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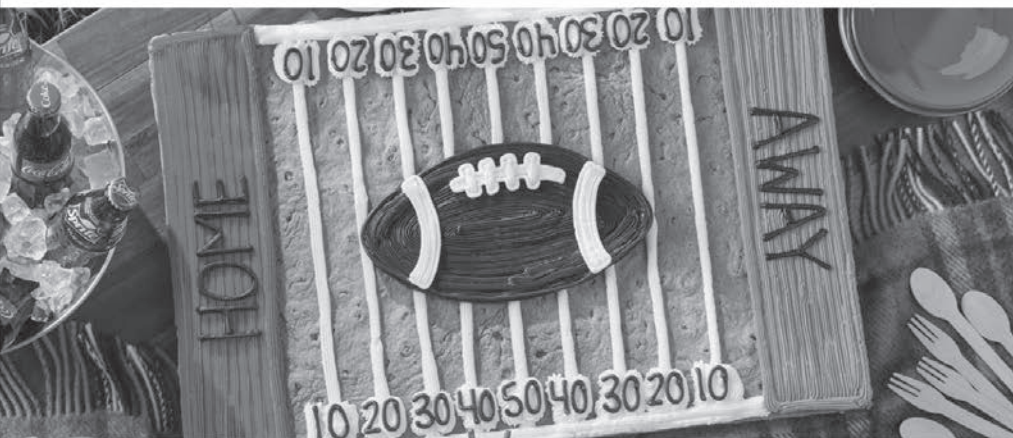
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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Spark,

As an area hospital-based physician I'd like to thank all Lakota students, their parents and families, and the entire community for the efforts made to "flatten the curve" of the coronavirus by following the social distancing guidelines of our state and local leadership. Clearly, this has not always been easy for everyone, but it has made a difference. We've been fortunate in our region to have not been overwhelmed in our hospitals compared to other areas of our country.

Now, we are starting a gradual process of "returning to normal." As we start this process I'd like to express my recommendation that people be willing to re-engage with their health care providers and the health care system. I am concerned that if people defer medical care related to fears over COVID-19 that it could lead to risk of significant complications and poor outcomes for too many. With proper basic precautions medical offices and hospitals are, in my opinion, as safe as going to Kroger for groceries or venturing to other local businesses. Especially if you have asthma, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, or any other chronic medical disease I encourage you to reconnect with your providers and not forestall medical treatments which may have been delayed. Your physicians are ready and available. Electronic medical visits are also here to stay as well. Continue to support each other and our local businesses. Stay healthy, Lakota!

—Stephen P. Beerman, MD, SFHM

Lakota East father of Katie '22, Mary '24, and Lucy '29

The Spark encourages letters to the editor. Letters can be sent to the publication at sparkbusiness2019@gmail.com or delivered to room 118 at the Lakota East High School Main Campus. Letters must be signed, and the staff reserves the right to edit the letters for length, grammar, invasion of privacy, obscenity or potential libel. The opinion editor will contact writers for confirmation.

ON THE COVER

designed by **alexandra fernholz**



This issue, Spark decided to focus entirely on the largest story of the year: the novel coronavirus. However, the pandemic isn't just noticeable for its statistics but the number of first responders, essential workers, and ordinary citizens it has impacted. Therefore, we wanted these everyday heroes to be the focus of our final cover for the year.

TO THE CLASS OF 2020

BY REBECCA BRELAND photography alexandra fernholz

To the kids I've spent the last 12 years of my life with, to the kids who've been with me through it all, to the kids who've made me who I am, to the class of 2020: This was not the ending we planned. It is certainly unlike anything we expected. A spring quarter full of promise and celebration, in a matter of weeks, has become a source of grieving.

The coronavirus has swept the globe, and in its undercurrent has taken weddings, sporting events, paychecks and worst of all, many lives. And yet, this does not cheapen our own losses — milestones that were a lifetime in the making.

Athletes lost Senior Night. Club members lost their final events. Organizations lost their last formals. We lost our last moments in the Lakota East classrooms. We lost the opportunity for proper goodbyes with the places and people we love. Still, though, this abrupt ending doesn't diminish our years here.

After 12 years of schooling, all the way from preschool to our senior year, we have been together. It's sad to see all of what we worked towards change in an instant.

The last three months of your senior year are the ones you're supposed to look back on. In these three months, we should've had things like the Parade of Graduates through our elementary schools, where it all started, our final prom, with dresses many of us already have, our senior picnic with our closest friends, our car show to impress the underclassmen, and last but surely not least, our graduation.

If we are being honest, this sucks. Everything we've worked for seems as though it has gotten ripped away from us. But we are strong. We've been through too much to not at least try to turn that curveball into a home run. This home run may look different, but that is what makes it special.

Yes, graduation will look different. We won't be at the Cintas Center where all our siblings have and possibly will graduate at in the future. But we get to graduate at a place we all know and have memories with, one more time at Lakota East.

Many schools are doing half the work Lakota is doing for their seniors, and for that I commend them. They are not choosing to cancel everything- they are fighting for the exact same thing we are: a finish to our senior year.

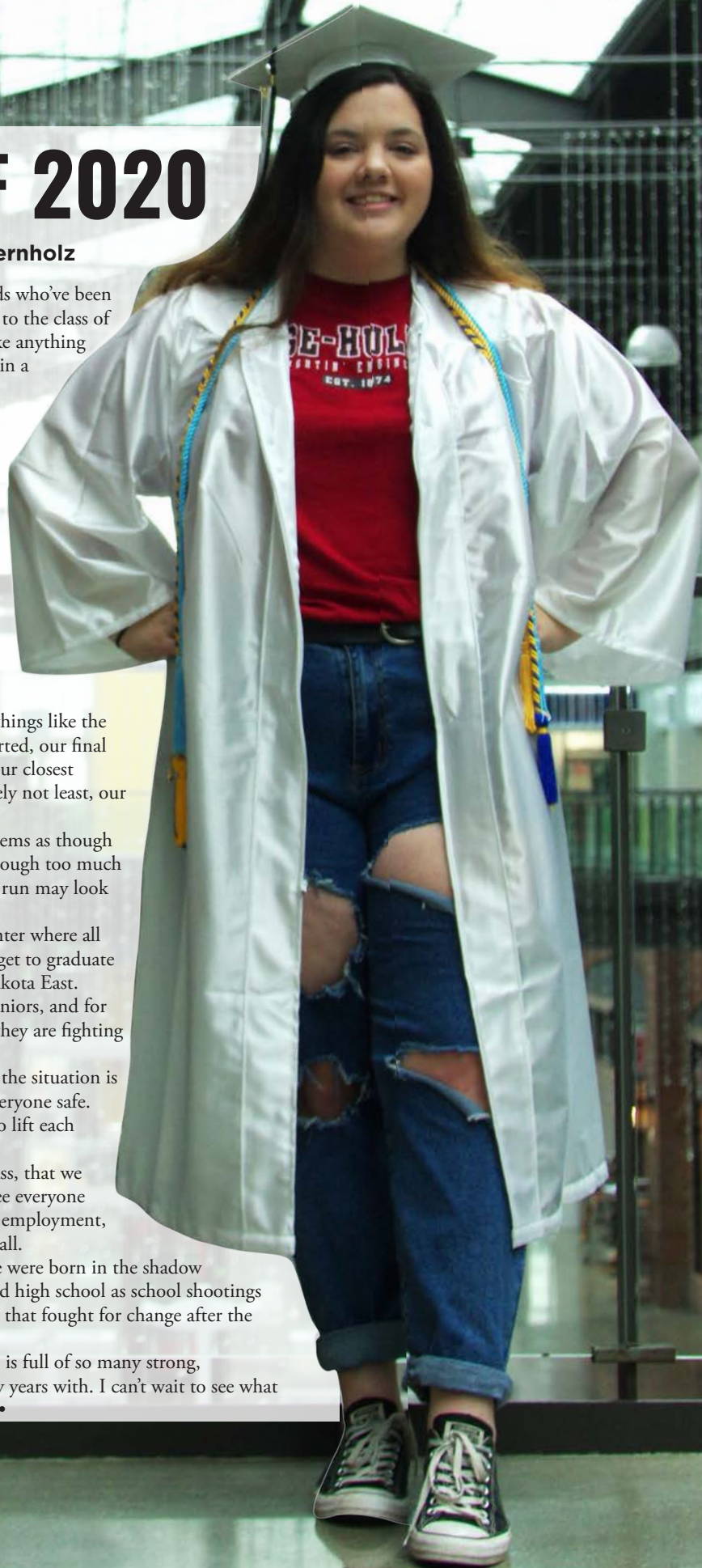
No one chose the pandemic. I know it's hard dealing with it, but the situation is being handled how it is best for everyone. They are trying to keep everyone safe.

As a community it is time to come together, virtually of course, to lift each other up and help each other out. This includes the senior class.

I am deeply saddened that we will not have those final days in class, that we are unable to make those final memories, but I am so so excited to see everyone thrive in whatever path they are choosing. Whether it is enrollment, employment, entrepreneurship, or enlistment, the class of 2020 can and will do it all.

I know you have heard it before but just listen one more time: we were born in the shadow of 9/11. We have never seen the country before that time. We entered high school as school shootings became more and more prevalent. We were among the group of kids that fought for change after the Parkland school shooting. We are strong because of this.

