



Nineteen voices from COVID-19

Read Dawn's story on page 8.

THE K.H.S. JOURNALISM PARTNERSHIP

A COLLABORATIVE EFFORT FROM THE STAFFS OF THE KIRKWOOD CALL AND PIONEER YEARBOOK

About this issue

In light of this unprecedented public health crisis, The Kirkwood Call and Pioneer Yearbook staffs have worked together under the Kirkwood High School Journalism Partnership to produce this special issue.

Special thanks to our KHS journalism partners and sponsors who helped us fund this project.

Credits

WRITERS Jack Anderson
Megan Cleveland
Matthew Connelly
Fiona Cseri
Malcia Greene
Charlotte Heinrich
Liam Jackson
Grace Klebe
Emma Lingo
Maddie Meyers
Zach Millenbruck
Ally Ortmann
Ethan Peter
Kiden-Aloyse Smith
Grace Williams
Benji Wilton
Charlotte Witt
PHOTOGRAPHY Natalie Sweesy
Brigid Van Rees
Emma Wright
DESIGN Madeleine Bartin
Wolfgang Frick
Lindsay Kocher
ADVISER Mitch Eden

A KIRKWOOD HIGH SCHOOL PUBLICATION
www.thekirkwoodcall.com

IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A TIME OF celebration. Students and athletes were supposed to dance alongside each other at prom and bring home state championships. Families were supposed to start packing for their summer vacations and sit down at crowded restaurants to honor another completed school year. Businesses were supposed to start stocking up again for the summer rush and open patios for their customers to enjoy the summer air. But on April 9, just two weeks after the Mayor of St. Louis announced a stay-at-home order, Governor Mike Parson released the decision to close all Missouri schools for the rest of the school year. Now, it did not matter what the students and residents of St. Louis were supposed to do, because the COVID-19 pandemic was forcing everyone's lives on hold. But this is where the stories just began. As the worries shifted from prom dresses to promising to stay six feet away from others, and from homework to working from home, TKC and the Pioneer collaborated as one to help tell the story of 19 people during these difficult times. 19 stories to show the impact of COVID-19 in our community. 19 stories of what actually happened, instead of what was supposed to. ♦

THE PEOPLE OF COVID-19

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Libby and Adam Evers

them which was fine but it was the first one where it was the real ultrasound, where you're getting all the measurements, so I was very upset that I missed out on all that."

At home, Libby and Adam said they were instructed by their doctor to be meticulous about sanitizing and maintaining social distancing. When Adam came home from a shift as a police officer, he immediately changed and took a shower. At work, measures to protect officers were implemented and he had access to personal protective equipment (PPE), but his risk of exposure was not eliminated. "I wash my hands right when I get inside. I only stay in one area of the kitchen whenever I do come home, unless I need to use the restroom or something, but when I come home to eat I just stay in one area of the kitchen," Adam said. "End of shift, I come home and right there in the kitchen. I make sure that if there is a contaminated spot, it's one area of the kitchen where Libby doesn't go and I make sure I sanitize everything else including myself." ♦

Story by LIAM JACKSON AND CHARLOTTE WITT

Photo by BRIGID VAN REES

WHEN LIBBY AND Adam Evers found out she was pregnant December 2019, they were elated. At the same time, thousands of miles away, a new illness was just beginning to infect a small number of people in Wuhan, China. Libby said she would see notifications from The Wall Street Journal about COVID-19 in China, but the idea of the disease being a threat was not on her radar until months later. When she found out from the Center for Disease Control

(CDC) that she was in a high-risk category, she started her work as a financial advisor from home.

"Since March 13, the only time I have left the house is for a doctor's appointment or to go walk around the block," Libby said. "I've missed friend's birthday parties, I haven't gone to work, I don't have a lot of my work files [and] I've had to work all remotely. We get all of our groceries delivered or Adam has to handle stuff, but the only time I've left has been to go to the doctor."

Pregnant couples often look forward to the days when they go to

the doctor and get an ultrasound, seeing their baby for the first time. When Libby and Adam arrived on March 30 for their appointment, Adam was stopped at the door. Because of restrictions put in place to try to limit coronavirus exposure, only Libby was allowed inside.

"I was upset that I wasn't able to go," Adam said. "I couldn't go to the appointments but we didn't know that at the time. We even checked the website and they didn't update it. We went to the hospital and I went with her on the March 30 appointment and they told me I couldn't come in. I got to FaceTime

IT'S NOT EVERY DAY ONE decides to walk a marathon, let alone during a global pandemic.

But thanks to one TikTok trend, a passion for exercise and the itch to get out, Kirkwood residents Mary Ralston, Meg Murphy and Amanda Ralston thumbed their noses at COVID-19. To these girls, 26.2 was just another number.

"It was a really spontaneous decision," Amanda said. "The night before, we were walking around [Larson Park], and were like, 'What if we just do it tomorrow? Let's go out, the weather's going to be nice.'"

Although stay-at-home orders prevented them from working out indoors, they decided to move in other ways. Despite the loss of MSHSAA canceling Amanda and Murphy's track season and cutting Mary's freshman year at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) short, all three made it their mission to remain active.

"Our [track] coach has been sending us workouts, so we've all been doing those while in quarantine," Murphy said. "We didn't do them this week because we knew we had that marathon on Monday, so we had been taking a break and doing the best we could."

Prior to their walk across St. Louis, Murphy and the Ralstons traced their route via Map My Run, an app allowing users to customize courses. They met at Murphy's house, located in a subdivision off Bopp Road, Monday, April 20, around 10 a.m.. According to Mary, they walked through local back roads such as Clayton, Hanley and Wydown to reach Forest Park.

"We're all runners," Amanda said. "So it was easier since we had more endurance and were more aerobically prepared for it, which definitely helped."

While walking at an approximate 19.25-minute-per-mile pace for nearly nine hours—minus a half hour rest and three bathroom breaks—distractions such as listening to a 10-hour long Spotify playlist the trio devised and rehashing team memories were fundamental to keeping spirits high amid the 70 degree weather. That, and treating themselves to a picnic on the Norman K. Probst Golf Course after 11 miles of winding streets. Above all else, though, there was one universal thrill they all looked forward to: their excitement for Murphy's mom's famous PB&J recipe.

"[Mrs. Murphy] is known to be good at making peanut butter and jellies," Amanda said. "Her secret ingredient is whipped peanut butter."

But according to Murphy, they endured their fair share of struggles. She noted how chafing backpacks, public restrooms being closed due to the virus and physical exhaustion all made their journey more difficult.

"Between miles 16 and 20, I saw I had a blister and my feet were killing me," Murphy said. "I was just done with it. Everything was hurting. I knew where we were, so I knew how far we had [left]. I was over it and tired and wanted to be done."

For those wanting to switch things up during these times, Mary recommends starting with walking a half marathon first, and believes that you'll still feel just as accomplished,

but without as much pain. She also advises packing sunscreen and planning out your rests.

