said Mike Weiss, owner of Big Shark Bicycle Company.

On March 20, 2020, Governor Parson issued an order stating a ban on gatherings of more than 10 people, in hopes of combatting the outbreak. Businesses have had to adapt to conform to the order.

Weiss has been taking even more precautions in day-to-day business. He said, “No one came to us and said here’s your new rulebook. We had to say, what do we feel is safe for our staff and then what do we feel is safe for our customers? So, yeah, it’s all self imposed. We’re doing two people at a time in the store. And now, we’re putting racks outside where people can drop their bikes off, so we had to add all this stuff to our website about how to shop at Big Shark. We don’t have our showroom open at any of our stores, it’s all taped off with caution tape.

In addition to the challenges that arise with social distancing shopping, Big Shark and many other businesses also face difficulties involving the global supply chain. Most of the supply

chain for bikes in the US is from abroad, and specifically from China. In February 2020, when COVID-19 struck China, Chinese factories were forced to shut down, effectively halting the production of a multitude of goods.

Since COVID-19 struck China earlier, factories in Asia are now starting up again. But, it will still likely take four to six weeks for the newly produced products to reach the US. Weiss said, “We’re having this toilet paper moment where nobody can get a bike. Some bikes are plentiful, but the ones that are the lowest price point or the most accessible, those are being sold out pretty amazingly.”

Regardless of the current economic perils, experts warn opening up the economy prematurely can pose its own drawbacks.

Senior Vice President of the St. Louis Federal Reserve, Karen Branding said, “Absent a vaccine or absent a cure, how will we trust that we can go back into a Blues game or a restaurant or back into a classroom? One of the things that’s fundamental to almost everyone that’s talking about this is that first of all employers will need to provide a healthy work environment. There has to be widespread testing available, and right now, in the United States and in most countries, we’re not equipped with that. We don’t have access to the kind of testing we would need to reopen the economy absent a vaccine or a cure.”

As COVID-19 affects almost every aspect of “normal” life, it has become clear that in order for any economy to function, each of its parts, no matter how miniscule, must also perform their respective roles. Branding said, “Really, the economy is an aggregation of all of our millions of individual decisions that all of us are making on any one day. The basic part of this is that we’re so much more interconnected than we normally realize that we are, and this COVID pandemic, if it lays bare, it shows us just how interconnected we are,” said Branding. 🌐

WHEN INCOMPETENCE BECOMES DEADLY: THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION'S CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

IVY REED | REPORTER



Trump addresses the White House press briefing room on April 7. | ABACA PRESS

We all need some fun right now, so here's a little game: match each statement to the person who said it — President Trump or Dr. Fredrick Echols, Director of the City of St. Louis Department of Health.

"I like this stuff. I really get it. People are surprised that I understand it. Every one of these doctors said, 'How do you know so much about this?' Maybe I have a natural ability."

"This tragic loss to our community is a reminder that no one is immune to getting COVID-19. [...] For this reason, everyone must protect themselves, their family, friends and colleagues, by following the preventive measures and social distancing guidelines."

"It's going to disappear. One day — it's like a miracle — it will disappear."

Any guesses?

In times of crisis, we turn to our national leaders for guidance. But President Trump's inconsistent, irresponsible, xenophobic and inaccuracy-riddled response to the coronavirus pandemic has made state-level action to slow the spread more significant. For example, Trump's

advice to governors on providing their states with ventilators? "Try getting it yourselves." There's also the fact that Trump has resisted National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases Director Dr. Anthony Fauci's advice to issue a national stay-at-home order and has instead left it up to states to give them 'flexibility.'

So let's compare action taken by St. Louis officials to the Trump administration's pandemic response.

The first coronavirus case in St. Louis County (and the state of Missouri) was announced on March 7 by Missouri Governor Mike Parson. By March 16, Mayor Lyda Krewson had reported the first case in the City of St. Louis. But as Dr. Echols explained, preparing for the outbreak had begun much earlier.

"The activities related to our COVID-19 response started far in advance of the identification of the first case," Echols said. "Prior to the first case, we started reviewing our infrastructure [...] as well as identifying what operations need to be modified or altered during the response. [...] So a lot of the infrastructure and organizational

changes that needed to happen were already in place."

On the national level, there were already 437 cases in the country by March 7. The first case in the U.S. had been confirmed by the CDC on Jan. 21. When asked the next day in a CNBC interview about whether there were concerns about a pandemic, Trump responded, "No. Not at all. And we have it totally under control. It's one person coming in from China, and we have it under control. It's going to be just fine."

City of St. Louis health officials took serious measures to curb the spread of coronavirus before the first case in the area was even reported. In contrast, the foundation of Trump's catastrophic response was laid two years ago in 2018, when he disbanded the National Security Council pandemic office. When asked by a reporter at a March 13 briefing about his responsibility concerning the matter, the President responded with, "I just think it's a nasty question," and went on to claim, "I don't know anything about it."

Kimberly Dozier and Vera Bergengruen reported in Time Magazine that two days before,

Dr. Fauci told Congress, “We worked very well with that office. It would be nice if the office was still there.” Dozier and Bergengruen went on to explain that the CSIS Commission on Strengthening America’s Health Security published a report last November which urged the U.S. government to “replace the cycle of crisis and complacency that has long plagued health security preparedness with a doctrine of continuous prevention, protection, and resilience” in order to be prepared for a health crisis such as a pandemic. Obviously, that did not happen.

Not only did Trump disband a White House team that was in place to deal with global health crises like this one, but he was dismissing and downplaying the virus even after the first case had arrived in the country.

One may argue the increase in U.S. cases made it possible for St. Louis officials to be more prepared than the federal government by the time coronavirus came to the area. But the catch? When Trump was dismissing the possibility of a pandemic in late January, health experts were saying otherwise. Opinion columnist David Leonhardt explained in a New York Times op-ed that an editorial was published the same day – Jan. 22 – in online health news publication Stat by former CDC director Tom Frieden. Frieden warned, “The new virus is likely to continue spreading [...] We need to learn — and fast — about how it spreads and how often it causes severe illness so we can try to prevent its spread.” Leonhardt went on to highlight another editorial from late January titled

“Act Now to Prevent an American Epidemic,” this one published in the Wall Street Journal by Luciana Borio and Scott Gottlieb. The two former Trump administration health officials emphasized the urgency of immediate government action to prevent devastating consequences.

Trump had the information coming from epidemiologists and public health experts at his disposal. He had the tools to use presidential power to take more aggressive action to combat the spread of the virus early, but instead, he has dismissed the risks, celebrated himself and placed blame on others. He has called the virus the Democratic party’s ‘new hoax’ and normalized anti-Asian discrimination by labeling it the ‘Chinese virus.’ He’s tried to predict the miraculous disappearance of the virus one day (that’s not how pandemics work), attempted to blame the Obama administration and has taken a revisionist and self-congratulatory stance on his coronavirus response, saying, “I felt it was a pandemic long before it was called a pandemic.” He has refused to wear a protective face mask after the CDC issued official guidance urging all Americans to wear them. As the New York Times pointed out in coverage of Trump’s briefing on April 3, Trump said, “Wearing a face mask as I greet presidents, prime ministers, dictators, kings, queens — I don’t know. Somehow, I just don’t see it for myself,” despite the fact that foreign dignitary visits stopped weeks ago.

And speaking of those briefings? CNN’s Aaron Blake calculated that during one late March briefing, Trump spent about 25% of it blaming others

and congratulating himself. Blake pointed out, “That is more time than he spent conveying details about the coronavirus response.”