If we can overcome that, we can overcome this. The class of 2020 is full of so many strong, intelligent, and determined students who I am glad to have spent my years with. I can't wait to see what you all accomplish in the future, forever and always Thunderhawks. •



EDITOR'S NOTE:

Journalism is the crux of our society, and in a time like now, when the dissemination of information is at its most critical point, we as a news organization wanted to continue to contribute. At this point in time, the coronavirus pandemic is the biggest news story of the generation. It has disrupted the lives of the entire globe, taken jobs from employees, graduation from seniors, and most tragically, family members, friends, teachers, and colleagues. Now, more than ever, it is crucial not only to report the facts as they present themselves, but to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and relevancy of these facts.

Despite our drive to cover and deliver stories, we also wanted to maintain our safety and the safety of those around us by following guidelines set out by the Ohio Department of Health. Thus, our story formats have changed this issue from our typical sections to topical articles and we were forced to limit our content in order to properly cover the issues at hand. All of our writers compiled information and sources from the safety of their homes. All interviews were conducted via phone calls, video chats, and email. All of our editors and writers coached and edited their stories through video chat and excessive use of online communication forums, including Zoom, Google Docs, Googles drive.

Much to the chagrin of our photographers, designers, and artists, they were also under restrictions. To maintain social distancing protocol, our photographers have refrained from trekking into dangerous territory and we instead implored our sources to share with us photos they wished us to publish. All designs and art in this paper were also created by separate people in separate places, and then brought together on a single computer. To deliver the paper and stay safe, the papers were placed in plastic pouches and left for three days, in order to ensure no virus microbes were transferred. We then sent out our staffers to deliver them to each house in separate cars. The papers were left on each doorstep. The whole process intentionally created as little interaction between strangers as possible.

The process has not been easy and every single day we miss the freedom of going out and finding the stories that need covering, we miss being able to see our sources face to face, and being able to edit via pen and paper instead of mouse and keyboard. Despite all this, we are managing to stay true to our journalistic roots even in this trying time. The saying goes that the paper can't be made in the newsroom, but this time we did something even more challenging because everyone in the newsroom was a phone call away. We as a staff hope you, the reader, and everyone in the community and beyond will stay safe and thank you for a wonderful year of Spark. •

Alexandrea
Lentz

Ruby
BHL

Anna
Mullins

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A BIRTHDAY TO REMEMBER leann niedermann

Robyn Welling takes part in planning the birthday drive by for her friend Cathy Davis.



VIRTUAL RELAY FOR LIFE hannah fuller

After Ohio's stay at home order was extended, East's Relay for Life Chairs created a virtual Relay.



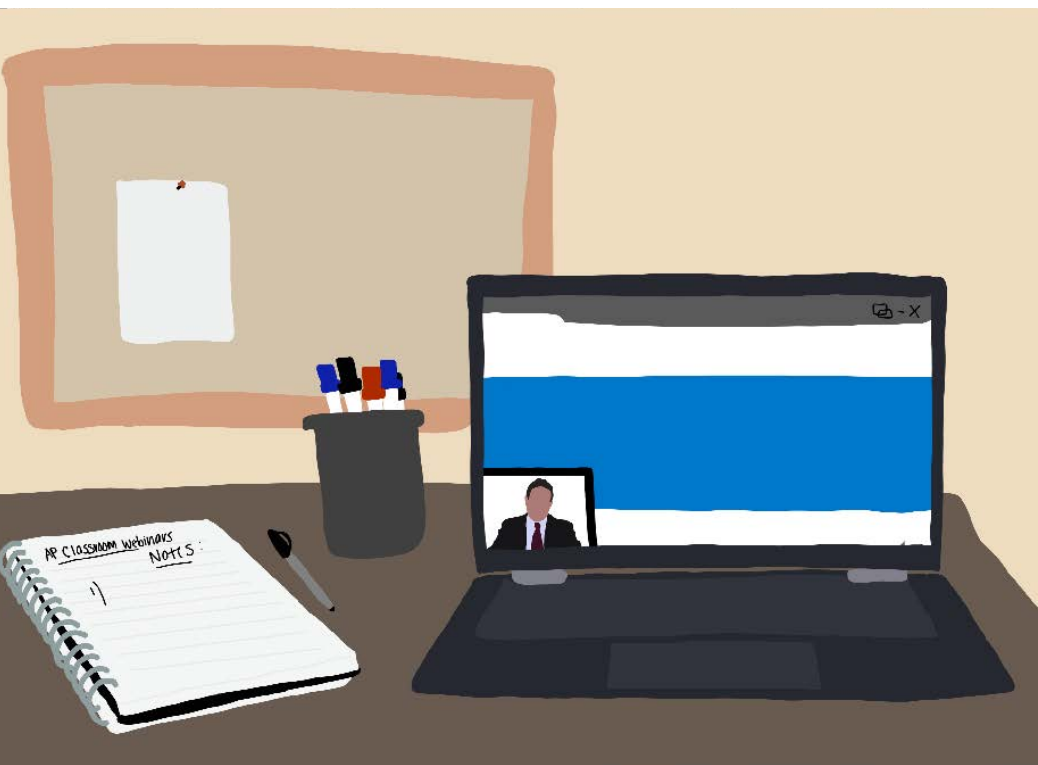
FITNESS FOR YOU nicholas hetterich

Lakota East father leads the charge in workout videos to keep athletes fit during the pandemic.



A NEW PERSPECTIVE ava hueslkamp

East parent Jill Patton uses her free time during quarantine to make masks for hospice workers.



TESTING POSITIVE

Amid COVID-19 concerns, the College Board has decided to make drastic changes to their annual AP exams.

story **eliza bush** | art **kelly johantges**

For the 918 students currently enrolled in Advanced Placement (AP) courses at East, news of the coronavirus brought a unique set of worries: how to prepare for their upcoming AP exams.

Every year, in the first two weeks of May, 2.8 million students around the world prepare to take one or more AP exams, according to the College Board's 2019 Program Summary Report. This year, East junior Anna Florence is preparing to take three AP exams: AP English Language and Composition, AP Biology, and AP Spanish Language and Culture.

For Florence, AP courses represent more than a fiscal relief from college courses, but a style of learning that prepares her to tackle

topics she may use in the future.

"[AP classes] are about learning things and making sure that you are prepared for a college environment," Florence told Spark. "It's about getting that basis of knowledge that you will need as you move throughout college in your career. The main purpose of AP classes, to me, is deepening your learning and deepening your understanding of the world and of academia."

This year, however, Florence's set of AP exams represent a more daunting task amid COVID-19 concerns. With worldwide school closures, the College Board has decided to reformat each AP exam to fit an at-home model that students will take on a computer, tablet, or smartphone, as opposed to the in-school,

written exam that students were anticipating.

On March 20, 2020, following President Trump's announcement that states would be allowed to cancel federally mandated standardized testing for K-12 students, the College Board announced that high school students can take an online, 45 minute AP test from their homes.

Florence has concerns about the revised AP exam format.

"My biggest concern is just that it's going to be 45 minutes," Florence said. "That's a very limited amount of questions. If I get a question on a topic that I don't really understand that well, but I understand most other things in the curriculum, then I don't get to demonstrate my knowledge of the curriculum and of the class as a whole."

East AP Spanish Language and Culture teacher Annie Cantrell shares Florence's concern about the exam accurately representing her student's ability. For the AP Spanish Language and Culture exam, students will complete two speaking activities: a cultural comparison in which the student will give a two minute speech on a cultural aspect in their community compared to a Latin American community, as well as a conversation in which the student listens and responds to a prerecorded "mock conversation."

"I think the sample of my students' skill set, or of any students' skill set, is very limited in only one conversation, and one cultural comparison," Cantrell told Spark. "[The College Board] is getting such a limited view of what the students can do with one cultural comparison speech, and one conversation."

On April 3, 2020, the College Board released the official exam formats for each of the 38 classes they offer. Prior to this, East AP U.S. Government and Politics teacher Tisha Menchhofer-Grote said she received an abundance of communication directly from the college board and from other AP teachers around the globe.

"At least every other day for the first three weeks, I was getting an email [from the College Board]," Menchhofer-Grote told Spark. "On the second of April, we were asked to attend a webinar with the Vice President of the College Board, Trevor Packer, where he told us all the

new rules are for the individual subjects.”

Florence is satisfied with the communication she has been receiving from the College Board and from her teachers regarding the way COVID-19 will impact her AP exams.

“I feel pretty well-informed,” Florence said. “I’ve been getting information both directly from the College Board and information that my teachers have gotten from the College Board. The College Board has done a good job trying to communicate with us and trying to update us as they get more information as it’s changing and evolving.”

With the College Board’s announcement of exam formats came information on how they will ensure that the exam is fair for every student, including how they will manage cheating. Their solution is to use the Respondus LockDown Browser, a customizable browser that prevents students from printing, copying, or accessing another website for the full duration of their online test.

Despite communication from the College Board, Menchhofer-Grote still feels somewhat uninformed about certain aspects of the test.

“The way in which [Packer] tried to describe [the LockDown Browser] is still very unclear to me,” Menchhofer-Grote said. “They’re trying to portray a circumstance in which there’s not going to be cheating, but we’re not exactly sure what that looks like with a student who may have multiple devices.”

In addition to the use of the LockDown Browser, the College Board has plans to send student’s responses to their teacher to verify that it is the student’s work as well as to use plagiarism detection software.

A 2017 survey conducted by the Josephson Institute Center for Youth Ethics revealed that 95% of high school students have cheated in some form, whether that be cheating on a

test, plagiarism, or copying homework. While the College Board is taking steps to reduce the ability of students to cheat on the exam, it is near impossible to eliminate cheating altogether.