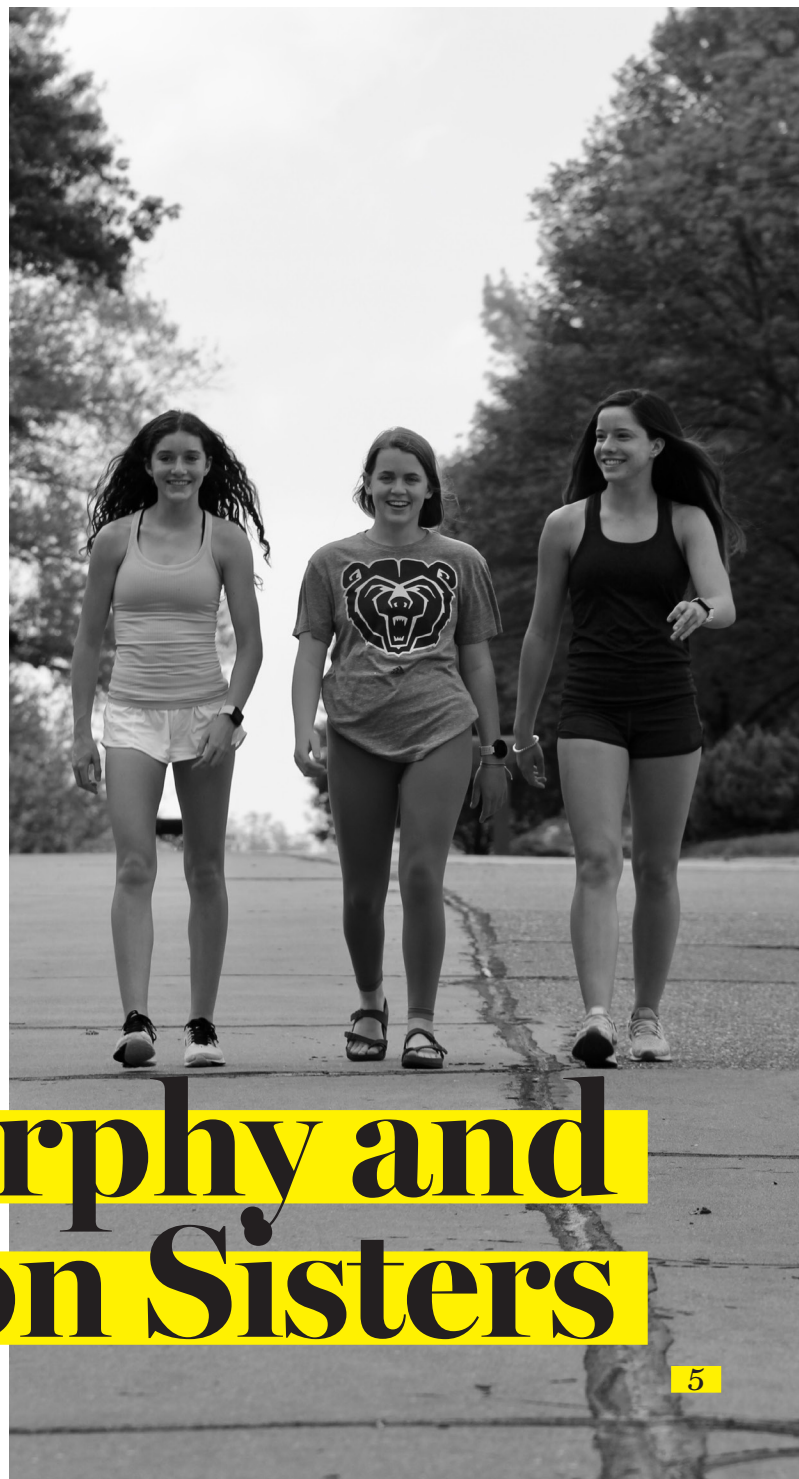
Not to mention, holding onto the little things. Like Murphy's sister, Grace, delivering Murphy and Amanda cherry slushies at mile 20 from Mobil. Or Murphy's dad stopping to chat (six feet apart, of course) on Ladue Road, or texting their track and cross country coach, Gina Woodard, for words of encouragement. It was like the aching joints, hours of pain and the internal 'Are we there yet?' thoughts vanished once they

were greeted with the surprise of cheering and applause from KHS administrators, like Principal Dr. Michael Havener and former KHS Principal Dr. Dave Holley.

"We ended up finishing at the Haveners' and their whole family was outside, [Coach] Woodard was there and the Holley's just happened to be there," Mary said. "It was like a whole event, us finishing, and finally reaching the 26.2. It was a good way to end." ♦

Story by MALCIA GREENE


Photo by EMMA WRIGHT



Meg Murphy and the Ralston Sisters

Donald Douglas





WALKING INTO WORK at 7 a.m., Officer Donald Douglas knew his place in KHS. Whether it was patrolling the hallways or sitting in his office, he had his responsibilities as the KHS Resource Officer.

But when spring break began, he did not know that he was not coming back to campus. COVID-19 became a pandemic as the case numbers increased all over the world, and at the beginning of fourth quarter, did not know that the school year would come to a stop March 13. Students did not know that they would be stuck at home for weeks to come. Douglas didn't know he was going to be on different shifts and working on the street again.

Douglas worked for the Kirkwood Police Department for 15 years, the past two 2019 and 2020 school years as the KHS Resource Officer. Before spring break, he said KHS was doing a great job improving security on campus. He said the school district and police department were always communicating, and they were set up to do another round of ALICE drills. ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, and Evacuate, and they are drills that prepare students for active shooter situations. But, nothing could have prepared him or KHS for the coronavirus, and he said he felt a responsibility for the health of the students and faculty when spring break began.

"[Coronavirus is] a tough thing.

We don't know what's going on [and] we don't know how it's going to affect certain people. We don't know what we can and can't do," Douglas said. "That in itself is scary so not knowing what this thing can do to us, this virus, is unsettling."

During spring break, Douglas said it was difficult communicating through email and not knowing what was going to happen to the school and his job.

"Not knowing what's going on is tough. I don't care what the situation is, you always want to have a plan in place to really know what we are preparing for," Douglas said. "For myself it's tough because I didn't just go back to work. The communication piece was really tough because I didn't know where I was going to be."

Missouri Gov. Mike Parson decided to close school for the rest of the year April 9, and Douglas was back working on the streets with day and midnight shifts. On the midnight shift he had to work from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., and Douglas said this was a shock to his system.

"We [the police department] go into most situations [and] most calls where we aren't sure if a person could be infected or has recent exposures to someone who could be infected," Douglas said. "We mask up [and] we suit up. [The police department now uses] way more precaution."

During quarantine and social distancing, Douglas said not being able to work at KHS was hard. He said he understood how students felt about not being

able to go back to school. Douglas said he started teaching his kids their school work and being a teacher with them was tough.

"Since I'm assigned to the schools, really that hits home because that's a big deal when the kids can't go to school. I think about the seniors [and] I think about people who need individualized learning where they can't do it online. They need that individual focus from a teacher," Douglas said. "I see that right now because I'm dealing with my kids. I really think individually how [coronavirus has] impacted me is the education piece."

Even though he couldn't come back to the high school, Douglas continued to help the students and faculty. On his day shift, he assisted and spoke with the people who were handing out lunches to kids and was able to see and talk with a couple of students during the pandemic. While he said it was tough knowing he could not work at the school, Douglas said the best thing KHS could do was stay at home and avoid contact with others.

"I'm one that rolls with the punches. You got to adapt to anything life throws at you. I've just taken [the coronavirus] as it comes. I think people are doing [a] pretty good job of staying at home and social distancing," Douglas said. "I know people are getting antsy [and] it's a long time to stay inside and not see people. [I just can do] everything I can do to protect myself and protect others." ♦

Story by GRACE KLEBE

Photo by BRIGID VAN REES

BEFORE COVID-19 hit the St. Louis area, Missouri Baptist Medical Center in Town and Country was a bustling hub for a variety of medical needs. But times have changed. Elective surgeries have been canceled. A previously unused wing of the hospital has been opened up to fulfill a demand for space. Only employees are allowed in, and they must be screened prior to entry. As coronavirus cases grew, the hospital transformed into a fortress on the front lines of an invisible war.