But Trump’s dismissive, immature and derogatory language throughout the crisis is nothing compared to his complete inadequacy as a national leader and his administration’s failure to act early on. Public health experts and epidemiologists agree that accurate, available and frequent testing is essential to curb the spread of coronavirus. But the reason the U.S. fell behind countries like Singapore and South Korea, who implemented large-scale and accessible mass testing, is a lack of action by the Trump administration, who refused to use a functioning test developed by the World Health Organization that was already being used by other countries. As Joanne Kenen explained in POLITICO, “why the United States declined to use the WHO test, even temporarily [...], remains a perplexing question and the key to the Trump administration’s failure to provide enough tests to identify the coronavirus infections before they could be passed on [...].”

Instead, a flawed CDC-developed test that delivered unreliable results was shipped to labs across the country. Only symptomatic people who had traveled to China or been exposed to coronavirus could be tested. And even after this test was discovered to deliver inconsistent and inconclusive results, the federal government did not switch to using a more effective test or loosen regulations to enable laboratories and medical facilities to develop their own tests. It wasn’t until Feb. 29 that



Dr. Anthony Fauci watches Trump during an April 1 press briefing. | WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES

an FDA policy was announced to allow hospital labs to manufacture tests. But by then, it was already too late. As Harvard epidemiologist William Hanage wrote in the Washington Post, “as of late February, when the first case of covid-19 without links to known cases in the United States was detected in California, fewer than 500 tests had been conducted to detect transmission in this country.”

Dr. Fauci admitted to Congress on March 12 that the testing was ‘a failing.’ But the next day, Trump attempted to blame the Obama administration for his administration’s failure to make testing widespread earlier, saying, “I don’t take responsibility.”

The virus had spread to St. Louis six days earlier on March 7, and Trump continued to make contradicting claims and downplay the seriousness of the virus that would be declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization four days later, on March 11.

In contrast, when asked what approach the City of St. Louis has taken to combat the spread of coronavirus, Echols responded with, ‘Education.’ He emphasized the importance of providing accurate information and effective relief to disenfranchised communities in St. Louis and said, “When you have a pandemic or a large epidemic or outbreak, one of the things that it highlights is the inequity that exists within our communities.” Echols also explained why public officials should have strong relationships with the media because “the media controls the messages.”

“It’s important for health officials to have good working relationships with all media outlets [...] and having these initiatives in place allows us to ensure that the accurate information that we need to get to the community actually gets to the community,” Echols said.

Meanwhile, Trump’s relationship to the media is something more along the lines of this tweet from March 9: “The Fake News Media and their partner, the Democrat Party, is doing everything within its semi-considerable power [...] to inflame the CoronaVirus situation.” And to correct the grammar and capitalization errors, “The fake news media and their partner, the Democratic Party, are doing everything within their semi-considerable power [...] to inflame the coronavirus situation.”

But the glaring errors in the President’s grammar are irrelevant considering his vilification of factual journalism that has contributed to the pandemic of inaccurate misinformation spreading alongside the virus. Trump has accused CNN and MSNBC of “doing everything possible to make the Caronavirus look as bad as possible, including panicking markets, if possible,” as he tweeted on Feb. 26.

An April 1 poll by the Pew Research Center highlighted disparities in factual knowledge about coronavirus between Fox News and CNN/MSNBC viewers. The poll used statistics that identified 76% of those who name Fox News as

their primary news source as conservative Republicans, and 57% of those who mainly get their news from MSNBC as liberal Democrats. When polled about whether a vaccine will be available in a year or more (scientists are saying a vaccine won’t be ready until at least halfway through 2021), the poll found that 78% of MSNBC viewers knew the accurate answer, compared to only 51% of Fox News viewers. When asked if the virus originated naturally (it did) instead of being developed in a lab, 66% of MSNBC viewers were aware of the fact compared to only 37% of Fox News viewers. 79% of Fox News viewers thought the media exaggerated the risks of coronavirus, and only 35% of MSNBC viewers felt the same. And only 17% of MSNBC viewers reported seeing conflicting facts about the COVID-19 pandemic. But double that percentage – 34% – of Fox News viewers reported receiving contradictory information from news sources.

Trump promotes conservative news sources that present their viewers with inconsistent and unfactual news coverage of the coronavirus

“We’ve never closed down the country for the flu.”

crisis while dismissing authentic journalism as fake news. That’s nothing new – welcome to the Trump presidency. But it’s more harmful now as misinformation becomes deadly.

“We struggle in public health in general with misinformation. And it can do a lot of damage,” said Washington University epidemiologist Dr. Christine Ekenga. “[...] We really need to take our directions from [...] scientists and healthcare professionals, and not politicians who may have ulterior motives other than protecting public health.”

But back to St. Louis, where gatherings of over 1,000 were banned in St. Louis city by March 12. The next day, St. Louis County Executive Sam Page announced a state of emergency in the county, and that gatherings of over 250 people would be banned. It was the same day the Trump administration declared a national emergency.

A state of emergency was declared in St. Louis County six days after the first case was announced. The Trump administration did not declare a national emergency until about seven weeks after the first case arrived in the U.S.

It was until around this time – mid-March – that, as the Associated Press found by reviewing federal receipts, the Trump administration waited to start buying masks and essential medical

equipment in bulk to supply healthcare workers. As supplies ran low and the national stockpile dwindled, the Trump administration encouraged states to figure out where to get medical supplies themselves. As Michael Biesecker explained in AP, “the Trump administration squandered nearly two months that could have been used to bolster the federal stockpile of critically needed medical supplies and equipment.” Trump also refused to use the Defense Production Act, which gives the executive branch greater control over the manufacturing sector to produce necessary equipment in an emergency, until March 27. Governors such as Andrew Cuomo of New York, where deaths had exceeded 500 by then, members of Congress, and health officials had been pressuring the President to invoke the act for weeks. Yet even when he did use it at the end of March, it was only directed at General Motors to produce ventilators. He waited until April 2 to widen the scope of its use to acquire respirators and ventilators from more companies.

On March 16, the Trump administration issued official social distancing guidelines.

Stay-at-home orders were issued by St. Louis City and St. Louis County officials on March 21. During Trump’s White House briefing two days later, he stated, “America will again, and soon, be open for business — very soon — a lot sooner than three or four months that somebody was suggesting. [...] We’re not going to let the cure be worse than the problem.” The next day, Trump said in an interview with Fox News that he wanted to see the nation open by Easter. This statement was met with alarm from health experts across the country who warned against relaxing social distancing restrictions too early.

Dr. Ekenga said (on March 27, for reference), “Us mere mortal humans, we can’t really determine the timeline of the virus. And I would say you can’t really put a timeline on how long we need to do social distancing. [...] What happens if you stop this early is that we could have a resurgence of cases. [...] We’re not even at the peak of the pandemic here in the U.S. We’re just at the beginning. [...] We won’t really see how effective these measures are until about three weeks to a month from now.”