Florence fears that students who manage to cheat on the exam will threaten her scores because of the bell curve system the College Board employs when grading AP exams.

“I know I won’t cheat on the test, but the fact that other people could is scary,” Florence said. “Only a certain percentage of test-takers get fives, a certain percentage get fours and threes and twos and ones. If people who are cheating are getting better scores, that would knock me to a lower score category.”

The changes to the AP test have subsequently resulted in changes to instruction in AP courses, all while students and teachers try to adjust to new remote learning methods.

Lakota Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Keith Koehne said the changes to the AP test may change instruction and learning methods.

“The curriculum stays the same, but the test only assesses three-fourths of the content, so teachers are making adjustments,” Koehne told Spark. “Teachers are adjusting to [the fact that the exam will be written] and will be preparing students for success in a fully written test.”

Cantrell has found that she’s been able to rethink activities that her students would normally do in class, while also preparing them for the entirely spoken exam they will take on May 22, 2020.

“There’s a huge social learning aspect that has almost entirely disappeared because we can’t have in-class discussions,” Cantrell said. “But, there are a lot of tech tools that allow us to sort of mimic that in a little bit of a less authentic way, like Flipgrid. With the changes to the exam, we’re going to do a whole lot more

speaking practice and very very little writing.”

Flipgrid is an online resource that allows Cantrell’s students to film and submit videos to a class page. Her students can then react and respond to other students’ videos.

For classes in which the exam will be written, some teachers struggle with ways for students to get their work peer-evaluated online. Menchhofer-Grote is coping with this issue, while also struggling to find resources for her students to practice with due to the changes made to last year’s 2019 AP Government exam.

“The format is all brand new, so I don’t have a whole lot of content,” Menchhofer-Grote said. “What I’m doing is I’m sitting down and I’m making my own rubrics and I’m making my own questions. It’s just taking forever.”

Florence has noticed a difference in the workload for her AP classes compared to her other classes in the new remote learning format.

“Remote learning for an AP class is definitely a lot more work than my regular classes,” Florence told Spark. “In my regular classes, I usually have about half an hour of work a day, whereas in AP I might have an hour of work every day.”

Despite complications for this year’s exam, Florence reflects on the learning she’s already done this year and the way that AP classes have shaped her education.

“I am thankful for the opportunity to take AP classes, because at many schools they don’t have any AP classes or the variety of AP classes we have at Lakota,” Florence said. “AP classes are a really great option because they allow you to gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of a certain subject than you would in an honors or college prep course, so you are more prepared for college and a career that you might pursue in the future.”

“My biggest concern is just that [the test is] going to be 45 minutes. That’s a very limited amount of questions. If I get a question on a topic that I don’t understand that well, but I understand most other things in the curriculum, then I don’t get to demonstrate my knowledge of the curriculum and of the class as a whole.”-East junior Anna Florence

THE POLITICS BEHIND THE PANDEMIC

As COVID-19 cases in the U.S. continue to rise, the impact of the pandemic on national politics is becoming more of a concern. • story **shiloh wolfork** | art **kelly johantges**

The U.S. is currently the leading nation in coronavirus cases. As COVID-19 cases continue to increase in the U.S., concerns about the impact of the virus on both its upcoming general election and politics in the country are becoming more prominent.

As of April 2020, states have begun to postpone their primary elections in order to prevent increased contraction of the virus through large gatherings of people. On April 23, 2020, New York became the first state to cancel its primary, which was set to take place in June. On the other hand, Wisconsin held its primary as normal on April 7, 2020, despite controversy.

The Ohio primary had originally been scheduled for March 17, 2020. However, after Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine declared a “health emergency,” the election was postponed, one of the first states to do so. Due to this, the Ohio primary took place by mail-in voting. The deadline for voters to mail their ballots was April 28, 2020. Voters were also allowed to drive to their county board of elections to drop off their ballots by 7:30 p.m.

In a March 2020 Pew Research study, the majority of Democratic voters, 68% of left-leaning Independents, and 58% of Republicans said they would feel “uncomfortable” visiting a polling place.

According to Tisha Menchhofer-Grote, East AP U.S. Government and Politics and CP U.S. Government teacher, postponing the primaries will lead to the implementation of a different

method of voting.

“Some states in the later months (March-June) of the primary have taken the health of their citizens very seriously and have made the decision to restrict mass gatherings at polling places and precincts,” Menchhofer-Grote told Spark. “They have opted to use alternative voting methods, like absentee voting/mail-in voting. This method has been used for quite some time, specifically for those who are physically disenfranchised.”

In a survey by Pew Research Center, 7 in 10 registered voters, including 64% of Republican voters and 71% of Democratic voters say postponing state primary elections has been a necessary step toward addressing the COVID-19 outbreak.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University Law, a nonpartisan law and policy organization that works to reform, revitalize, and defend American democracy, a vote-by-mail option is a key component toward ensuring that the 2020 election will occur securely and on time.

Although many worry that a vote-by-mail option would encourage voter fraud, there is no conclusive evidence that voting by mail results in a larger voter fraud threat than in-person voting, according to the Brennan Center for Justice. However, studies and research concerning COVID-19 are in a state of constant change, and the ultimate influence of the pandemic on the fall general election remains uncertain.

According to Menchhofer-Grote, the effect of the pandemic on the parties’ national conventions may be more extensive than people realize.

“The Democratic National Convention (DNC) was delayed into the week of August 17, 2020. [In my opinion,] it should have been moved further into the calendar year,” Menchhofer-Grote said. “The Republican National Convention (RNC) is the week after that (August 24, 2020). We’ll see how this virus impacts more and more people, but we may need to have a virtual convention for both parties. The two major parties and the major news networks/outlets should be preparing for this alternative.”

Rachel Blum, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Miami University, emphasizes the importance of recognizing the impact of the pandemic on the approval rating and reelection of President Donald Trump.

“[The] coronavirus could impact the general election in a more indirect way through the economy,” Blum told Spark. “Peoples’ personal economic situation in the months preceding the general election is a key predictor of whether the incumbent will win reelection. If the economy has not fully recovered by this fall, this could have negative consequences for the incumbent. Trump’s handling of the coronavirus might be enough to spur voters to turn out for Biden in November, but they might not.”

According to a Pew Research Center survey from April 2020, about 83% of Republicans

rate Trump's response to the outbreak as either "excellent" or "good," while only 18% of Democrats say the same. In the same survey, about 52% of Americans say that they disapprove of how Trump is handling his job.

"Many Republicans remain supportive of Trump and his handling of the crisis. These voters will probably vote for Trump no matter what he does, because their allegiance to their party is as strong as a religion for them," Blum said. "Similarly, there are some Democrats who would vote against Trump no matter what happens. The real constituency we need to pay attention to are undecided voters."

Tom Wood, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Ohio State University, said voter turnout in the general election could go either way depending on which methods states choose to adopt.

"It might be possible that states will adopt very inclusive vote-by-mail rules to reduce the risk of in-person spread of the coronavirus via voting," Wood told Spark. "In this case, I would expect turnout to improve. Conversely, few changes might be pursued, and individuals will be expected to vote in-person. In this situation, we'd expect turnout to be suppressed. The expected difference will depend on how we adapt our institutions to mollify voters' fears."

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Washington and Utah currently conduct all elections entirely by mail. Additionally, Arizona, California, Florida and Montana reported over 50% of their votes as absentee ballots.

For East senior and President of East Junior State of America (JSA) Tanya Kukreja, no matter which voting methods are instated, voting remains just as significant.

"COVID-19 has allowed me to appreciate how important science is in application, and how it should be taken into account when making political decisions," said Kukreja, who is looking forward to voting in November. "Coronavirus wouldn't stop me from voting, but I understand that many others will consider it a hassle to vote by mail, especially people with limited time and resources."

Though the pandemic has resulted in different responses from the Democratic and

Republican parties, Blum said the COVID-19 outbreak has been beneficial in exposing important ideological discrepancies within political parties.

"The Tea Party was one of the strongest factions in the GOP, and their stated focus was fiscal conservatism," Blum said. "Yet they supported a president who was not particularly fiscally conservative. The key disagreement within the Democratic party has been on whether we need a fundamental transformation of America into a socialist country or not. [Overall] the key issue between the parties seems to be on governmental accountability, which is something Democrats want, but which Trump does not."