Dawn Joyce is a nurse at Missouri Baptist Medical Center and has been working there for 8 months after graduating from nursing school in May 2019. Since the beginning of the outbreak in mid-March, her role as a nurse in general medicine has shifted to providing care to patients on the hospital's coronavirus floor.

"At the very beginning, it was pretty scary because you think about patients that you had been caring for on another floor, and they start out having cold symptoms, and then it suddenly changes from a wet cough to a dry cough to a fever," Dawn said. "All of a sudden they're on the COVID floor, and you're thinking 'Oh my gosh, I just worked with this patient three days in a row.'"

According to Dawn, while Missouri Baptist hasn't had nearly as dire of a shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) as hospitals in New York City, the hospital still lacks vital equipment. She said N95 masks are scarce, as well as surgical gowns, and there is not enough equipment for emergency room doctors. Nurses have been asked to reuse gowns in between patients, which Dawn said she and her coworkers were not willing to do.

Due to the risk of potentially spreading the virus, Dawn has not been able to see her children, who

live with their dad, for several weeks at a time. Andrew Joyce, Dawn's son, said that seeing his mom during this time poses a potential danger that goes both ways.

"Even if she's not on the COVID floor and putting us at risk for getting COVID, maybe we're putting her at risk for getting COVID and then going back to the hospital and working on a different floor," Andrew said.

After seeing the initial reports of the virus in China, Dawn said she believes the coronavirus outbreak in the U.S. could have been much worse. She said a large component of preventing the spread of the virus boils down to common sense and basic hygiene like washing your hands. According to Dawn, additional precautions like wearing gloves to the grocery store often provide a false sense of security.

"For me, I feel like it's all about fear," Dawn said. "When people see me or when people know that I'm a nurse, nobody even wants to be around me. If they see me in uniform, I feel like I have the plague."

While she noted that coronavirus will likely stick around for at least another year or two until a vaccine is produced, Dawn said that a positive outcome to the pandemic would be the improvement of the American healthcare system. She said healthcare workers are learning how to better prepare for potential future health crises.

"When we're doing [practice] crisis situations, it's not real," Dawn said. "I think it really shows the weaknesses in healthcare. When this is all said and done, hopefully it's going to make the healthcare system stronger because we see our weaknesses and we know where we need to focus." ♦

Story by BENJI WILTON

Photo by NATALIE SWEESY



Dawn Joyce





Tim Griffin

going to hit our bottom line quicker than some of these smaller cities who are able to contract.”

In addition to turmoil within Kirkwood, St. Louis county has suffered upward of 2,794 cases and 127 deaths (at time of press), according to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Reports of essential workers falling ill in the county have begun to trickle in, and municipalities are working to find ways to hold elections in June, but still adhere to social distancing practices. There’s no definitive end in sight, but leaders like Griffin, Luetzow and Wurtz have remained optimistic for the city.

And they said they can’t wait to celebrate when Kirkwood makes it through the pandemic. Luetzow said one of the first things she wants to do is grab burgers with the council at PJ’s in downtown Kirkwood. The group often goes there after meetings to catch up and unwind after work. She said, after this, a celebratory meal will have been well-earned.

“In this time of uncertainty, it is important that we remember our community’s values of being safe, inclusive, and welcoming,” Griffin wrote in his letter to the City of Kirkwood. “We are all in this together, and we all have a role to play. The City of Kirkwood is here to support you throughout this difficult time and will be doing everything possible to ensure the health and safety of our community and the continuation of your city services.” ♦

Story by EMMA LINGO

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT

“OUT OF MY BACK window I can see a good part of downtown Kirkwood,” Tim Griffin, Kirkwood mayor, said. “It’s just sad to see the empty parking lots – no cars, no people. So many small businesses are being closed and have to limit their services. [COVID-19] is a devastating thing for our community.”

Since coronavirus made landfall in the U.S., officials at all levels of government have been carrying out emergency plans, hoping to offset the damage coronavirus is wrecking on the economy and on people. Elections have been rescheduled, city council meetings have been

moved online and small businesses are trying to keep their heads above water. As a municipality, Kirkwood’s city council has been forced to make unexpected snap decisions on spending, throwing the plan they had for the city’s budget off its course in an effort to support essential workers and local businesses.

“Planning for an emergency like this, for coronavirus, was not on our to-do list. This has been [us] scrambling to respond,” Nancy Luetzow, deputy mayor, said.

Luetzow is not supposed to be in office right now. Her term limit expired. However, with April elections rescheduled to June 2, no one has been elected to take over for her. Now she’s in office indefinitely, making decisions she never thought

she would be.

One of Luetzow’s fellow council members, Kara Wurtz, was elected to the council in 2016. She has two years left on her term and no idea who her colleagues will be in two months. Over a month of social distancing disrupted countless meetings and appointments and, until coronavirus passes, council members like Luetzow and Wurtz will continue to set up shop in their living rooms and at kitchen tables to hash out new ways to keep downtown alive and the budget stable in the long run.

“Kirkwood is so unique in the fact that we have a lot of in-house services that we can provide to residents,” Wurtz said. “While we’re looking at these revenue cuts [we know we’re]

HE LOGS ONTO HIS INBOX and new emails flood his screen. He tries his best to answer the questions of teachers, students and parents, some of which even he does not know the answer to. Finally ready, his screen goes white as the words he has so dreaded typing fill the empty space.

In two emails sent to KHS students following school closure through the end of the year, KHS Principal Dr. Michael Havener, confirmed not only the suspension of the school year, but also the postponement of events such as prom, graduation and Gold K that he said seniors and administration had looked forward to all year.

Announced by Superintendent Dr. Michele Condon April 9, the decision for students to not return to school was the result of an order by Gov. Mike Parson (R-MO) to close all Missouri schools through the remainder of the 2019-20 school year. Before the complete closure, however, Havener said the initial shutdown, set to end April 3, showed how confusing the situation was from the beginning.

"I know that the number one priority for the school board is the safety of the students," Havener said. "Once the incident at the [Villa Duchesne] dance happened, it actually impacted Kirkwood High School a little bit, and I think that's when it really set in at Kirkwood. I think at that point even we didn't realize how fast it was spreading, and it made sense to take a smaller amount of time off at school, then come back and finish it up after."

Drawing a comparison between the situation surrounding COVID-19 with another event he had

experienced, Havener said he saw some similarity in the hopelessness of the pandemic and events of 9/11.

"I was [assistant principal] when 9/11 happened, and that was an unbelievably horrible event," Havener said. "The one thing we had at that time was each other. We could see each other and be together. Obviously this is a lot different, and it's horrible in its own way, but this time we don't have each other face-to-face. I think that's what makes it different from something like 9/11. It's been a time to lean on everyone and see how important that is. It's been great to see everyone go above and beyond during this. It's critical during this time."

Though he said the closure was disappointing for the majority of the students and staff, Havener said he was especially impacted by the inability of the senior class to finish their high school career in classes. After the closure announcement and sending an email to the senior class, Havener went as far as calling every senior within a three-day span.

"No senior class should ever have to go through what this senior class is going through. Those things are rights of passage: your senior year, Gold K, graduation, prom and senior skip day, and I don't want the senior class to miss out on things like that," Havener said. "It's our hope to continue to do something. We're going to do everything in our power to have a graduation. I don't know when, I don't know where, but even if the two dates set aside don't work, we still aim to have a graduation."

Though he said the events surrounding the pandemic were less than ideal, Havener said he found hope in the community and their ability to come together in the midst of trials.