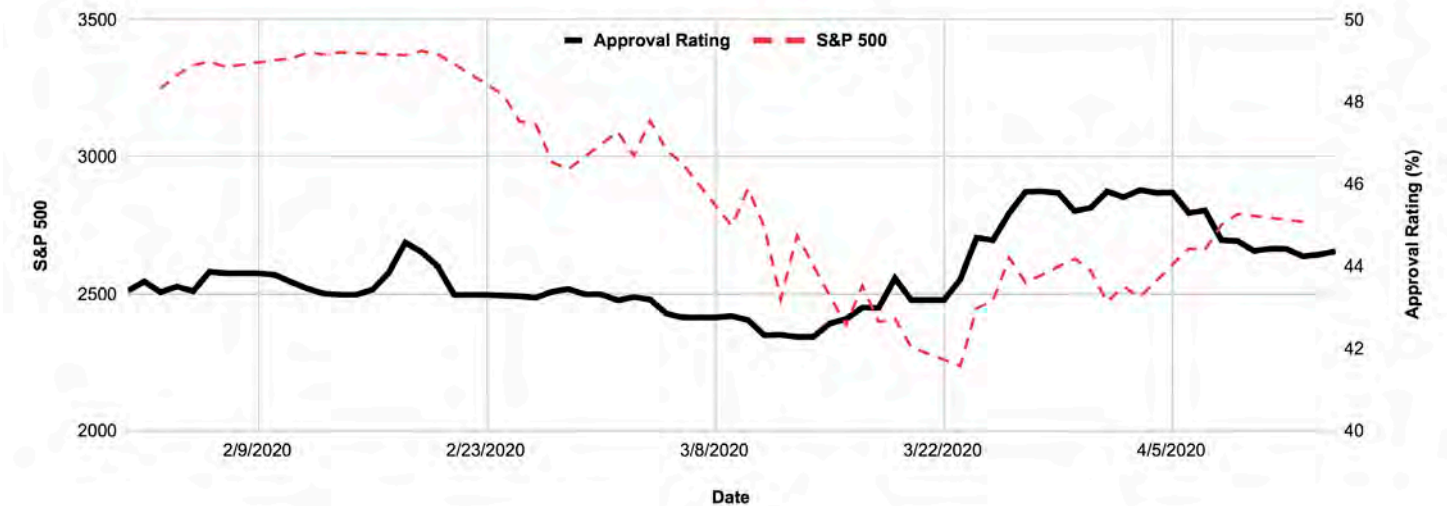
In the same interview, Trump also compared the deadly coronavirus pandemic to the flu, saying, “We’ve never closed down the country for the flu.” This is a scientifically false comparison due to several factors, including the lack of coronavirus vaccine and the fact that it is about twice as contagious as the flu and an estimated 10 times deadlier, as an NPR fact check revealed.

Donald Trump is grossly unqualified to lead the nation during this crisis. If a competent administration had been in place and decisive action had been taken earlier, fewer Americans would be suffering and the spread of coronavirus could have been stopped earlier. But due to the blatant negligence of the Trump administration, it’s already too late. 🇺🇸

CORONAVIRUS AND TRUMP'S REELECTION CHANCES

How will the coronavirus impact the November election?

LUKA BASSNETT | PAGE EDITOR



The slight increase in President Trump's approval rating seems to be starting to fade.
GRAPHIC FROM LUKA BASSNETT, DATA FROM FiveThirtyEight and FRED

The coronavirus crisis seems to have wedged itself into the view of the media, sucking up the oxygen that might otherwise have fueled reporting of other newsworthy events. However, even as the pandemic continues, one should not forget the elephant in the room: the 2020 elections. Although the coronavirus' effect on politics will not be clear until after the quarantines end and the infections subside, it is possible to make political predictions based on our current knowledge of the crisis. For example, the coronavirus has introduced three main variables that will impact, to different degrees, the reelection chances of President Trump.

One of the greatest predictors of a president's reelection chances is economic performance, with GDP growth leading to reelection and GDP shrinkage to defeat. Examples of this effect are the elections of 1980 and 1992, where weak economies led to the defeats of Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush, respectively, and in 1948 and 1964, where good economic conditions led Harry Truman and Lyndon Johnson to victory.

On the economic front, the current coronavirus crisis seems to predict a bad election for President Trump. Economists at Goldman Sachs predict that the US economy will contract at an annualized rate of 24% in 2020's second quarter, and The New York Times' data visualization and analytics column, The Upshot, estimates that the

United States' current unemployment rate is near 13%--the highest since the Great Depression.

While it is possible that the economy will recover after the crisis peaks, especially if the government adds to the \$2 trillion stimulus package already enacted, such a recovery will likely not be complete when Americans go to the polls.

Another effect of the coronavirus on the election concerns the president's approval rating. The statistical analysis website FiveThirtyEight reports that since Feb. 29, the date of the first coronavirus death in the U.S., President Trump's approval rating has risen by just over three percentage points.

While a higher approval rating would certainly help his chance at reelection, the examples of previous crises show that this small boost in approval is probably momentary. 9/11 and the Cuban Missile Crisis both resulted in large jumps in the approval ratings of Presidents Bush and Kennedy, but these increases faded away over time, at a rate of about one percentage point every two or three weeks.

Although the coronavirus crisis occurs more gradually than either of these events, the examples of 9/11 and the missile crisis show that, barring any unforeseen events in the interim, the slight increase in the president's approval rating will probably disappear in one to two months.

The final ramification of the coronavirus is probably the least predictable. Quarantines and

fears of infection will impact the way the presidential candidates campaign. The Democratic National Convention has already been postponed, and if current conditions persist, it will be impossible for either candidate to campaign in the traditional sense.

On the outset, this would probably play to Trump's favor, as his daily press conferences make him much more visible than his Democratic opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden, who can only campaign digitally. It is possible, however, that Biden might relish the lack of the kind of scrutiny that normally accompanies presidential campaigns.

These three factors are by no means the only ones affecting the presidential race. Questions surrounding the extent of the damage caused by the coronavirus and its effect on politics cannot be answered now and will most likely not be answered for some time.

For example, the recent primary in Wisconsin has shown that the pandemic, if it continues into November, could lead to changes in voting and possible disenfranchisement, depending on how voting is carried out. What is clear is that while the coronavirus has created (mostly through its economic effects) some problems for President Trump's reelection campaign, it has also introduced some factors that could be used to his advantage, leaving the results of the election still very much in doubt. 🗳️



The first batch of CARES Act economic stimulus checks arrived over Easter weekend to eligible taxpayers via direct deposit, and more are on the way, according to the IRS. | FBI.GOV

In these past few months, we have made history. With the COVID-19 pandemic hitting all parts of the United States, people have turned to the government for help. Death and infection rates are skyrocketing and hospitals are starting to become overwhelmed. But one of the worst effects of this pandemic is the lasting impact it will have on our economy.

The government has attempted to provide stimulus to certain parts of the economy. The Trump administration has taken some steps in order to keep our economy afloat. The government passed a historic \$2.2 trillion relief aid package to help. They have extended unemployment benefits by thirteen weeks and will increase unemployment benefits by six hundred dollars a week.

The \$2.2 trillion relief package helps seven main areas. It mainly helps individuals, small

businesses, major corporations, hospitals, the federal safety net, state and local governments and education.

The government has also extended unemployment benefits. People will get six hundred more dollars a week on top of what they will receive from the state for the next four months. They have also extended unemployment insurance for the next 13 weeks. These benefits cover freelancers, contractors, and self-employed people as well, something that does not typically occur. Insurance companies are required to cover all COVID-19 costs and tests. Tax returns are also pushed back to July 15th.

Individuals get around \$560 billion through direct cash payments and more unemployment benefits. Couples who make less than \$198,000 yearly or \$99,000 individually are eligible for direct cash payouts. Those who make less than

\$75,000 individually should expect \$1,200. Couples with children get \$500 for each child. These checks are based on 2018 or 2019 tax filings or information given by the Social Security Administration if someone has not filed taxes.