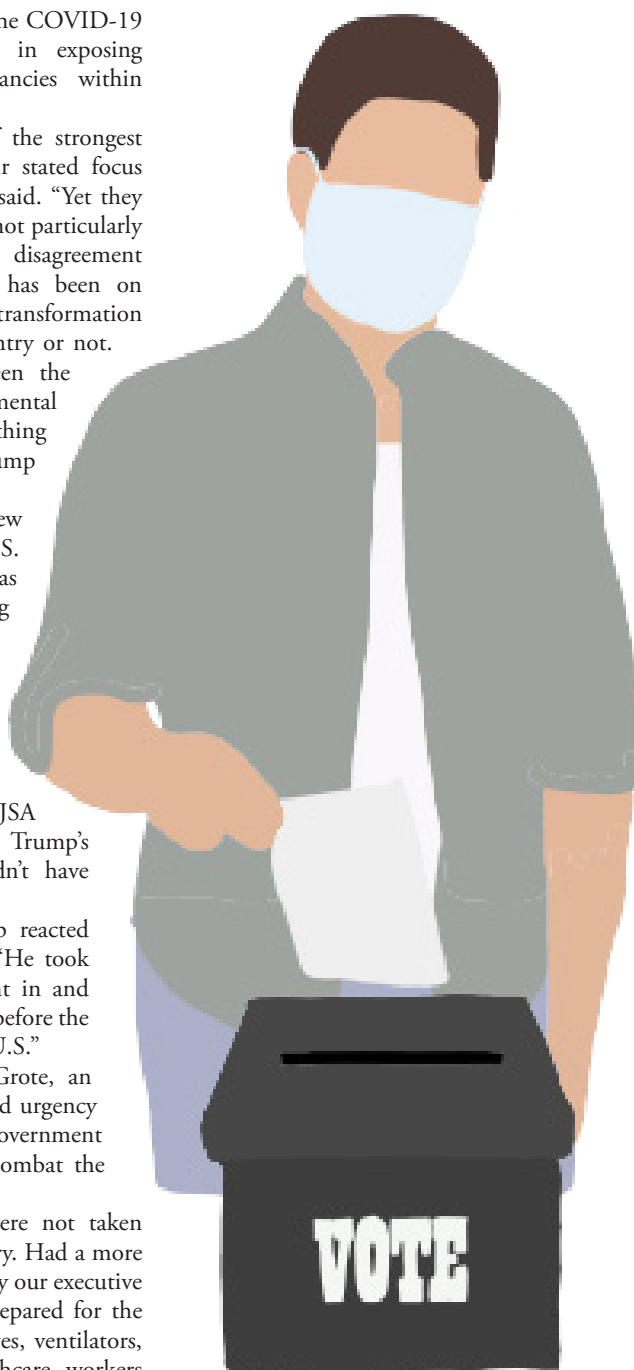
In an April survey by Pew Research Center, 65% of U.S. adults believe that Trump was too slow in initially responding to the COVID-19 threat. The same survey found that 39% of Republicans say that Americans are overreacting to the COVID-19 outbreak, compared to 25% of Democrats.

For East senior and East JSA participant Hunter Oswald, Trump's response to COVID-19 couldn't have been better.

"I thought President Trump reacted very efficiently," Oswald said. "He took the initiative to stop movement in and out of areas where the virus was before the first infection and death in the U.S."

According to Menchhofer-Grote, an overarching sense of support and urgency between the federal and local government is necessary in order to fully combat the virus.

"The intelligence reports were not taken seriously in January and February. Had a more proactive approach been taken by our executive branch, we could have been prepared for the mass production of masks, gloves, ventilators, hospital beds, preparing healthcare workers for what was to come," Menchhofer-Grote told Spark. "There really needs to be a much more coordinated federalism effort between the federal government, states, and local government." •



According to the U.S. secretary of state 99% of voters used mail-in ballots or used a clerk's drop box for the May 5 elections.

REMOTE LEARNING FOOD DISTRIBUTION

As the remote learning era begins, the Lakota District finds new ways to distribute food to students who rely on the meals that are provided during the school day.

story **hannah fuller** | art **alexandra fernholz**



About 1,700 students in the Lakota district receive free and reduced lunch according to Craig Hatfield, Lakota Senior Director of Business Operations.

Not only do schools have to adjust to the new way of learning due to the increasing cases of COVID-19, but also they must now tackle how to feed those children who depend on the food given to them by the district.

With around 17,000 students in the Lakota district, an average of 9,000 students buy their lunch or receive a free or reduced lunch each day that Lakota distributes food, according to Craig Hatfield, Lakota Senior Director of Business Operations. Of those 9,000 students, about 19% receive a free or reduced lunch. As the schools in the district close, these students still rely on meals provided by their school.

Starting on March 23, 2020 Lakota Local Schools started a program where buses are packed with meals and travel to six neighborhoods. These neighborhoods, which are also bus locations during the school year, include Countryside Village, Lakota Pointe, Lakota Lakes, Meadow Ridge, North Pointe, and Princeton Village. Pick up locations are at five schools: Adena Elementary, Hopewell ECS, Liberty Junior School, West Freshman, Wyandot ECS. Students up to age 18 who are in need are able to pick up free meals every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The locations of the buses are strategically placed to allow easier access to families who depend on the meals provided to them during a normal school day.

On Mondays, the students are given a hot lunch for Monday, a bag with Tuesday's breakfast, Tuesday's lunch, and a Wednesday breakfast. On Wednesday, they are given a Wednesday hot lunch, Thursday breakfast, Thursday lunch, and Friday breakfast. On Friday, students receive lunch and breakfast, according to Craig Hatfield. Since there are no meals distributed to children on the weekends in a normal school year, there are also no meal distributions on the weekends during the remote learning time.

The buses arrive at the specific locations at certain times throughout the day and stay at each place for 30 minutes. The meals that the students receive are the same Child Nutrition Meals that are served in the school cafeteria during a normal day.

Hatfield is in charge of coordinating with

Lakota's Child Nutrition Department to make sure there is enough food for the students, as well as ensure the buses are where they are supposed to be at the scheduled times. The Child Nutrition Program is a reimbursement program with The Ohio Department of Education's Office of Integrated Student Supports that partners with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in order to ensure that students are served nutritious foods while at school.

"We have been looking at the emotional and financial impact of the pandemic and how our students, staff and families are dealing with these issues."

- Leah Aguilar, LODI Parent Engagement and Community Outreach Coordinator

"Our goal is to have every child be given 10 meals a week," Hatfield said. "That's the way we are structured."

In order to fill all of the bags, nine resource officers and 10 Child Nutrition employees meet to fill the bags starting at 8 a.m. on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. They then break off into one or two deputies and two Child Nutrition employees and board the buses to distribute the food to students.

Butler County Sheriff's deputy Jody Green, a seven-year School Resource Officer (SRO) at Liberty Junior and Woodland Elementary, is one of the resource officers that help distribute the food.

"All nine deputies along with Child Nutrition work together bagging and preparing meals," Green said. "We are like a well-oiled machine working together."

Not only do SROs help make sure that students are being fed, the Lakota Office of Diversity and Inclusion (LODI) also helps families in the district to be prepared for success during this time. This organization helps to make sure that all students in the district have equal access to different opportunities in and out of school, including access to technology, school supplies, and food.

Leah Aguilar, LODI's Parent Engagement and Community Outreach Coordinator, has worked with her team in order to make changes that will benefit students during the remote learning time.

"We continue to reach out to buildings, staff, families, and community partners to ensure any concerns or needs are being met for them as well," Aguilar told Spark. "We also have been looking at the emotional and financial impact of the pandemic and how our students, staff, and families are dealing with these issues."

Aguilar has also worked with the Child Nutrition Department to help prepare for the distribution of food.

"LODI helped our Child Nutrition department identify areas in our district that could best reach the majority of students to cover meals for them each week," Aguilar said.

Although the distribution of food has only been going on for a few weeks, there has been a significant increase in the amount of students who go to different locations to receive meals.

"[April 1, 2020] was a big day, we had 800 students come to get their bag of meals," Hatfield said. "Typically, we have averaged around 2500 to 2700 total meals provided per day."

During the first week of food distributions, March 23 to 27, there were 6,520 meals provided. During the second week, March 30 to April 3, there were 7,616 meals given to students and 9,140 meals distributed during the third week, April 6 to 9.

"Some people are not capable and may not have the resources to go out and buy food," Hatfield said. "That's why more kids are coming to us so we can help out." •

LOGGING ON TO LEARN

Lakota's staff and students are faced with changes as Ohio's schools close for the rest of the academic year due to the coronavirus.

story **alexandra fernholz** | art **kelly johagntes**

Amid the stacks of binders, piles of paper, and scattered notes that now make up his at-home office, he opens up his laptop, turns on the document camera he brought home from his classroom, and begins to work. For East chemistry teacher John Severns, this is the new reality of his job after Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine closed all Ohio K-12 schools due to coronavirus concerns.

On the afternoon of March 12, 2020 DeWine announced that, effective March 16, all Ohio K-12 schools would close through April 3, 2020, meaning Lakota schools would not be in session again until April 6, the following Monday.

Lakota teachers, who, under the direction of Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller, had already been planning to implement a Remote Learning Day that Friday, were given the day to remove any equipment they'd need to begin teaching online.

"It was very chaotic," Severns says. "Teachers were grabbing things left and right. I personally made like three trips out to my car. It's like, if we're going to be back in four weeks, then I need this but not this. If it's even remotely possible that we won't be back for the semester, holy crap, I need lots and lots and lots of stuff."

After returning from spring break, Lakota students began their schooling from home on March 25, 2020. However, before they could return to school that April, DeWine announced an extension of the closure until May 1, 2020 as Ohio's confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus neared 2,000.

According to Lakota Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Andrew Wheatley, Lakota officials were prepared for this change in plans.