"It's been inspiring with how people have come together. Even if people were upset about something, even if people didn't agree, I think there's a greater understanding about what we're all going through," Havener said. "It's inspiring to know that when times get tough, people come together. Even if we don't agree,

we're looking out for what's best." ◇

Story by GRACE WILLIAMS

Photo by NATALIE SWEESY

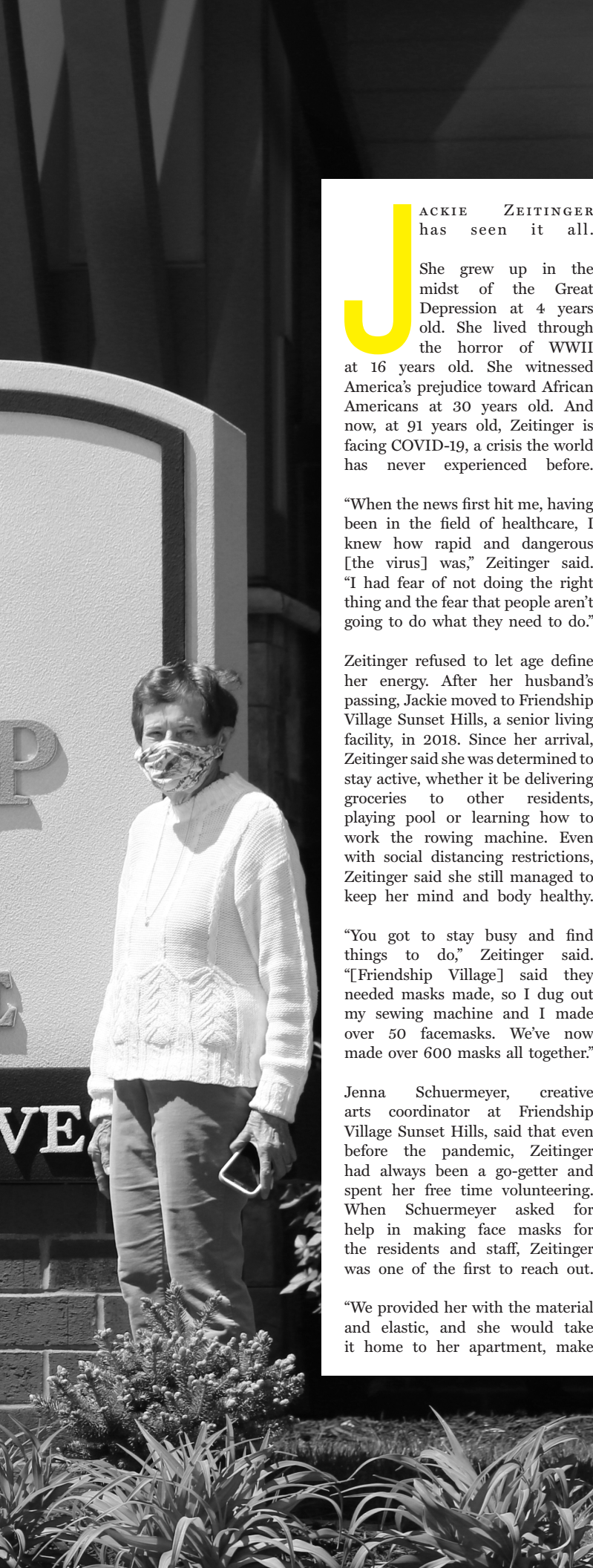


Michael Havener

Jackie Zeitinger



FV
FRIENDSHIP
VILLAGE
MAIN ENTRANCE
563 VILLAGE CIRCLE DRIVE



JACKIE ZEITINGER has seen it all.

JShe grew up in the midst of the Great Depression at 4 years old. She lived through the horror of WWII at 16 years old. She witnessed America's prejudice toward African Americans at 30 years old. And now, at 91 years old, Zeitinger is facing COVID-19, a crisis the world has never experienced before.

"When the news first hit me, having been in the field of healthcare, I knew how rapid and dangerous [the virus] was," Zeitinger said. "I had fear of not doing the right thing and the fear that people aren't going to do what they need to do."

Zeitinger refused to let age define her energy. After her husband's passing, Jackie moved to Friendship Village Sunset Hills, a senior living facility, in 2018. Since her arrival, Zeitinger said she was determined to stay active, whether it be delivering groceries to other residents, playing pool or learning how to work the rowing machine. Even with social distancing restrictions, Zeitinger said she still managed to keep her mind and body healthy.

"You got to stay busy and find things to do," Zeitinger said. "[Friendship Village] said they needed masks made, so I dug out my sewing machine and I made over 50 facemasks. We've now made over 600 masks all together."

Jenna Schuermeyer, creative arts coordinator at Friendship Village Sunset Hills, said that even before the pandemic, Zeitinger had always been a go-getter and spent her free time volunteering. When Schuermeyer asked for help in making face masks for the residents and staff, Zeitinger was one of the first to reach out.

"We provided her with the material and elastic, and she would take it home to her apartment, make

the masks there and come back with the finished product and take more," Schuermeyer said. "She has also offered to help with any of the activities we needed. She helps deliver packages and she's just a really hands-on type of lady. We really appreciate people like that here."

Even between delivering packages, sewing facemasks and volunteering, Zeitinger said she, like anyone else, experiences moments of loneliness. With social distancing and both of her children living out of state, Zeitinger said the hardest part of it all is living through the small things alone.

"All of our meals come to our rooms which is hard because you are eating by yourself if you don't have a husband or a wife," Zeitinger said. "That's probably the worst out of everything, eating by yourself and wanting to share things that you are doing. If you have someone living with you, you can at least talk to them."

Although the majority of her free time is spent alone in her apartment, that does not keep Zeitinger from finding ways to see the positive during a negative situation.

"When I feel like I am getting a little discouraged, I do some in-depth reading to get my mind off of me and not to get in a place where I am pitying myself," Zeitinger said. "Just get yourself busy. It's up to you to have a good, bright outlook on everything."

As of now, Friendship Village Sunset Hills does not have any confirmed cases of the virus. Zeitinger said she is very fortunate to have workers like Schuermeyer who help keep the residents safe and happy. For Zeitinger, it's the simple things the workers at Friendship Village do that keeps everyone positive.

"[Friendship Village] contacted a school where we can become a pen pal with somebody and they have set up Zoom so that you can

go to a Zoom room from your own personal cell phone," Zeitinger said. "We also have this thing where high school kids will run up and down the halls pushing a wagon with ice cream in it, ringing bells as if they were an ice cream truck coming to give us ice cream."

Through activities like these, Schuermeyer said she hopes to create an atmosphere where residents remain active, but safe. She encourages residents to safely interact and stay active to help maintain their wellness.

"I want people to feel like we are all part of a family and we are all in this together," Schuermeyer said. "Nobody is by themselves and everyone should feel like they have a shoulder to lean on."

As new statistics, studies and updates are released, Zeitinger said she encourages people to take the proper precautions when trying to combat the virus. With a large majority of coronavirus victims being 65 years old and older, Zeitinger said she hopes others understand the dangers of being reckless.

"If you don't think ahead, this could be one of the worst types of deaths to go through," Zeitinger said. "All it takes is a careless mistake."

Although she is confined to the campus of Friendship Village and is not able to participate in her normal activities, Zeitinger said she is fortunate that she is not living on her own. And despite everything going on, she feels safe and at home.

"It would've been terrible if I was still in my own home and this hit," Zeitinger said. "I am being fed and being taken care of health wise. With everything going on, it couldn't be better." ♦

Story by MEGAN CLEVELAND

Photo by BRIGID VAN REES



Thank You ❤️
Healthcare
Workers!

Rob Monroe & Stephanie Schmidt

Story by ALLY ORTMANN

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT



ROUNDING THE CORNER of her street, Katie Bernsen catches a glimpse of color. Balloons fly from the trees. Fresh baked goods, stacks of cards and gifts pile near the doorway. Poster boards litter the yard. Her yard.