Although some help is better than none for the families that need it most, the government can do more to help those that truly need it.

Small businesses also benefit from this bill. They are eligible for up to \$10,000 of emergency relief funds. The government has also allotted \$350 billion to forgivable loans. This allows each small business with less than 500 employees to take out up to a \$10 million loan to cover necessities. If the businesses keep all of their employees through the end of June, that loan will be forgiven. The bill also allocates \$15 billion for the relief of existing loans.

Major corporations are given some relief as well. Around \$150 billion is allocated to big businesses. These corporations will have to pay back the government. There is a special part of this \$150 billion that is set aside to keeping the airline industry running.

This bill supports overwhelmed hospitals as well as encouraging the discovery of new drugs and vaccines to help treat and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Approximately \$150 billion has gone into helping hospitals with money and medical supplies, drug access, CDC programs, and veterans' health care.

Food banks and food stamps have been given some more funds to help the thousands of people that cannot afford to eat because of this crisis. State and local governments, as well as education, have gotten funds to help with their COVID-19 responses and help those who were forced to drop out of school. It also extends federally owned student loan deadlines to Sept. 30.

Even though this bill will help many Americans, it will not reach the people who need it the most. Those who are unbanked or have not submitted information to the IRS will not get any relief in the next months. These people are usually of lower income and desperately need relief now. There are other downsides to this plan, such as the fact that many small businesses won't get the help they need. But some help is better than none, and this plan is a start to saving the United States economy. 🌐

RELIEF AND STIMULUS PACKAGE

An in-depth look into what families can be offered and information about the stimulus package

DHEERA RATHIKINDI | PAGE EDITOR

SCHOOL

What effect has the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the education system?

KAITLYN TRAN | NEWS SECTION EDITOR

VIVIAN CHEN | PAGE EDITOR



On March 10th, University of Akron president announced that the university would be closing down its campus. | MIKE CARDEW/BEACON JOURNAL

COLLEGES IN U.S.

As COVID-19 sweeps the nation, college students have been forced to experience the severe measures of abruptly evacuating campus and transitioning their university environment and curriculum to online school.

Kimberley Tran, an undergraduate freshman at Princeton University, details her personal experience managing the abrupt change, and the steps that the college she attends has taken to implement online schooling. Tran, along with other college students on the East Coast, began to receive news about potential cancellations during midterms week at the beginning of March.

"A lot of people were very stressed and anxious, and overall very unhappy," she said. "They told us this news right in the middle of midterms, so a bunch of people couldn't focus, myself included. We were worried that our grades would drop. Everyone was so distracted by how you would have to leave campus soon."

Not only was the news a strain on academics, the abrupt cancellation was also disappointing for Tran and her peers.

"I was having a very memorable and great second semester. We lost three months in a matter of days," said Tran.

Karina Chen, an international student and undergraduate junior at Washington University in St. Louis, explains that, before spring break, there was tension between students about travel plans, and fear around students coming back from break

with symptoms. Eventually, school was cancelled.

"I think the school made a smart call to extend spring break for another week, and then make everything online," stated Chen.

As international students, Chen and her peers faced a particularly uncertain and anxious experience when school was cancelled.

"The freshmen and sophomores were panicking because they thought they were basically being kicked out of their dorms when the school sent out the email [that students would not return home]," said Chen.

Fortunately, international students were eligible to fill out a form to stay on campus for an extended time. Chen thinks that roughly half of the students later returned to their home countries, while the other half stayed in St. Louis for research and summer volunteer opportunities.

For Tran, upon receiving the final news, Princeton students had about a week and a half to leave campus. These circumstances were especially difficult for some students.

"Students who had unstable home lives or were international couldn't get back home due to travel restrictions," said Tran. "They were allowed to apply to stay on campus, however, I heard that situation was very messy because a lot of people were denied even though they had very good reasons to stay on campus."

After spring break, students began online classes.

"Most classes are either pre-recorded or available live on Zoom, but teachers no longer expect their students to attend live classes, in case they

live in different time zones. Office hours are now on Zoom as well. Precepts, which are smaller versions of class lectures held by a teaching assistant (TA) are either cancelled, on Zoom, or optional," Tran said. "All of our lecture material can be found online on either Canvas or Blackboard. But you submit assignments for some classes using GradeScope."

Washington University has used a similar system with programs Canvas and Zoom, but they have also opted to use a lockdown program that locks the browser and has the ability to record the student for exams and quizzes.

Tran finds that the overall experience of online school has been more challenging without the ease and efficiency of in-person contact.

"It's really hard to ask questions during class because your professor can't really see you as well. It's awkward whenever you try to jump in, and then you interrupt someone. It's not as nice as being able to receive help for a problem in person from a teacher or a friend because they can't be there to show you in live time right next to you on the paper."

Technical issues have also resulted in some difficulty with converting to an online structure, for instance lag and the adjustment to using the available electronic tools.

As for the content of the classes, Tran finds that the material is harder to grasp due to the lack of focus and accountability some students have when working from home.

"My peers and myself are [definitely] less focused when at home. You can see that during class whenever we break out into small rooms to do small group work, then a lot of people just turn off their webcams and mics and don't say anything," Tran said. "It's easy to tell a lot of people are clicking on other tabs or using social media while classes are in session."

Chen expresses similar sentiments, agreeing that lack of focus and accountability are significant concerns with online school, and that some students find it easy to fall asleep during class.

The workload ranges from daily to weekly assignments, depending on the class. Compared to conventional classes, Tran feels that the workload is greater and accumulates more quickly when using an online system, due to tendencies of procrastination and continuous pausing and replaying of lectures.

Despite a generally more difficult and inconvenient experience, the online schooling system does carry some benefits, Tran cited the greater convenience of accessing professors through an online method,

and Chen mentioned the ability to watch lectures at a quicker speed.

Another issue that students are facing as a result of the pandemic is the expensive tuition for what is now online schooling. Some colleges are keeping the same rate of full tuition, while others are discounting only room and board. Princeton is a member of the latter situation. A common sentiment among students confronting both situations is that the standard of learning when online has now decreased.

“In general, I wish I was back on campus to take these classes, and controversially, I think there should be a major tuition decrease or reimbursement for students,” said Tran.

Despite student opposition, Princeton University and many others have continued to charge the original flat fee for tuition, claiming that the same quality of teaching is still upheld. Chen’s tuition at Washington University has also remained full price, with only the housing and meal plan being refunded.

Even after the school year, college students will face the next challenge of finding new summer opportunities. These summer opportunities are critical for students to gain experience in their intended careers and develop a resume for future positions or graduate school admission. Students’ initial summer opportunities, nearly all international and some domestic, have been cancelled, leaving students to start from scratch in finding new internships and jobs either online or later in the summer.

Chen had originally stayed in St. Louis for her MCAT exam scheduled in mid-August and to perform research, but her research opportunity was recently cancelled.

Both Princeton University and Washington University have turned to a selective pass/fail

grading system, where students are able to choose which classes they would like a pass/fail grade or traditional grade for.

While college students have the unique struggle of abruptly leaving their second homes and having more advanced coursework to complete online, high school seniors have their own disappointments and high school juniors face a brand-new standardized testing system.

The spring sessions of the ACT and SAT have been cancelled. In response, some colleges have made the announcement to waive or no longer require ACT/SAT scores for current juniors who are applying for admission in the fall of 2021.