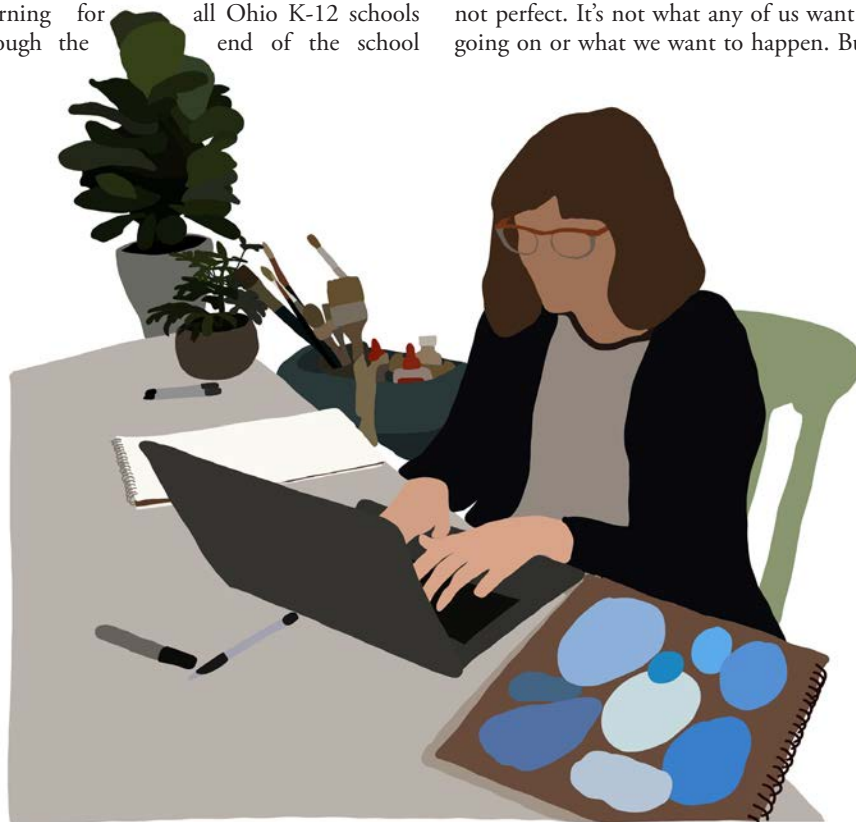
"The Curriculum Department has been planning for an extended school closure since

March 9, when the district announced the March 13 Remote Learning day," Wheatley says. "Since March 9, we have been working collaboratively with teachers, building principals and district administration to develop guidelines, resources, plans and processes for both remote learning and remote leadership."

Then, a final announcement came from DeWine on April 20, 2020, extending Remote Learning for all Ohio K-12 schools through the end of the school

year, meaning students would not return to their school buildings for the rest of the academic year.

"Governor DeWine today announced that schools will stay on remote learning for the rest of the academic year, [and] we're going to do that in Lakota the best way we can," Lakota Superintendent Matt Miller told the community on a Facebook Live session just an hour after DeWine's press conference. "It's not perfect. It's not what any of us want to be going on or what we want to happen. But it's,



East ceramics and photography teacher Karen Saunders works in her home office.

it's necessary, and all of us are doing the best that we can."

Severns says that the new announcement didn't surprise anyone he knew.

"Everyone on the staff has been of the understanding that this was going to go longer than [April 6]- it was always going to go longer than [April 6]," Severns says. "We're making plans for the long haul."

However, an online curriculum means that Severns and every other teacher in Ohio will have to adjust the way they think about their course content.

"I think the immediate reaction of the teachers is, 'I'm going to do everything I always did, I just have to figure out how to post it online,'" Severns says. "That is completely unrealistic. When the teacher and the student can't interact with one another directly and instantaneously, you just [have to] slow down.

One thing that [Mr. Severns] has done that has stood out to me is he has tried to make this unexpected transition to online school as smooth as possible which has helped minimize our stress,"

-East junior Kendall Gerdeman

You got to focus on what's really important."

A Spark survey of 157 East students found that 35% of students felt they were 'somewhat' able to keep up with their work as well as they would have while at school. 32% said they were not able to keep up, while 33% said they were.

"One thing that [Mr. Severns] has done that has stood out to me is he has tried to make this unexpected transition to online school as smooth as possible which has helped minimize our stress," East junior Kendall Gerdeman told Spark. "He has done a good job of keeping it consistent to what our class would be like if we were there in person."

Though Gerdeman herself has had no issues with her school issued-chromebook, a Spark survey of 160 East students found that

56% of them had experienced some sort of technological difficulties. East Calculus and Precalculus teacher Pat Krieder, who has taught at Lakota for 23 years, says the only challenges he's had so far with the online course content have been technology-related.

"The tech issues have been simply with many of my students struggling to open documents and submit their homework successfully," Krieder told Spark. "Some of the apps and devices that operated without a problem at East have struggled at my house."

Teachers of the creative arts have had to come up with more unconventional methods of keeping their students occupied.

"I sent the ceramic students home with clay," East ceramics and photography teacher Karen Saunders told Spark. "When the clay runs out, [I'm] having students design teapots off of [their] favorite song lyric, movie, game, [or] book. [I've been] getting interesting

sketches and making for good conversation with students."

For early childhood teachers, whose students remain some of the only ones in Lakota without Chromebooks, online learning presents a different challenge.

"Each week, we send the parents an email with that week's learning activities, along with any paper resources they may want to use," Wyandot first-grade teacher Nancy Church told Spark. "The biggest challenge for me has been finding online resources to support the curriculum still needing to be taught. This in itself can be very time-consuming."

According to Church, much of the material is things which her students have already learned, but won't need much parental

guidance for.

"I have been sending out a reading, writing, math, and word work activity daily," Church says. "The content is all review for the children. I have used many different avenues to implement the curriculum that I need to teach. When we first started remote learning, the children were learning to maneuver through some of the apps for the first time and needed a parent to help guide them."

According to a Spark survey of 158 students, 100% said their teacher's use of Canvas had increased over the extended quarantine. 89% said their teachers had also used Zoom, a popular video chat software, to communicate with them.

As of April 6, 2020, the Lakota District reported a total of 1,630 Zoom meetings, 208,000 Lakota OneLogin logins, and over 1.3 million Canvas course hits.

Teachers of Advanced Placement (AP) classes, like Severns, are also challenged to get their students up to speed for their AP tests during what many regard as the most critical period of time for AP students. Due to the restrictions brought on by COVID-19 concerns, new guidelines have been released by the College Board, which is in charge of the AP tests.

"All subject areas cut back on the amount of material that was going to be covered on the [AP] test," Severns says. "In my situation, there were five topics that we would cover in second semester. [AP has] decided that the exam is only going to cover three of those five topics. However, my students are counting on me when they go to college that they've seen that material. Nearly all my AP Physics students are going to be engineers, and they gotta know this stuff, they just do."

In order to account for these new changes to curriculum, AP has released a series of video classes for each course. Severns has also taken up this idea, making a series of short videos for his AP students to condense the knowledge they need into short bites.

According to Deana Moss, East Assistant Director of Curriculum and Instruction, this situation is compelling teachers to "reimagine" their old methods of

teaching.

"For many, learning is a social experience. Teachers are trying to be creative in finding alternate ways to allow this type of learning to continue in new ways," Moss told Spark. "Teachers are finding ways for students to demonstrate progress beyond just the typical right or wrong answers. The challenge is creating opportunities for the rich discussions."

According to Severns, teachers have been stepping up to the challenge as a team.

"The teamwork is just tremendous," Severns says. "[There has been] lots of texting going on between teachers. Somebody will send out an email and say 'Hey, does anybody know how to do such and such?' Then the person that does jumps on and takes care of it."

Students too are undergoing their own period of adjustment.

"It's different, that's for sure," East freshman Luma Alammouri told Spark. "It's not really bad; it's just not the same. It's a little harder to ask questions, but not impossible. The worst part is probably not seeing my classmates."

For chemistry students like Gerdeman, one of the main challenges to an online chemistry course are the labs which used to be done in class.

"The pace and flexibility is easier overall, but lack of access to the teachers can be challenging," Gerdeman says. "We are used to doing hands-on labs in the classroom, and now we have to virtually do them on our chromebooks which is harder to understand."

According to an East survey of 158 students, 71% of students felt an online education was not equivalent to an in-person one, while 25% of students felt their online classes were 'somewhat' equivalent.

"It feels more like work than learning," East senior Nkem Azuka told Spark. "I miss seeing my teachers and friends every day, and it's harder to stay focused at home. It's school without all the fun of school."

Azuka, who takes three AP classes, has disliked the transition to online classes because she feels she's missing an important part of her education.

"Calculus and AP Literature already used a lot of online material, so it's not much of a difference," Azuka says. "French though, French sucks because we need to speak it.

It's hard to practice without in-person class. Especially because the AP test is speaking."

According to Wheatley, there are some positive aspects to the situation, however.

"These are very trying times; however there have been some silver linings from this," Wheatley says. "Using virtual conferencing to collaborate has been a big win. My belief is that we will continue to use video conferencing for some meetings that are logistically better to do virtually. We can't underestimate the power and importance of face to face learning, but our teachers have also had some big wins utilizing digital tools when appropriate. This situation has also spurred great conversations about instruction, grading, and supporting all learners."