"A COVID Fighting Rockstar Lives Here"
"Our Superhero Wears Scrubs"
"Today We Celebrate Katie"
"Kirkwood Loves You"

Overwhelmed, Bernsen is greeted by her family and a few close friends. April 15, 2020, Bernsen, the ICU nurse manager at St. Mary's Hospital, was "love bombed."

As the ICU nurse manager, Bernsen oversaw two ICU units at St. Mary's Hospital. Due to the increase in COVID-19 cases in the St. Louis area, St. Mary's opened a third ICU unit, strictly dedicating two of them to coronavirus patients. Prior to the outbreak, Bernsen worked five days a week.

Now she works long, inconsistent hours for all seven.

Stephanie Schmidt, Bernsen's close friend, said she knew Bernsen had been working every day and was struggling. So when she woke up April 12 she told herself, "Today's the day. We are going to celebrate her, and I'm gonna invite everyone I know to get on board with it."

And so, Schmidt called mutual friend, Rob Monroe, for backup. They decided to create a Facebook group of all their and Bernsen's mutual Facebook friends, and they sent out a message asking people to make yard signs to "love bomb" Bernsen's front yard. Schmidt and Monroe said the goal was to remind Bernsen she is loved and appreciated.

"I know how important any little recognition of things people are doing well [is]," Schmidt said. "We tend to think people that have big problems need big solutions. It takes a long time to get to the big solutions, so I'm really aware of celebrating the little steps. Anything we can do to celebrate

people, we want to do that.”

According to Schmidt and Monroe, they were hoping for around 10 yard signs. They had no idea how quickly the “love bomb” would grow. The group, composed of over 100 people from Kirkwood to Texas, blew up with people asking to send money to help provide meals and snacks for Bernsen’s family and ICU nursing staff. Others offered to give gift cards for carry out, prepare home-cooked meals and baked goods and donate snacks. Schmidt said the overwhelming support showed her just how many lives Bernsen has touched.

“It’s just incredible, all the things these people did,” Schmidt said. “People want to be engaged and they want to be kind and they want to be helpful. Katie is truly a treasure. She shows up for Kirkwood. And that’s why I think everyone wanted to show up for her.”

A photo frame mat held the signatures of everyone who had stopped by at different times

during the day to add their own decorations. And lists taped to her garage door read the names of friends who brought gifts and donated money to provide meals for her family. Bernsen said she was not surprised to see the names of her closest friends, but was blown away to read the names of community members she knows only a little.

“You don’t realize how many people’s lives you’re touching along the way in just the connections that we make over the years,” Bernsen said. “I’m not a lifelong Kirkwoodian, I did not grow up here. And so just to be able to see how this community is and how passionate they are, and how kindhearted and incredibly generous this community is, it was incredibly special.”

Through the monetary donations received, the “love bomb” raised over \$1,800 with donations ranging from \$5 to \$100. The money collected is being used to provide multiple prepared meals for the Bernsen family each week, and to purchase snacks and treats

for the St. Mary’s ICU nursing staff. Between the meals provided by the donations, home-cooked meals brought over by friends, and gift cards received for carry out, the Bernsen family has dinner covered each week. Bernsen said knowing her kids are eating proper meals and that a warm meal is waiting for her at home has helped alleviate stress.

“It’s such a relief [to be given meals],” Bernsen said. “That was one less thing that I was going to have to be worrying about, what we were having for dinner tonight. It just means the world, it really does.”

Schmidt and Monroe said the “love bomb” was something small they could arrange to show their support for not only Bernsen, but healthcare workers as a whole. To them, it is necessary that we rally behind those fighting this pandemic.

“We’re in this together,” Monroe said. “We have to do what we can do to help our community. I can’t go be a nurse, but what I can do is

I can support those who can go to work at a hospital. I can make sure to put my money and my effort into supporting the people who can be out and [helping].”

Since the “love bomb,” Schmidt and Monroe said they have heard from people organizing their own versions to celebrate the healthcare workers in their lives. Schmidt, Monroe and Bernsen said they hope to continue to see people offering support and appreciation during this time of confinement and beyond.

“Our lives are so different right now then they were before, and it’s really easy to be wrapped up in our own lives because we’re all in a place of uncertainty,” Schmidt said. “We’re all concerned and worried. But we have to remember to really celebrate people along the way. Big problems don’t necessarily need big solutions. We don’t need to wait for a vaccine to be grateful, we can do some things today. When we do any little thing it has a ripple effect, and anybody can start it. Whoever you know, celebrate that person.” ♦



Cindy Koehler

Mary had just been diagnosed with coronavirus April 21.

“What a circumstance to lose your life partner in,” Koehler said. “Now they find out she has this diagnosis and her kids can’t come and see her. She’s only got a couple of kids who can see her because they’ve been exposed as well. It just seems like such a horrible, lonely way to die, and it’s robbing my cousins of a way to mourn their dad. There’s no closure because everything is on hold.”

Koehler said she was frustrated that other people were not putting their lives on hold. She heard students say they were ignoring the guidelines, and she watched as people protested on the news and walked through stores without masks. Through tears, Koehler implored people to follow social distancing guidelines.

“I would just ask that people take this seriously because dying alone, being robbed of your chance to say goodbye and mourn a family member isn’t right,” Koehler said. “If it means you have to stay at home for a few weeks, I think it’s a sacrifice we can make.” ♦

Story by ETHAN PETER

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT

CINDY KOEHLER, KHS French teacher, lived a block away from them when she was a child. There was her Uncle Walt, who Koehler described as a fixture of her childhood, and Aunt Mary, who held a special place in her life as her Godmother. And of course there were Uncle Walt and Aunt Mary’s nine children, some of whom were Koehler’s classmates and the closest cousins she had.

“[They] always were the ones who hosted Christmas and Thanksgiving,” Koehler said. “I mean Aunt Mary would cook for the hordes and the masses. I can’t

tell you how many holidays in my childhood we spent at their house.”

Now, when it matters most, Koehler cannot see them.

Instead, Koehler had to tell her cousins she was sorry through a text. Sorry their father—her Uncle Walt—was diagnosed with COVID-19 April 15. Sorry they had to work so hard just to see him in the hospital, and even then they had to suit up before they entered his room. Sorry for their loss on Saturday, April 18, when Uncle Walt passed away.

And sorry there can be no funeral. Koehler cannot tell her

cousins in person she is sorry for their loss, and she has not called them out of fear they are overwhelmed by the situation.

“Under normal circumstances, you lean on your family,” Koehler said. “And you can’t do that. You can do that on the phone. You can do that on Zoom. But nothing replaces a hug, that physical release and support, the physical act of being hugged. You can’t do that.”

Koehler was particularly worried about how Aunt Mary would grieve following the loss of her husband of 60 years. But that worry quickly changed to fear when Koehler learned Aunt

CLAIRE STEVENER HAS dedicated an entire wall of her bedroom to the posters she has received from each show she has been a part of at KHS. But there is something missing. Where there should be a poster for “The Addams Family,” there’s an empty space. The KH Players were set to perform the show beginning April 1, but it was postponed due to COVID-19.

Stevener, senior, has been a part of the theater program at KHS since her freshman year, “The Addams Family” is the 13th show she has worked on. For 11 of them, she designed costumes.

“[“The Addams Family”] was a monster to deal with, costume-wise,” Stevener said. “There were a few costumes that I worked so hard on, and was like, ‘I need to see this on stage.’”

One challenge she faced was getting costumes for the Ancestors, who are the ensemble of the show. Each Ancestor represented a different time period, from flappers to a revolutionary queen, and each costume had to be dyed gray.