In contrast, this year’s AP exams have instead been adjusted to account for COVID-19. The exams will be taken at home and have been shortened to 45 minutes, with the answers now being free response, as opposed to multiple choice. The test will be open book and open note.

CHS junior Koray Akduman, who is taking five AP tests this May, thinks that the exams will not necessarily be more difficult, as the College Board has likely taken needed preventative measures to ensure that the test scores remain in range with past years.

However, he thinks that for some students, the adjustment needed to take the new AP test will be challenging.

“Multiple choice is straightforward, whereas for free response, there’s a lot of ways to go with it. There’s also less tools that you can use to study from,” said Akduman.

In addition, Akduman brings up the concern of time management and accessibility for individual students.

“Some students may be worse at managing time, and other people might have less access to textbooks, and they can’t get them from the libraries because all of the libraries are closed.”

CHINA

China’s Ministry of Education has requested that students watch pre-recorded video lessons for their online schooling. One of the purposes of pre-recording lessons is to provide students with the convenience of being able to create their own timetable for the day, as they can watch the videos on their own time and do not have to follow a schedule set by the school. Additionally, if students are struggling to understand the material being taught, they can always rewind a video or play it slower until they understand the subject. However, there have been numerous complaints about this method of learning, especially from parents with younger children.

“Especially for the younger students, I think it’s better to have live courses [...] In a recorded course, [teachers] cannot interact with students,” said An Haitao, mother to an elementary schooler in China.

There has also been concern with students lacking the drive and accountability that comes with a live classroom. When students are in a classroom, surrounded by their peers and educators, they are motivated to actively participate and learn. However, when a younger individual is left to watch a video, it’s easy to procrastinate on an assignment and end up speeding through rather than carefully completing the material, because when given the choice, many students would choose efficiency over an in-depth understanding of the subject at hand. Without a teacher watching in, students lack accountability. A pre-recorded lesson makes it incredibly easy to play a video on 2x speed and complete assignments with significantly less effort.

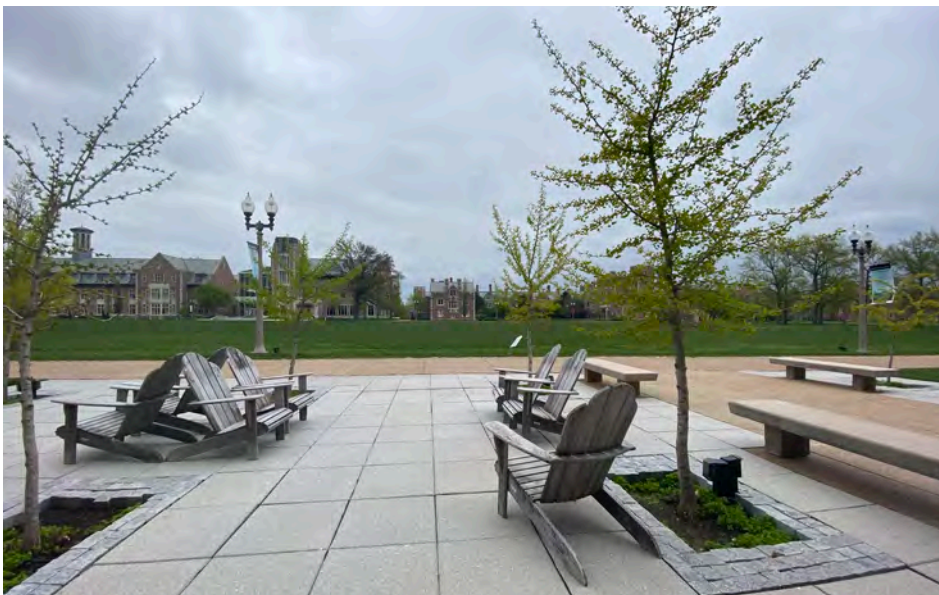
Despite all of these shortcomings in the online school programs, students with access to technology are lucky. Due to parents also needing technology to be able to work now, many Chinese families face the harsh reality of not being able to afford multiple devices for the whole family to continue with their work.

GERMANY

Students in schools in Germany first began anticipating a school closure in February. Evelyn Pearce, a high school student living in southern Germany, recalled the fear in her area after northern Italy was declared a danger zone and many of her classmates were there for vacation.

“It was a slow buildup to [the thought that] it’s going to come to Germany, and it’s going to get as bad as it is in Italy. I think everyone was worried about that,” said Pearce.

Ultimately, school was cancelled. On March 22, German Chancellor Angela Merkel announced business and school closures and restrictions on free movement. As a result, German schools moved to online teaching, a switch



An empty Washington University campus as a result of COVID-19 forcing students to return home. | ELLA CUNEO



A professor at Peking University in Beijing uses an online educational system to teach physical chemistry classes. | SHEN BOHAN/XINHUA PRESS

that countries worldwide have been making. The structure is based on either video calls or posted assignments, with the former or latter form varying on the student's school and grade. Pearce's younger brother has video calls, whereas Pearce's coursework is solely posted online. Similar to Clayton High School, teachers have posted weekly assignments that allow students to have increased flexibility.

"You can do school whenever you want. You just have to turn in the assignment by the time the teacher wants you to turn it in," said Pearce. However, Pearce finds that online school naturally leads to a lengthier workload.

"With [online school] they're giving you the same amount of work, but none of it is done in class where you just talk through it. You have to write down every answer [for online school, and] it takes a while to write everything down. I was working seven hours a day on [online school-work], and our school day is 5 hours on its own here," said Pearce.

An additional struggle for students is grasping the concepts without instruction, along with the large quantity of reading and writing, which her coursework is mainly composed of.

"I miss just being able to listen to a teacher explain a concept to you, instead of just having to research everything yourself," said Pearce.

As of now, schools in Germany are scheduled to begin on May 4th, but Pearce believes that with the current circumstances, that is unlikely to happen, although the possibility of cancelling the remaining school year still remains uncertain. Additionally, Pearce's school has not yet received word on the grading system, and if there will be any adjustments to account for the effect of coronavirus on learning.

"It's frustrating that everything's so up in the air with school," said Pearce.

ITALY

In late February, the Italian government ordered a complete lockdown of the country, and since then, all school has been held online. Antonio Rizzo is a professor teaching physical computing at the University of Siena in Italy. He does not pre-record his lessons for his students, but instead hosts live courses.

"I chose Google Meet because I don't have many students. I have about 10 students. I can connect quite easily with their calendars," he said. "The platform is quite easy to use and it's possible to share not only your screen but also a

white board. If someone wants to write or draw something, we can cooperate on the same piece of digital paper."

Each class period is about ninety minutes, and teachers must cover all the material in the time given while allowing every student to interact and participate in the lesson. This task is much more difficult when a teacher handles a large class.

"[If] we had 30 students, I could give three different topics to be addressed by the three groups," explained Rizzo. "Then, when we meet, they will have one or two representatives for each group that present to the other groups what they have done."

Rizzo firmly believes in the concept of blended learning and its effectiveness.

"It will be important to organize the teaching according to the flipped class and to give the materials out to the students to study. When you meet with them, you [can have discussions] and you will have a more interactive session where the students can present their own issues, their own problems and misunderstandings," stated Rizzo.

Rizzo is currently applying this method to his own classroom, by allowing time for students to revise previous work and then proceeding to give new material. So far, his main obstacles are the limitations of the functions on online video platforms.