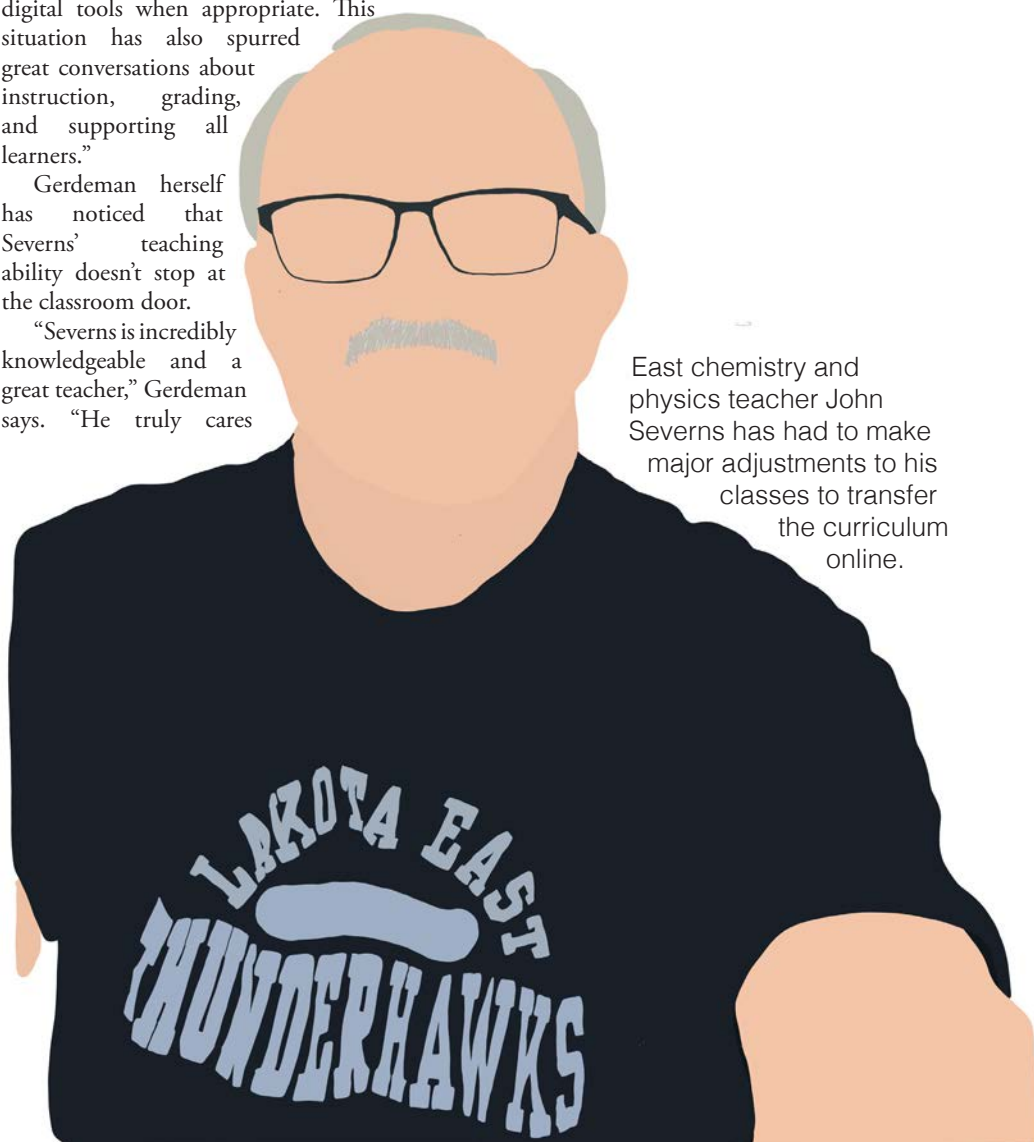
Gerdeman herself has noticed that Severns' teaching ability doesn't stop at the classroom door.

"Severns is incredibly knowledgeable and a great teacher," Gerdeman says. "He truly cares

about each one of his students and pushes us in the classroom to do our best. Not only does he want us to excel in his class, but also wants us to be successful in life."

Severns has found his silver lining in his students.

"[My students have] been phenomenally patient and I've had some luck," Severns says. "Nobody was prepared for this but I'm doing the best I can and my students have been phenomenally gracious." •



East chemistry and physics teacher John Severns has had to make major adjustments to his classes to transfer the curriculum online.

NOWHERE TO GO

After her senior trip to Europe was cancelled, Spark staffer Isis Summerlin details her experience with airline policies during the COVID-19 pandemic.
personal narrative **isis summerlin** | art **kelly johantges**

There are a lot of things that I was looking forward to during my last year of high school: prom, graduation, getting to say goodbye to my friends and classmates, closing the last chapter of my childhood experience. Now all of the things that I was looking forward to are uncertain. But what I was looking forward to most had nothing to do with school.

For over a year I had been planning to travel outside of the U.S. with my best friend. I would be going on a week-long trip to Paris and Barcelona at the end of May. The flight was paid for, the hotel was booked. I was going to picnic in front of the Eiffel Tower and walk around the Picasso Museum. But it wasn't really about the sightseeing. It was about gaining my independence.

At the beginning of this year, I thought that all the effort I had put in was finally going to pay off. It took months to convince my parents. It took weeks of planning and going from travel agent to travel agent. It took countless hours over the summer working instead of enjoying what quite possibly could've been my last summer with my friends.

None of it mattered anymore. Cases of the coronavirus were popping up, and U.S. Airlines were notifying people about the risks of travelling. So, for our safety and the safety of others we decided not to go on the trip. Later on March 11, 2020, President Donald Trump banned travel to 26 European countries, including France and Spain, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. So our flight was cancelled anyway.

We had booked our trip with Gate 1 Travel and had planned to fly with Delta Airlines. They were quick to inform us about their policies on cancelled flights. As long as the flight was cancelled 60 days or less prior to departure, I had the option to rebook within 18 months,

or I could cancel the trip myself and receive a 50-75% refund.

Gate 1 Travel was clear and communicative about their flight policies. During a time period when many people cannot work or travel, being accommodating to travelers by offering refunds is so important. Nobody knows when the spread of the virus will slow, let alone when international travel will be permitted again. Not only that, but the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) guidelines state that if an airline cancels a person's flight, that person is required to receive a refund.

In an article published by USA Today, concerns were raised about airline passengers receiving refunds during the pandemic. Matt Williams, a college professor in the UK, had planned to take a trip to California in April. An agent recommended that he take a flight credit, but a few days later United cancelled his trip. Williams won't receive a refund until within a year of not using the voucher.

Many other passengers have issued

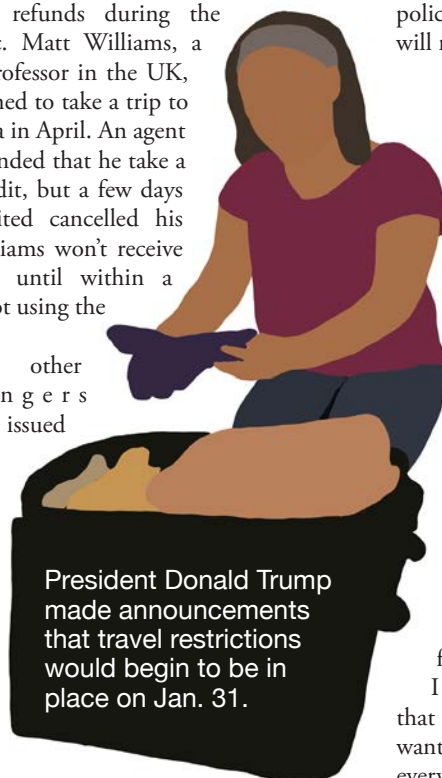
complaints to the U.S. DOT about the difficulty of getting refunds they are qualified for from airlines. This is most likely the reason why the DOT released an Enforcement Notice on April 3, 2020, reminding the airlines that they are legally required to provide prompt refunds when the carrier cancels or makes a significant schedule change.

In my case, Gate 1 Travel sent us an email saying that if we would like a refund we would need to submit a request and that all requests are processed in the order that they are received. Due to the influx of flight cancellations, I assume it will be a couple of months before our request is processed. But at least our airlines' policies are directly laid out so we know that we will receive a refund soon.

I guess I'm lucky because many passengers' refunds will be delayed for a year, or they won't receive them at all. All the money I saved won't have to go to waste, so at least someday in the future I may be able to travel or put that money towards something else. Unfortunately, that choice has been taken away from a lot of people.

COVID-19 has taken a lot away from people all over the world. Small businesses are struggling. Workers are filing for unemployment. Parents have to work without childcare. Teachers are trying to acclimate to online schooling.

Seniors in the class of 2020 are grieving for long-awaited moments that will be lost due to the virus. I'm sad that all of the experiences I have been waiting on for 12 years may not happen anymore but I realize that it is necessary. It is necessary that people, including myself, set aside their wants and needs for the health and safety of everyone. •



PAUSE THE APPLAUSE

personal narrative **natalie mazy**
art **kely johangtes**



For Spark staffer Natalie Mazy, social distancing has made her more grateful for dance and the community it has given her.

I spent the entire school day of March 12, 2020 refreshing Twitter, news sites, and the page of the CRU dance competition I was supposed to be attending that weekend. Every spare moment was spent obsessively reading new updates as the reach of the coronavirus began to take its hold.

My mind had been made up. I knew there was no way that our studio would be competing, despite emails stating the competition was looking for a venue willing to house them after the original was closed for all major gatherings. Anger and confusion boiled in my stomach. I just wanted the bad news over with. My gut was telling me eight months of hard work, long nights, and dedication would not get to show itself on a stage any time in the near future.

By the end of the school day, the news had broken. We would not be setting foot in these halls for another three weeks. We would not be changing classes with the ring of a bell or eating lunch in the cafeteria. As I walked out of the building carrying my backpack stuffed with the entirety of my locker, it felt like I was living a dream.

The dance competition hadn't been cancelled yet, so, like most other days, I got in my car and drove to St. Romain Dance Academy, where I spend 20 hours each week rehearsing.