“You kind of look back and think, ‘Dang, I did all of this work,’” Stevener said. “Now the underclassmen get to have all of the fun next year.”

Instead of canceling the production, it was postponed to the fall of 2020. Current seniors will have graduated, and they will not be there to participate in the show.

“I understand why, but it is disappointing,” Stevener said. “I will most definitely [come to the production next fall].”

The KH Players typically put on four shows a year, ending with the musical in the spring. After each show, the cast will often throw a party at a restaurant. After the musical, there is a banquet where they give out awards, honor the seniors and announce the shows for the coming year.

“The banquet is a time where you hug your directors, you say ‘thank you’ to the seniors, you cry and laugh and joke around,” Stevener said. “I don’t want that over a Zoom call.”

Stevener said they don’t know if they are going to have an in-person banquet yet, and they are still working on alternative options. After the banquet, seniors sign their names at the top of the theater and crew members paint their handprint on the wall of the shop.

“I will definitely get my name up on that wall,” Stevener said. “I will come back when I’m 80 to put my name on that wall.”

Since the musical is the last show of the year, Stevener said it is often emotional for the crew. She said she feels she is not getting complete closure for her time with the KH Players.

“I call it the Senior Sob Moment,” Stevener said. “After the last show, everyone runs into the green room and you look around and you see all your senior friends. You do that thing where you look at them and you’re like, ‘don’t you dare start crying,’ and then somebody starts crying. Then everyone bursts into tears.”

Although disappointed about the end of her time with the KH Players, Claire is grateful

for the time she got with the program. But, she is missing out on her Senior Sob Moment.

“That’s the end, there are no more shows,” Stevener said. “It sucks that I am not getting that moment. But again, we are going down in history. This is the year that everything shut down.” ♦

Story by GRACE KLEBE

Photo by BRIGID VAN REES



Claire Stevener

Randy Kriewall





EVERY DAY AFTER 2 P.M., Randy Kriewall rides his bike. He said he does it for the exercise, but somehow he always ends up at KHS, even though it is closed due to COVID-19. Sometimes he just rides by, but other times he stops there to reflect.

"It feels right," Kriewall said. "It's been like home for 28 years."

Kriewall currently teaches math and used to coach basketball at KHS, but most people know him as "the man behind the camera" at every sporting event, theater production and pep rally. Kriewall said being close with the students and faculty made retiring this year a tough decision. And that was before he knew his last days teaching would not be at KHS, but from home.

"You kind of have this image in your head of what it's going to be like, and you plan how you are going to end your year and what you are going to say to your kids and what you are going to do in the room," Kriewall said. "It's weird because it doesn't feel like anything's ending. It felt like it already ended. It ended when we didn't go back."

While the end of Kriewall's teaching career is unexpected, the beginning was also out of the ordinary. On his first day teaching at KHS, he was walking out to his car when he saw another first-year teacher. He set all of his students' pre-tests on his car while he went over to talk to them. Later, when he was pulling out of Dougherty Ferry, he saw all of his papers flying around him.

"I forgot to have them put their hour [on the paper and] I didn't know any of the kids' names, so I spent about four hours that night just to sort through them and grade them," Kriewall said. "I was handing them back the next day, and this kid was like, 'Why does my test have tire marks all over it?'"

According to Antoine Smith, 2001 KHS graduate, Kriewall takes time to form personal connections with others which is what makes Kriewall such a special teacher. Smith got to know Kriewall because he was his varsity basketball coach all four years of high school. According to Smith, Kriewall has made a positive impact on his life and they still keep in contact.

"Kriewall, to me, was an example of doing things the right way," Smith said. "He gave me that foundation [for] becoming a man and going off to college and playing ball there."

Smith's senior year, Kriewall gave the basketball team a book called, "The Big Picture." Smith said that book changed his life and helped him learn to appreciate everything and work hard to achieve his goals.

"Kriewall is just a ray of positivity," Smith said. "He's one of those generational souls. [You are] very lucky to know him and [have] been around him and been affected by his spirit."

Gina Woodard, Health and Wellness teacher and cross country coach, said she has also experienced his positive energy and goes to his room to brighten her day. She said she is going to miss hearing his crazy snake

stories and seeing her friend every day.

"People who have graduated a decade or two ago, they still talk about Randy Kriewall," Woodard said. "That's not because of him being a certain kind of math teacher, it's about the kind of person that he's always been. He really leaves his mark on his students and he sees the students as people first and students second."

Although coronavirus changed Kriewall's retirement plans, he said he is trying to make the best of it. He said he is still going to be involved, helping with sports, working with some business classes and training photographers in journalism classes. Also, he will still be taking photos on campus.

"That guy is everywhere with his camera," Woodard said. "As a coach sometimes you're like, 'Ugh it's raining' or 'Oh it's freezing,' and [Kriewall] is there with his camera because I know that he thinks it's important to capture kids doing what they love and what they're good at. He's just always been a kid-first or other-people-centered kind of person."

Kriewall said coronavirus has refocused him on what matters. Recognition is not important to him, he just wants to see people again.

"I just feel super lucky," Kriewall said. "I am just grateful and miss you guys." ♦

Story by MADDIE MEYERS

Photo by NATALIE SWEESY

Monica Tritz





ON THE FIRST MONDAY morning of spring break, Head Coach Monica Tritz was up bright and early. As she got ready for the team's 9 a.m. scheduled practice, Tritz figured she would get the players together to get some full court work in and a great deal of shooting in preparation for their Class 5 State Semifinals game. Instead, she was faced with telling her players they had been robbed of their postseason run. The culprit? COVID-19.

After receiving the 7:30 a.m. call that Kirkwood would not be competing in the MSHSAA 2019-20 Class 5 State Tournament due to the coronavirus, Tritz said the first thing she did was inform her four seniors: Natalie Bruns, Olivia Giardino, Kate Jozwiakowski, and Rylee Mulvaney. While Jozwiakowski and Giardino said the news did not settle in until after a couple of days, Bruns said the waterworks came at once.

"I wasn't super shocked but I was really upset and I did end up crying just because it was like ripping the band-aid off," Bruns said. "Even though you know it's coming it's not really official until they say it's official."

Each of the four seniors said the abrupt ending to the season was a difficult one to process, not only because they were hungry for revenge after losing in districts the year prior, but also because of the mark they made on the 2019-20 season. In the regular season, the

Pioneers finished by winning 18 of their final 20 games. Needless to say they were not accustomed to losing. So, when the team suffered a painful loss to Hazelwood Central 64-40 during the second-to-last game of the season and their seven-game win streak was snapped, Giardino said they were reminded that they must earn their wins.

"It was a hard loss, but it was perfect timing to lose," Giardino said. "We needed the motivation back because we had been winning quite a few, so it was a reminder we needed to work [hard] for our wins and it prepared us for [the postseason]."

Finishing first in their district, the Pioneers earned a bye game to the District 4 Championship where they battled against their neighborhood rival, Webster, at St. Louis University High School March 5. While they trailed 18-10 at half-time, they fought back in the second half with a 9-2 run right out of the gate and seven clutch free throws that iced the game in the final two minutes. As the team survived their first elimination game, Jozwiakowski said it was another big test for them.

"They came out with a lot of energy and for a while they were fighting a little harder than we were, so it was hard to see our season might end," Jozwiakowski said. "When we got into the locker room at halftime, everybody was just that much more excited to go [fight] for the next round. No one likes losing, especially to Webster, so everyone's competitive instinct kicked in and

we were like, 'This is not how we're ending.'"