"To give [students] support with the external device is a bit tricky. [When] it's just the coding, it's okay. But as soon as you move away from the screen and you need to work on any kind of hardware, it is not as effective as when we're in the same classroom sharing the same physical environment," said Rizzo. "I think the best thing [for me] now is an improvement in sharing and connecting [external] devices to my computer." 🎧



A common concern of parents to younger students is the lack of interactivity in their online courses. | JOSE M. OSORIO / CHICAGO TRIBUNE

THE “CHINESE VIRUS”

How the coronavirus pandemic is affecting Asian Americans across the country

SERAPHINA CORBO | REPORTER

TIANCHENG FAN | REPORTER



A Chinese boy and his mother wear masks to protect themselves from coronavirus in an airport terminal. MIA STUDIO

A cold glare, being spat on, or even being violently attacked. This is the reality that thousands of people of Asian descent are experiencing in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. While not many people were concerned for their safety in the beginning, millions are now out of school or unemployed, not leaving their homes unless absolutely necessary. As COVID-19 spread to other countries such as Italy, where the death rate was around 12.2 percent as of April 7, tension and anxiety grew dramatically.

The long-ignored anti-Asian racism is now threatening many Asian American lives. People are afraid to go out, even to grocery stores. Spreading faster than the virus, anti-Asian racism could crush people's lives. Over 650 discrimination cases against mainly Asian

Americans were reported within one week on the newly launched website Stop AAPI Hate. As of March 31, reported hate crimes against Asian Americans averaged approximately 100 per day, though many more are not reported. In addition,

“In stores for the past few weeks, people have steered clear of me. Think sudden U-turns of their carts, looked suspiciously at me, and given me angry looks while covering their noses and mouths with scarves.”

- Jennifer Lin

cyber attacks have increased. Thousands of posts, videos, comments and blogs target Asian Americans.

Recently, Jennifer Lin, a Chinese-American,

has been facing racism from strangers.

“In stores for the past few weeks, people have steered clear of me, think sudden U-turns of their carts, looked suspiciously at me, and given me angry looks while covering their noses and mouths with scarves.” Lin said.

The lives of Asian Americans have become much harder during the pandemic. On top of concerns about getting COVID-19, they must deal with racism against them and their families, who, due to language and cultural barriers, might not even be aware of racist acts that have the potential to become violent.

“I remember one student told me that when she was shopping in Schnucks in Clayton, one American was yelling at her, ‘go back to your country,’” said Linyun Fu, Global Programs

manager at Washington University in St. Louis Brown School.

Racism against Asians is not new to this country. In the 1980s, people with Asian backgrounds were harassed, attacked and blamed for the collapse of the U.S. manufacturing sector. However, the difference between now and then is that the U.S. government is encouraging anti-Asian racism instead of warning people about its potential damage.

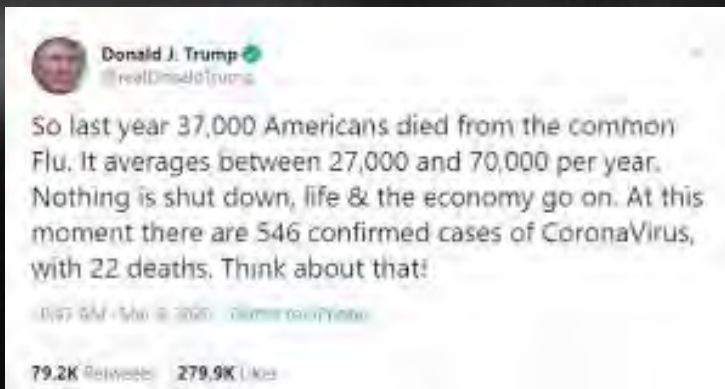
Last month, an unnamed White House official allegedly called COVID-19 the "KungFlu." A picture of Donald Trump's speech for his March 19 press conference revealed that the words "Corona Virus" had been crossed out and replaced with "Chinese Virus," causing an enormous uproar of disapproval from many Americans. Cyber violence has become an issue as well, inundated with videos, posts, and comments of "kung-flu," "Chinese virus," "Wuhan virus" and other racist phrases. In March alone, on Twitter, 10,000 posts included the phrase "kung-flu."

"I think that it's completely unnecessary and wrong to say [it's the Chinese virus]. Fauci and all these other medical experts have not been calling it [the Chinese virus], it's not Chinese virus, it has its name," CHS junior Angela Xiao said.

In 2015, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued the new guideline for naming a virus, stating disease names may NOT include geographic locations, people's names or cultural, population, industry or occupational references with the aim to avoid unnecessary offenses. For this reason, WHO named the new virus COVID-19. Still, many people kept using anthropomorphism -- giving a not-human virus an ethnicity and human characteristics.

Many believe that the United States, and especially President Trump, must do a better job of acknowledging the hate crimes against Asian Americans.

"I think this is a time when we need to come together as a nation to fight the virus instead of dividing and tearing each other apart. On top of this pandemic, you shouldn't have to worrying about people being racist during this hard time," said Xiao.





PEOPLE

Residents in Tower Grove gather for a social distance parade.
GRACE SNELLING | EDITOR IN CHIEF

RESTRICTED REPORTING

The lives of journalists in the midst of COVID-19.

GRACE SNELLING | EDITOR IN CHIEF

JIMMY MALONE | SPORTS SECTION EDITOR



Tom Gaffney writing a story in his office. (Photo provided by Gaffney) on the left.
Ben Hochman writing stories in his chair. (Photo provided by Hochman) on the right.

Every night at 7 p.m., New York Times Senior Staff Editor Tom Gaffney steps out of the doorway of his house in Manhattan and listens to his neighbor play “America the Beautiful” on the tuba.

The nighttime ritual started some time ago in Gaffney’s neighborhood to honor healthcare workers as they returned home from the hospital. Now it’s a spectacle, complete with singing, cowbells and even the odd vuvuzela. Gaffney, who has been quarantining for a month as of April 7, finds the new tradition uplifting.

“I took a video of it, just to share with some of my colleagues,” Gaffney said. “One of the reporters in that Slack channel was like, ‘Oh, this is perfect! I’m writing a story about this, we’re going to post it online!’”

Gaffney runs a team of about 20 reporters for the New York Times. On a typical day, he works a night shift that starts at 4 p.m., over the course of which he edits stories, writes headlines and collaborates with his peers. In-person interaction is a key element of his job.

“One interesting thing about newsrooms is just how, when you’re all in the same room, you

sort of make decisions on the fly, especially when there’s breaking news. You can kind of huddle together and say, ‘Okay, we’re going to move this story down, we’re going to chop 500 words out of that story.’ It’s a very fluid discussion,” Gaffney said.

Recreating that same atmosphere has been difficult. However, improvements have been made over the weeks that the team has been separated. Video chats take the place of the team huddle and messaging apps like Slack allow for a constant stream of communication.

While the use of these technologies has certainly bolstered the Times’ ability to deliver news, keeping up with deadlines is a constant struggle, especially during a time when information is in such great demand.

“We have editors who work in four different states, and we’re all sort of spread out and trying to work towards a deadline,” Gaffney said. “Remarkably, we’ve been making the deadlines. They call it the daily miracle. It’s a little more miraculous these days.”

In the midst of this pandemic, journalism has become crucial as a means to inform the public

of current events. Several of Gaffney’s colleagues have risked their own safety by traveling to Wuhan, China at the beginning of the outbreak or covering its progression in Washington and the West Coast. One journalist with a medical background, Sheri Fink, spent days in a Brooklyn emergency to document the state of American hospitals.