The energy that usually consumed the studio the days before competing was replaced by a somberness. Within the first few minutes of being there, our studio owner let us know the competition would not be happening. In a matter of hours, the normalcy that had occupied my days disappeared.

The next day, we had a showcase in the studio to show our parents the solos and duets that were supposed to be going on stage. We took pictures, clapped loudly, and poured our hearts out through movement. Our teachers presented us with pretend awards and told us how beautifully we danced. That would be the

last time I would step foot in the studio for the foreseeable future.

In a matter of days, in-person dance classes were traded for zoom calls and email correspondence with my dance teachers. According to Zoom CEO Eric Yuan, the company reached 200 million daily users in March, as groups ranging from extended families to dance studios are utilizing the platform to connect in a time where finding connection has become drastically different in a short period of time.

The arts across the globe have taken a hard hit, from local dance studios to the Broadway stage. The CDC and New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo have extended the suspension of all

The National Coalition for the Arts' Preparedness & Emergency Response (NCAPER) is an organization that promotes preparedness and provides support to arts organizations affected by disaster. The NYC Low-Income Artist/Freelancer Relief Fund was created by freelance dancers to support dancers who don't have a steady income. The American Ballet Theatre (ABT) has created the ABT Crisis Relief Fund that allows people to donate in order to support the dancers and the people working tirelessly behind the scenes.

Live streams for dance classes have become the new normal. Cincinnati Ballet has taken to Facebook Live to share classes taught by dance teachers, including Cincinnati Ballet's Artistic

“The energy that usually consumed the studio the days before competing was replaced by a somberness.”

-East sophomore Natalie Mazey

Broadway performances to June 7, 2020 as of April 8. The American Ballet Theatre (ABT) also announced April 8 that all spring and summer 2020 performances held at the Met Opera have been cancelled, meaning their 80th Anniversary season will be nonexistent.

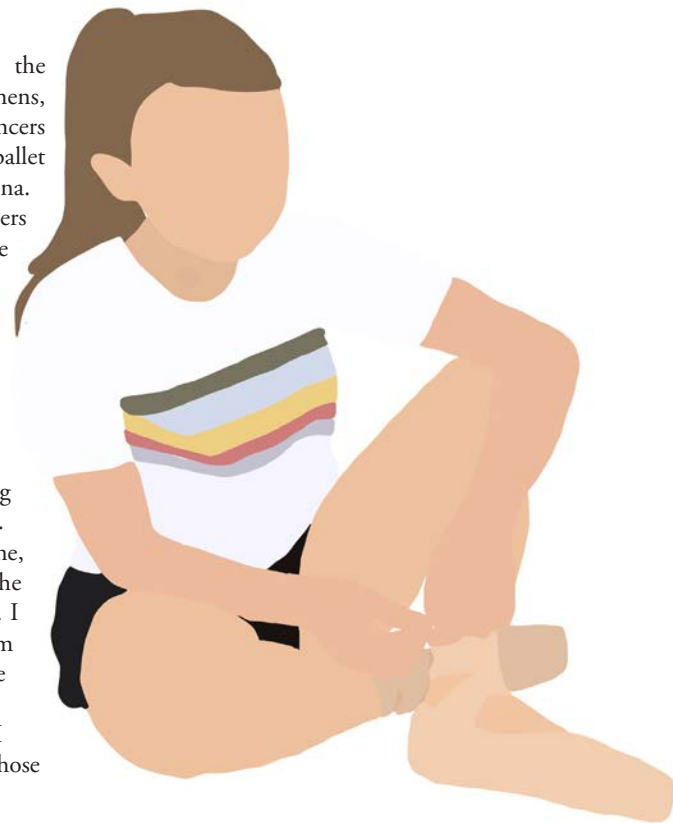
As of May 1, 2020, 26 states are shut down or partially restricted in order to slow the spread, while 18 states are under a partial reopening, and six states have an order lifting or are reopening soon. On April 27, 2020 Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine unveiled a plan to slowly reopen, five weeks after a stay-at-home order was issued. As necessary closures take place, funds donated to arts organizations dwindle, leaving those with a career in the arts without a reliable income. Organizations are working to provide some support for these people.

Cincinnati Ballet has closed the ballet centre until further notice, but has asked people to donate the cost of their ticket to the non-profit organization. The names of supporters will be listed on a special page in the program and online as Cincinnati Ballet Heroes during the 2020-2021 season.

Director Victoria Morgan. From the comfort of their living rooms, kitchens, or wherever they can find space, dancers utilize chairs, tables, or makeshift ballet barres to maintain strength and stamina.

For now, I am grateful for my teachers who have taken the time to orchestrate online classes, and the dancers and companies across the country that have live streamed classes for the public to enjoy. But class through a screen will never compare to the in-person instruction. It will never compare to the community that's built through hours spent working towards a common goal in the studio.

This is a strange time for everyone, but it has made me appreciate the community that dance has given me. I know now more than ever that I am lucky to have found a second home inside of my dance studio, and I am already looking forward to the day I am able to once again step inside those walls to do what I love. •



THE TRIO

Spark staffer Maddie Cramer discovers how to get closer to her siblings during the coronavirus pandemic.

personal narrative **maddie cramer**
art **kelly johagntes**

I think it's safe to say that most people's relationships have changed quite a bit since Gov. Mike Dewine issued the "Stay At Home" order on March 22nd. Personally, not being able to see my friends has slowly been driving me insane. Therefore, I've had to turn to my siblings for entertainment. I have two younger siblings, Kyle and Megan, who are both 13 years old. Before Coronavirus was even a thing, we were extremely close, so being quarantined in a house with them isn't much different than a usual summer for me. However, it has presented some challenges that I never thought I would have to deal with, the biggest one being my sister.

Despite Kyle and Megan being twins, it is a running joke in my family that Kyle and I should have been the twins instead. We like the same TV shows, video games, LEGO sets, and we've wrestled and chased each other around since before he could walk. These activities are perfect for being in quarantine, seeing as they're all indoor and can easily be done together. Not to mention, I don't think I will ever get bored of Scooby-Doo marathons, afternoons of playing Minecraft, and teasing him about cutting his hair to look like Tiger King's Joe Exotic.

Spending time with Megan is where it gets difficult. She prefers to spend her time reading, biking around the neighborhood, and writing in her journal. While she can be exceptionally loud and wild at times, she mostly keeps to herself in the privacy of her room. As the oldest sibling, I feel awful if I don't spend equal time with my siblings. But, it is much more difficult to do things together with Megan. The

books she reads aren't exactly ones we can read together, and biking around the same two parts of the neighborhood day after day gets old very quickly. This is why I created "Sister Days", or days where I would take Megan out to eat or shop at Liberty Center. She likes spending what seems like hours at Bath and Body Works, I like buying bubble tea from the stand in the Foundry, and we get to spend time together, so it's a win-win in my opinion. In fact, we had plans to get dinner and go see Little Women over spring break. Now, with restaurants only doing carry out and delivery and most recreational spaces, like movie theaters closed, we can't hang out together like we used to. It's affected how we spend time with each other.

I had to get creative. Megan and I don't share a lot of interests, but the last thing I wanted was for her to feel like I preferred Kyle over her. She likes movies, so we asked our dad to stop by Redbox after getting groceries to pick up Little Women for our family movie night. Megan also recently finished reading Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire, so we watched that together too and even though I have seen that movie at least a hundred times, watching her smile as the credits rolled made it completely worth it. Another thing we've tried to do is have a "picnic" outside on our hammock. Since the weather in Ohio can never make up its mind, our picnic hasn't happened yet, it still fills me up with joy to see how excited Megan is about

the idea of eating her lunch in the shade of the tree in our front yard.

The best thing to come out of this quarantine has been the time my siblings and I have spent as a trio. For my family's Easter dinner, we wanted to make a dessert, and both Kyle and Megan absolutely love brookies--brownies with chocolate chip cookies baked on top. It didn't even take us an hour to make our Betty Crocker box-mix of cookies and brownies, but it was one of the best hours I've ever spent with them. So yes, COVID-19 took away my taekwondo. It took away my friends. It took away my freedom. But it made me appreciate my siblings, and most importantly the time we spend together. Recently, it seems like the news is full of tragedy and suffering, and as Megan says, it's times like these we need to hear good news more than ever. •



COWVID-19

Spark staffer Leann Niederman speaks on the struggle of dairy farming in quarantine.

personal narrative **leann niederman**
art **kelly johantges**

Springtime on the farm. It's a time for birth and new beginnings.

The sheep have their babies, and the 4-H* hogs are bought. The lambs frolic around with each other while the pigs use their snouts to push around the shavings. The baby animals begin their journey of life.

The grass grows green, and the tree out front gets flower buds on the leaves. Soon it will be time to plant the seeds for the fall harvest.

One thing missing this year is the laughter of the preschoolers and the wonder of first graders. The green farm and all of the newborn animals have only been seen by my family and I.

With Ohio's stay at home order, the annual spring tours cannot take place this year. Around 3,000 kids, ranging from toddlers to elementary students, won't get the opportunity to experience spring on the farm.

Even without the normal flow of visitors, the farm is anything but quiet. Just because the world seems like it is shut down doesn't mean there aren't still chores to be done and improvements to be made.

The pens have to be set up for the 4-H hogs,

and the animals still need to be taken care of. Paintball Country is closed, which gives time to renovate some of the fields, resulting in more work.

Along with the work, there has been time to spend with the family. Between schooling at home and Winter Guard practices being cancelled, there is more time to spend together. Granted, some of that time is working.