In the following games, Kirkwood beat Marquette 61-48 in Sectionals March 11 to advance to Quarterfinals. Around this time, Tritz said people began to show legitimate concern over how coronavirus would impact the tournament. On March 14, the team advanced past Quarterfinals with a 44-33 victory over Poplar Bluff, but with a change of scenery — only 120 people were allowed to be in the gym including team staff, players, referees and family. On March 16, however, MSHAA announced that all state championships would be canceled in response to coronavirus concerns. Unaware they were playing the final game of their high school careers together, the four seniors all said they wanted one thing they knew they couldn't get closure. And for Tritz, the same.

"It's frustrating regardless [how] it ends," Tritz said. "It was the inevitable and it's bigger than basketball obviously but that doesn't take away the pain, it doesn't take away the frustration and the sadness I have for my seniors. I haven't been able to see the girls which is heartbreaking and I just feel like we've had zero closure. I have these girls who gave blood, sweat and tears for four years and they didn't even get an opportunity. We can't control it, but the emotions are still raw, the emotions are still real." ♦

Story by ZACH MILLENBRUCK

Photo by NATALIE SWEESY



Katie Paul

"[Gibbs] has been crucial for getting me through high school. That woman deserves so much more than what she is getting," Paul said. "She has given me permission to call her whenever I need to."

For Paul, it is important for those struggling to reach out and talk to someone. She advocated for people to utilize those resources and know that they are available.

"There are resources out there," Paul said. "Just remember that you are not alone and there is someone to help you."

Although Paul has said she's struggled during quarantine, she found ways to take care of herself by taking five minutes out of her day to reflect on how she's feeling. She also tries to find positives in her day through something she calls "pockets of joy."

"Remember to find those happy moments because we are in such a negative time," Paul said. "If you don't find those little tiny happy moments in your day, it'll weigh heavily on your brain." ♦

Story by KIDEN-ALOYSE SMITH

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT

FOR KATIE PAUL, SENIOR, being kind to herself, reflecting on her feelings, acknowledging the happy moments and taking each day one at a time is essential for her to get through quarantine. Paul was diagnosed with severe General Anxiety Disorder, severe Panic Disorder, Major Depressive Disorder and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder and often relies on KHS, and outside resources, for support.

"It's hard not to have connections with people, I usually do," Paul said. "It's hard to be alone with your own thoughts."

Paul utilizes school counselors, such as Sara Gibbs, educational support counselor, for a source when dealing with her mental health. According to Paul, an important part of her everyday schedule is holding meetings with Gibbs and her outside doctors.

"One way my mental illness

manifests itself is that it likes regiment and knowing what to expect," Paul said. "We're in a time where every day we don't know what's going to happen. Giving myself something to rely on and that will be the same is really important. "My doctors and Ms. Sara [meet with me every week.]"

According to Paul, if she feels a panic episode starting, she focuses on her coping skills and tries to not be hard on herself about her feelings.

HE WAS ON SPRING break in Florida when he saw the tweet: MSHSAA is considering the cancellation of all spring sports. With two state titles under his belt, college scouts looking in his direction and personal records to break, Kaleb Owens, senior, had a breakout track season ahead of him. Due to COVID-19, for him and hundreds of other student-athletes at KHS, those goals are no longer achievable.

With an injury to his iliotibial (IT) band and his knee, Owens was unable to run for three months and missed his senior cross-country season. When he recovered mid-December, he began training for what he said would have been the most important season of his high school career.

"It was my last chance to impress college scouts and hopefully get an offer to run for a team," Owens said. "The University of Indianapolis and the University of Memphis were on the top of my list but they were seeing if my times went down during the season. There's not much I can do now."

After he found out the season was officially canceled, Owens committed to the University of Iowa to study pre-physical therapy. He said the possibility of running at another school had been the only thing holding him back. Although he will not enter as a member of the track team, Owens created daily workouts in hopes of walking on next year.

"I run every day, try to do two track workouts a week and I do weight lifting every other day," Owens said. "I even filled up empty gallons of milk with sand to make

weights. I'm just trying to stay fit; that's really all there is to it."

Martin Strong, senior, has been running with Owens since freshman year. Strong described them as one of the strongest duos on the team and said they had big plans for this year. When Strong, Owens, Jacob Ewen and Christian Baker, both 2019 KHS graduates, broke the 4x800 meter school record during the 2019 track season, they were only a second and a half shy of the state record, which was one of the fastest in the nation. Strong said they had plans to come closer to that record this year.

"Sophomore year was when we knew we could make a difference in this school's records," Strong said. "When we won the 4x800 meter, that's when we knew by the time we were seniors we could break school, or state records."

According to Strong, Owens had the right balance of humor and motivation to inspire the team. Strong also said even though Owens could not run during the cross-country season, he was still a great leader and motivational speaker.

"[Owens] is a very determined athlete, very self-motivated and a captain-like figure," Strong said. "He sometimes gave speeches, but he was really good at those one-liners that you hear in the middle of a race and make you want to run faster."

Will Arbanas, junior, has been running with Owens for a year and was also hoping to have his breakout season and make it to the state meet this spring. He said Owens is the person on the team who always goes the extra mile and knows how to use his humor to make stressful situations more relaxed.

"He is really a role model to look up to," Arbanas said. "He was looking to have one last shot at making a run at the state meet and obviously that can't happen now. He is still working and it is obviously disappointing for him, but he knows there are bigger things than just his senior year."

Owens said one of the goals for the team is to keep everyone's head up and check in on each other. Whenever he has felt down or worried about the future, Owens said he has been able to use running as an outlet. He added

that being with family a lot more is not always terrible, and sometimes actually nice. Mainly, he tries to focus on what he can control.

"My mindset is always to take what you're given," Owens said. "All I know is that right now there's a chance I can compete in the summer so I'm training for that. If that doesn't happen, then I'll take my next opportunity." ♦

Story by JACK ANDERSON

Photo by NATALIE SWEESY



Kaleb Owens

Carl Strasser

CARL STRASSER WAS the owner of one of the largest resale companies in the United States when the online shopping pandemic swept the globe in the early 2000s. The manufacturer he used began selling to online retailers and stores, and the virtual consumer surge soon left Strasser without a store. Now, after going back to school and opening Kirkwood Pizzeria in the heart of Kirkwood, Strasser is doing whatever he can to not let the COVID-19 pandemic repeat what Amazon and other online shopping outlets did to him years earlier: put him out of business.

Strasser opened the doors of Kirkwood Pizzeria October 2019, setting up shop where Fortel's Pizza Den had previously called home on Kirkwood Road. Since then, Strasser said he has tried to make positive impacts in the Kirkwood community, doing various activities like organizing a Turkey Day pizza eating competition between KHS football offensive lineman and sponsoring the KHS lacrosse team. Even during a time like the coronavirus pandemic, when Strasser said sales were down, he said his emphasis was still focused on the well-being of his community.

"It's tough because we're feeding the workers at [BJC Healthcare] and the workers at Siteman Cancer Center, so when you want to give up you have to remember that you're doing a lot of good," Strasser said. "Being in the restaurant industry isn't something I do to make a lot of money, it's because I'm passionate about it—I love making people happy through food."

Kirkwood Pizzeria's doors no longer open at 11 a.m. but rather 3 p.m., taking away their lunch sales and other dine-in revenue. Like the widespread uncertainty surrounding the respiratory virus, Strasser said he did not plan to be able to reopen for lunch in the future, and would instead focus on deliveries and night-time dining for the pizzeria's business.