“In a hospital at the center of the crisis, nearly 200 babies have arrived since March. Some pregnant women have fallen extremely ill, but doctors are winning battles for their lives and their children’s,” Fink wrote in a New York Times article about a Brooklyn maternity ward fighting Covid-19.

On a positive note, Gaffney believes that this situation will increase proficiency among journalists in working remotely. He has already seen his own publication, as well as others such as the Washington Post, exploring new channels of news media and branching out into a more visual realm.

He is also aware that, for many people, these stories are personal.

“As a New Yorker where this hit particularly

hard, this is really a personal story for a lot of people,” Gaffney said. “We had several reporters get infected, and one editor on the staff unfortunately passed away. I think that understanding [that this is personal] is being reflected even more so in journalism that is being published.”

The pandemic has had a major impact on local journalism as well. Ben Hochman, a sports columnist for the St. Louis Post Dispatch and CHS alum, found himself in a unique position with the suspension of sports across the nation.

“Once they cancelled sports it was a punch to the gut, but also a call to action,” Hochman said. “I had to think about what I can do as a journalist to provide perspective to our readers.”

Though sports are his niche, Hochman has experience reporting in the midst of a crisis. In 2005, he worked as a sports writer for the New Orleans Times Picayune during the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

“My job is sports writing, but during the time of a crisis, it’s a balancing act,” Hochman said. “It’s a combination of stories that are about the topic itself, but with a sports hook.”

As a journalist, Hochman’s goal is to use his position to uplift his readers while keeping them informed. Without professional sports to write

about, he has to be more creative with the stories he writes.

“I’m trying to find stories that are coronavirus related, and stories that are fun sports reads for a little escape for the readers,” Hochman said. “I find everything from former athletes who are now doctors, to people who would normally watch the Cardinals, but are now watching the cardinals as birdwatchers.”

As a member of the Clayton community, he also sees how the pandemic affects sports at CHS.

“People in America, St. Louis and especially in our community of Clayton, look to sports as an outlet, escape, therapy and just entertainment,” Hochman said. “I wrote about the CHS baseball seniors who worked out hard all winter and early spring, with the motivation of getting back to the district tournament and defeating Westminster who beat them 1-0 the previous year. Now, to think that was their last game ever played. It’s sad and mind boggling, but that’s our new normal.”

In addition to CHS sports, St. Louis professional sports have been deeply affected by the pandemic. The St. Louis Cardinals were prepared to begin their season this April, but MLB recently suspended the season because of the virus. St. Louis was also scheduled to host multiple NCAA

March Madness games at the Enterprise Center, but the tournament was cancelled just weeks prior.

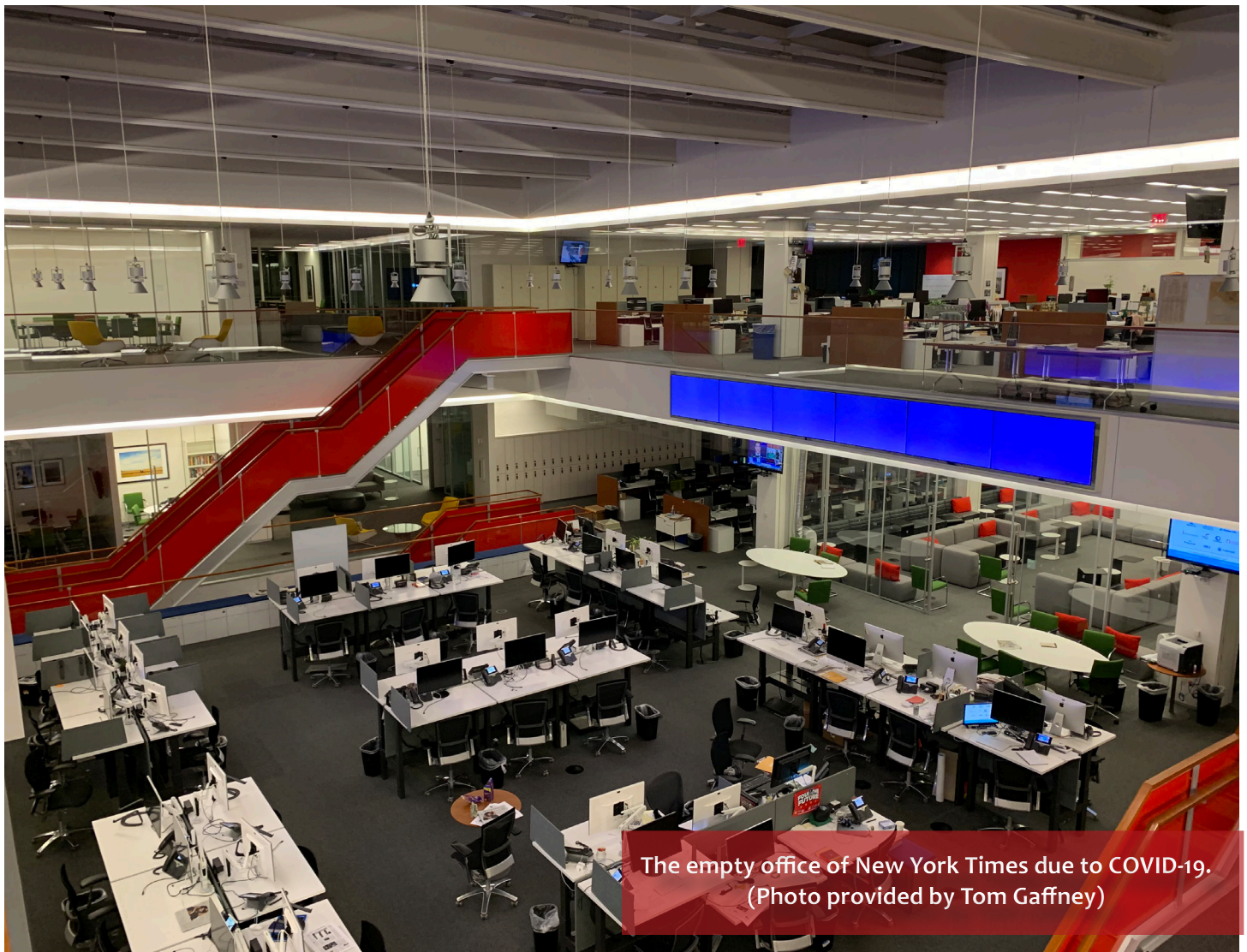
“It’s a terrible sports analogy, but it’s a curveball for everybody in sports,” Hochman said. “I feel terrible for the St. Louis Blues, who were literally in first place with just a few weeks to go until the playoffs when this happened.”

Hochman values his role as a sports writer, but greatly appreciates the journalism done by those around him with regards to this tragedy.

“I’m just a sports writer in this scenario, and I served my little purpose,” Hochman said. “But the people that are bringing the hour to hour news on the coronavirus about how people are fighting it, beating it, and surviving from it are the journalists truly rising.”

Speculation continues as to when sports will return, especially with large crowds. Despite this crisis, Hochman sees a bright future for sports fans.

“Not having sports is a very emotional thing for a lot of people,” Hochman said. “Whenever we’re allowed in groups, not 10 or fewer, but in 20,000 at Enterprise Center or 40,000 at Busch Stadium, it will be electric, therapeutic, nourishing and a very special experience.” 🇺🇸



The empty office of New York Times due to COVID-19.
(Photo provided by Tom Gaffney)

DR. FERGUSON

A CHS parent who is at the frontline of the coronavirus epidemic.

SOFIA ERLIN | FEATURE SECTION EDITOR

When he's not working in the Emergency Room, Clayton parent Dr. Ed Ferguson enjoys going go-karting with his kids, biking and soap making. Recently, however, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ferguson has spent most of his time at the hospital.

Ferguson has been an ER physician for 19 years and currently works at Mercy Hospital. Mercy started treating higher numbers of COVID-19 patients near the end of March. Right now, they expect their peak number of patients to occur sometime near the middle or end of April. But these numbers are changing everyday.

The influx of patients has brought new challenges. For example, the shortage of medical supplies, beds and ventilators. Like many hospitals, Mercy is taking proactive measures to reduce these shortages.

"One of those things is having each person wear the same mask as long as we can. And then once we're done with it, then they have a way that they can recycle the mask" said Ferguson.

The hospital is also building more emergency beds and having physicians from other departments help in the ER. Besides the lack of the supplies, COVID-19 has created additional challenges, some of which have to do with the nature of the virus itself. One thing that Ferguson and the rest of the medical community have never experienced before are patients with extremely low oxygen levels who don't feel short of breath.

"[Before treating COVID-19 patients,] normal oxygen saturation would be somewhere above 92%-93% and if we would see somebody with an action level of say, 87%, that person would be considered to be extremely sick and would probably be admitted to the ICU. However, we're seeing people that come in that are young and otherwise healthy that have oxygen levels even in the 50% range. And that's a person who normally would not survive and they are sitting there playing with their phone," said Ferguson.

This phenomenon is changing how hospitals treat sick patients. The typical course of action would be to put everyone with low oxygen on a ventilator, but, because of the shortage of ventilators, hospitals are having to reevaluate this treatment.

"What we don't know yet is whether or not those patients will do better if we just let them stay with a low oxygen level for a period of time and not put them on the ventilator," said Ferguson.

Another difference between COVID-19 and other infectious diseases is the huge range in severity. While some patients are completely asymptomatic, others require hospitalization and can die.

Additionally, medical personnel are finding it difficult to predict who will experience the worst symptoms.

"Initially we thought that we could identify risk factors for who is going to get really sick and who wasn't. And it's becoming clear that even though there are risk factors, patients with no risk factors become severely ill," Ferguson said.

One final impact of the virus are its negative effects on mental health. Because of the social distancing measures, many have been feeling anxious and lonely. Calling friends and family and trying to stay connected virtually can help alleviate some of this stress.

"I think it's important to recognize that in addition to taking care of ourselves physically by preventing the disease, we should not underestimate the psychological impact of social distancing," Ferguson said. 🍷



Dr. Ferguson, ELLA FERGUSON | PHOTOGRAPHER

"Initially we thought that we could identify risk factors for who is going to get really sick and who wasn't. And it's becoming clear that even though there are risk factors, patients with no risk factors become severely ill."

In 2001, Lydia Boda was still a child, living in the Ville neighborhood of St. Louis with her three brothers. That was the year that her parents started the Bridge of Hope Ministry in their living room.

At first, it was only meant to be a small church.

“We have clients, actually, that still come to Bridge of Hope who started out in those days,” Lydia said. “They would come to church, and worship with us, and ask for different things, and we would get donations from Panera Bread and hand out food and do all sorts of stuff.”

The Boda family’s living room was open for service throughout the week. They occupied the top two floors of a three family apartment complex, from which they offered all the aid that they could provide. It became clear that the need for their help was great in the community. By 2003, the operation had grown so much that they bought and renovated the bottom floor of the building to house their church. But even that wasn’t enough-- the room was so packed during services that they could hardly fit everyone in. So, in 2005 they low-balled an offer on a much larger building that used to be a preschool. That same year, it was theirs.

Lydia grew up surrounded by other members of her community. Many of them came to Bridge of Hope for worship, but a great number sought outside help as well. Because the St. Louis public schools in her area were unaccredited, Lydia’s mother home-schooled all four of her children, and through travel and hands-on experiences, ensured that they would receive a robust education. This often also meant that they witnessed first-hand the disparity that existed, and continues to exist, within St. Louis.

“We were in it constantly. I knew about things that were going on. I knew that people were prostitutes, and I knew about drug addiction. My parents did not shelter us at all from any of it, because they knew that if we saw the despair and the exhaustion that it can cause, that there’s no way we could fall into it. They never thought that sheltering was going to be a good way, especially when you’re so in it and you’re in that community. When you see the struggles, you can’t ignore it,” Lydia said.

As Lydia reached adulthood and went to college to study art and sculpture, Bridge of Hope continued to expand. Her father, who was the director of Bridge of Hope, worked to provide showers, laundry, a community garden, food and access to other support systems for clients of the shelter. Today, Bridge of Hope offers tutoring for people trying to obtain their GED or take the ACT, and has regular counseling sessions in order to focus more on mental health.

According to Lydia, her father is “a jack of all trades and just a huge inspiration.” However, when he was no longer able to run the shelter, Lydia returned home from Michigan to help. Although she was initially planning on lending a hand where she could, the shelter’s Board noticed her passion and commitment to the community.

“I didn’t even think about becoming the director until I had two board members approach me and say, ‘Hey, have you thought about being the director here? Because we really need somebody who’s going to steer the ship with a little bit of energy,’” Lydia said. “I was overwhelmed by it, because I’m so young and I’ve never worked in ministry. But I wanted to see it succeed. And it was also kind of a challenge, like, ‘How can I take this business, this incredibly full-hearted business, and then translate it to people who are

willing to provide funds for it, and be able to save it from being closed in a couple months?”

At 27, Lydia took over the director position at Bridge of Hope. It was a turbulent time for the shelter-- funding was down, and it seemed like they might have to close within a span of months without help.

Today, they are in a much better place.

“We’re actually doing really well. We’re okay. Better than what we were when I first started a year ago, you know, we were two months away from completely shutting down. Now we’re able to sustain and stay open. But with this whole virus, it’s kind of a big unknown. Our big fundraiser had to be canceled. There’s a lot of things up in the air. But honestly, there’s nothing else that we can do about it, other than to keep asking and keep in communication with the people who support us,” Lydia said.

For the population that Bridge of Hope serves, and especially those who are homeless, COVID-19 poses a major threat. Not only are many shelters closing down in order to prevent crowding, food is less accessible, and those without a home have no way to practice social distancing. Lydia is planning on reopening Bridge of Hope on the week of April 5th in order to start handing out lunches until the 22nd, but even that cannot encompass all of its usual services. In addition, without access to the news, many homeless St. Louisans are less informed on the precautions that they should be taking.

“That whole weekend to Monday, that was insane,” Lydia said. “We had to change things constantly, and it was just chaotic. Our whole community was like, ‘What? What’s going on?’ because they don’t have access to TV. So they would hear about it at Bridge of Hope and other organizations, and they just don’t really under-



Lydia Boda (right). Photo from Lydia Boda

stand why everything is changing.”

For those looking to help vulnerable members of St. Louis over the course of this pandemic, Lydia suggests researching organizations that will be able to provide services for them. There are many steps that can be taken; making sack lunches or donating hygiene products may be a good place to start. To donate to Bridge of Hope, visit bridgeofhopestl.org.

“[Bridge of Hope] is a safe place,” Lydia said. “We accept everyone. That’s our biggest thing. We are a safe place.” 🇺🇸

LYDIA BODA

GRACE SNELLING | EDITOR IN CHIEF

Lydia Boda, director of Bridge of Hope, aims to help those who are homeless through the COVID-19 pandemic.