"I want to protect everybody," Strasser said. "I don't want my employees to get sick, I don't want anyone else to get sick and we take a lot of pride in keeping [Kirkwood Pizzeria] clean, even before [the coronavirus pandemic]. You have to have sales to stay open, but not everybody cares about sales as much as their passion. There's a lot more to life than selling a lot of pizza." ♦

Story by MATTHEW CONNELLY

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT





Jeff Rutledge

FOR 12 YEARS, ITS FLASHY logo and sizzling fajitas filled the Kirkwood air. It has seen its customers overindulge in the complimentary warm chips and salsa, while others drown in their best-selling margaritas. It has seen thousands of people walk into the welcoming doors that gleam “open,” and chat with friends. But on March 20, the air went flat and the chips cold, and for the first time in 12 years, Amigos Cantina saw their doors close and the “open” sign go dim.

On April 21, General Manager Jeff Rutledge helped reopen the Mexican restaurant after a month-long closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and began offering curbside pickup from 4 to 8 p.m. for those wanting a Mexican meal. Unable to serve the community during regular hours, Rutledge said they looked for ways to help not only his workers, but also those in need of a meal. He said owners Rich and Megan Daniels, who already funded programs to feed those in need in the Kirkwood community before the pandemic, launched the Amigos Neighbor Meal Share Program through a GoFundMe on their Facebook Page. The program focused on using donations raised to get food to families in the area who needed them as quickly as possible.

“[In the past four days since reopening], we have provided 400 meals. We’re hoping to expand

that and provide 5,600 meals in the next eight weeks,” Rutledge said. “We’ve always been involved in the community—we’re involved in schools, fundraiser nights and lots of different organizations. We feel it’s important to be a part of the community, so in a time of need like this where we can help out, we definitely want to.”

Rutledge credited reopening for curbside pickup to the loyalty of Kirkwood residents when it comes to supporting local restaurants like Amigos, and said the revised and shortened menu includes all of the fan-favorites like fajitas and tacos. While the Cantina wanted to make sure it was safe to reopen before doing so, Rutledge said the stress was high to get Amigos’ food back on the plates of Kirkwood families and paychecks back in the hands of his Amigos family.

“[The coronavirus pandemic] has caused a lot of stress,” Rutledge said. “It’s not just for me personally, but I have 50 people that rely on [Amigos] for their expenses, and suddenly that goes away for a period of time. I know all my employees personally, and I know their families and kids, so there was a lot of stress of not knowing [details] at [the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic], and then the added stress of doing things on the fly. You want to err on the side of caution, but this is the livelihood for a lot of people.” ♦

Story by MATTHEW CONNELLY

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT

Brent Kelly

DIERBERGS HAS something for the whole family. Bourbon and Bud Light on sale for mom and dad. Brightly colored orange and blue jump ropes for little hands and feet. And baby wipes for the newest additions, three packages per purchase. The “coronavirus sale” landed in grocery stores worldwide, and for employee Brent Kelly, changed everything.

Kelly began working at Dierbergs as a 16-year-old courtesy clerk. Working through several of the store’s departments, after 24 years, he earned the role of assistant store director for the Lindemann Road location.

“Everything needs to look big and beautiful,” Kelly said. “Now they are more worried about people. Everything doesn’t have to be perfect. We want to keep everybody safe. [Dierbergs has] done an about face on everything they have always [emphasized].”

For Dierbergs, this about face means a hand washing station at the front entrance, surrounded by caution tape and powered by a foot pump. It means bringing the employees in before and after hours

to stock. It means a maintenance staff on a loop of wiping down surfaces, seven or eight times a shift. For Kelly, it means sacrifice.

“You find strength from within. Everyday I have to wake up, get ready and come to work,” Kelly said. “If my head is not in the game and I tell myself there’s a chance I might get [coronavirus], you’re not going to have that positive attitude that I need to have [and], my associates need to have.”

Because he works at the grocery store, Kelly said some customers don’t want to be anywhere near him at this time. In fact, he said he hasn’t seen his own parents in two months.

“Two weeks ago they bought Girl Scout cookies from my daughter and we took them over there,” Kelly said. “We stood at one end of the garage while my parents stood at the other and she couldn’t understand why she couldn’t run and give them a hug and thank them. It’s not that they don’t want to see me. They just don’t want to come close to me.” ♦

Story by CHARLOTTE HEINRICH

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT





Dan Mitchell

“DIDN'T LIKE SCHOOL. Never did. I made the decision to get into production and be the best produce man I can possibly be.”

Dan Mitchell, creative director of Summit Produce - Kirkwood Farmers Market (Summit), has been in the business since he could pick up a broom and start sweeping. Taking over after his mother Carol Mitchell's retirement, Dan introduced the pumpkin patch Kirkwood residents see each October and the Christmas village every December. He said for a small business, they are pretty big.

But this spring, their 42nd spring in business, made him nervous.

“It is very nerve-racking to open knowing that you are going to invest in all this product,” Mitchell said. “No one knows what is going to happen [with the coronavirus.] What if one person gets sick and we get shut down? What if people don't come to buy the stuff?”

Summit postponed their annual April 1 opening until April 20, giving the employees time to make improvements they had planned along with impromptu additions, like a waist-level fence encircling the

gardens and signs held by cement blocks designating curbside pick-up.

“Once we saw that our employees wanted to work or needed to work, and what we could do to be the most safe and best, [we decided to open],” Mitchell said. “Plus our suppliers, we don't want to leave them hanging, you feel indebted to them. Then you feel indebted to your customers and your community because they need to shop for food and plants. Where else could be safer than outside?”

To further customer safety, spices like rosemary and basil sit by the hand sanitizing station. Employees take phone orders for boxed flowers, six pink cartons for \$22.99. But Dan said he thinks they will have a busy year, and will need more employees.

“I really do believe that there will be some good that will come out of this,” Mitchell said. “I do believe that it is the will of God for this to happen. Sometimes humanity may not know the reason this is happening but I can tell you the world is getting a break from pollution and consumption ... Maybe God is protecting us from something we don't even know that will happen in the future.” ♦

Story by CHARLOTTE HEINRICH

Photo by EMMA WRIGHT

Conclusion

COVID-19 KNOWS NO GENDER, age or ethnicity. And it surely doesn't know jobs lost, birthdays missed or goodbyes never said. As journalists, our goal is to encapsulate the stories coronavirus has brushed over. Nineteen faces from COVID-19, 19 faces you see on the sidewalk, in the aisles or in the stands. But we know that the 18 stories we covered is just a sliver of what we know now. Instead of a 19th story, we wanted to hear from the voices we were unable to cover and specifically, the ambiguity of our current world. Read questions submitted through TKC's social medias. ♦

Nineteen questions about COVID-19

1

Will there be an effort to alleviate stress and more creativity encouraged?

2

How are the staff going to incorporate lessons they learned during this time once we are back?

3

Will society collapse?

4

When can I get out of the house?

5

Are there any cases when someone has gotten the coronavirus twice?

6

What are the chances that the people that [infected citizens] live with could also be infected and not have symptoms?

7

Will we have prom?

8

How will the healthcare system reform?

9

How will this affect the presidential election?

10

Will there be a second wave?

11

Will I still have to pay thousands of dollars for college tuition if I am doing online classes in the fall?

12

When will the economy start up and people go back to work?

13

Are we going to get a graduation?

14

Are the exchange kids still coming in the fall?

15

Will my grandpa be able to get a blood transfusion in the hospital or is there not enough room?

16

When will the playground reopen?

17

When will the nursing homes be open for visits?

18

Since my company is non-essential, how long will we stay afloat?

19

What will be the new normal?

On behalf of The Kirkwood Call, Pioneer Yearbook and all of us here at Kirkwood High School, we'd like to thank the first responders and healthcare professionals who have played an instrumental role in flattening the curve and bringing a swift end to this horrible crisis.