If I had been told two months ago that I would be bidding for my 4-H hog while tuning in to a zoom class, I never would have believed it. In over 10 years of showing hogs, there was always an auction with pies and food at our usual seller. Sitting in the barn and watching as the hogs came up group by group, getting to look and observe them at all angles was replaced with looking at a few pictures online, hoping no one outbid you before the auction was over.

The days started to blend together until suddenly it was Easter. We couldn't complete the tradition of going to see my family in northern Ohio. My grandpa, "the Easter bunny," would bring everyone an Easter basket filled with so much sugar that grandma would insist we limit ourselves. The small dairy farm in what most people would call "the boring middle of nowhere" is

the place of some of the best memories.

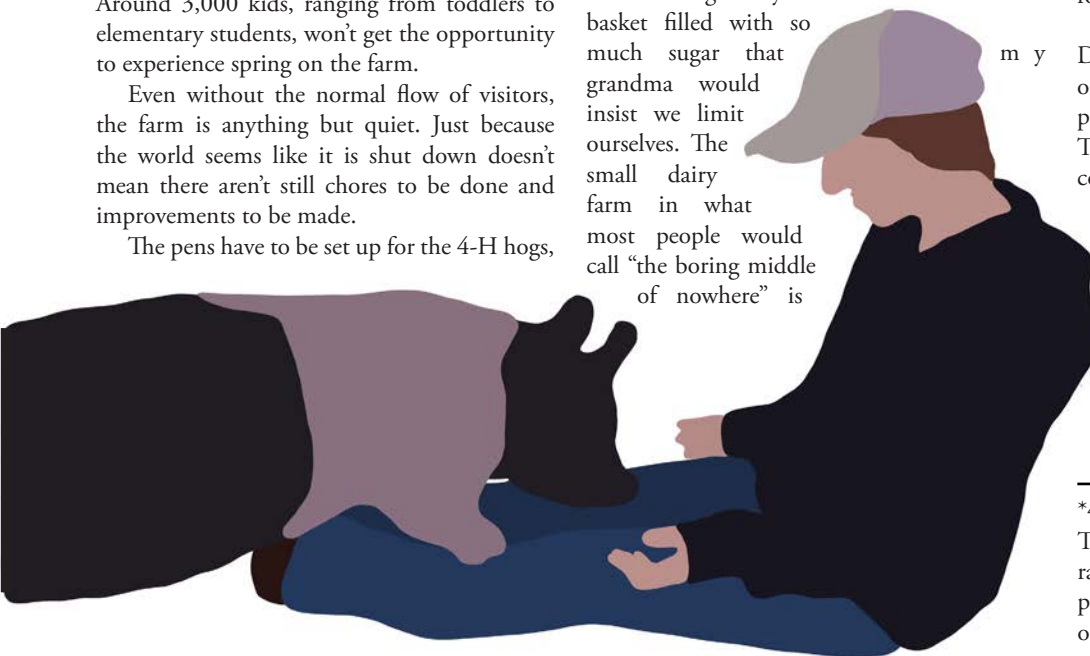
Being a dairy farmer isn't an easy job. It requires dedication and commitment. Because of the lack of school and restaurant service, dairy farmers across America are having to dump out milk. The American Dairy Association Mideast is asking for people to contact them if any stores are limiting the number of milk products per customer.

Some call for the milk to be donated, but before that can happen, milk must go through homogenization and pasteurization before being sold or given away. Homogenization is the process of mixing the milk so the cream does not separate, and pasteurization involves heating the milk to kill bacteria.

The world is in a predicament, but I am fortunate enough to have a roof over my head and food in my stomach. According to No Kid Hungry, more than 11 million children live in "food insecure" homes, meaning that the household does not have enough food for every family member to lead a healthy life.

For some kids, not just in the Lakota School District, their meals from school were the only source of a regular meal. Lakota has been providing lunches to students from ages 1-18. There are 11 bus locations throughout the community that deliver Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. There are also pick up locations at five schools. On Monday and Wednesday, each child present at the pickup location receives two breakfasts and two lunches. On Friday, students receive one breakfast and one lunch. The next time you complain about eating leftovers from the third night in a row, be thankful that you have enough food to even have extra. •

*4-H stands for head, heart, hands, and health. These words are part of the 4-H pledge. 4-H is raising livestock or completing a special interest project (like sewing) and going to the county or state fairs to exhibit the project for judging.



A DREAM ON PAUSE

As coronavirus cases grew in both the United States and Ohio, a small, family-owned business has to decide whether their health is worth the risk of staying open.

personal narrative **rehab jarabah** | art **alexandra fernholz**

Ding-dong.

That's the sound that tells me a customer has walked in. It's also the sound I tend to hear before I fall asleep.

The Arabic music we played softly in the background which I've now memorized the order of.

A hole-in-the-wall place right off Reagan Highway, located in Colerain. Also named after something that reminds us of our culture the most. Al-Zaytuna Grill--The Olive Grill, because it's the crop Palestinians grow the most.

The people who have walked in, each with their own stories and lives.

All the interesting conversations I've had and people I've met.

Something my family is so proud to own. The dream we made our reality.

All, in a moment, taken for my own safety.

Everything I'd known for the last three years, disappeared.

As the coronavirus cases started to grow, my parents grew more and more worried. With every new article with new information, the more worried my parents got. Just a couple weeks beforehand, they didn't care about the virus.

We knew things were getting worse. The constant rush that lasted hours, the rush that had just become normal to us, soon stopped. We went from never having a sitting moment to sitting for hours without seeing a single customer.

But as new laws came and more precautions were taken, my parents knew a decision had to be made.

Their options? Keep the restaurant open, continue to have a steady source of income and risk their health as well as the health of all six of their kids. Or close the restaurant, giving us no source of income, but ensuring we all stay healthy.

Even before these decisions were made and laws were sent out to the citizens of Ohio, we

were taking our own precautions. We started putting all food in to-go containers to limit any germs coming back to the restaurant, then we completely stopped dine-ins and kept people off our booths and tables.

Even with these precautions, we were still faced with the decision.

On March 15, 2020, we stood in the kitchen, refreshing our news stories. My dad was sure that Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine would close restaurants. As coronavirus cases climbed both in the United States and Ohio, we watched as businesses were told to close.

After a few days, my dad stopped taking my older sister, Nasma, and I to work. Although there was times I was annoyed at how many people would ask me dumb questions, like where chicken wings come from, and when people would be rude and messy, then not tip. However, the pros outweighed the cons. I had so many nice conversations with customers and became close with our regulars. I've watched people go from unmarried to married, watched families grow, and seen so many cute babies.

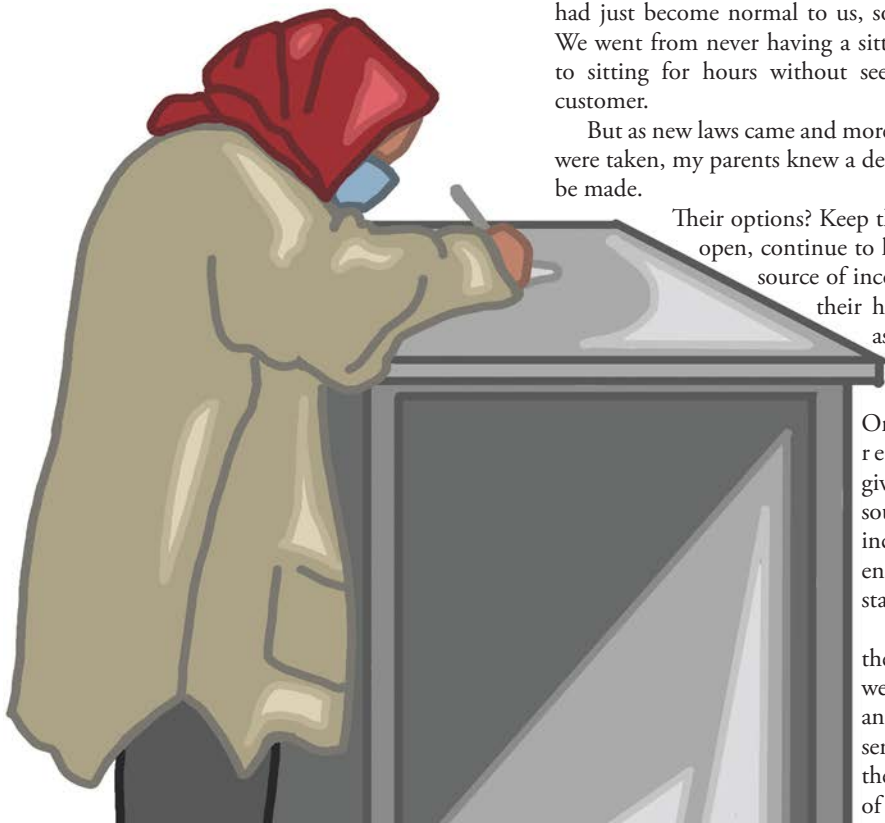
We stayed at home, quarantined, while my parents, or sometimes just my dad, would go to work. But, every night when he came home, my parents, Nasma, and I would sit in the family room and discuss the same thing: whether or not to stay open. There was a lot of back and forth, but we realized we weren't essential workers. Our health was not worth the risk of staying open.

The decision was made: the kids would stay at home and self-isolate and my parents would clean and pack up the restaurant. They brought everything perishable back to our home, and that was that.

They left a sign on the door and an answer on the voicemail for anyone who would try to come or call in an order.

On April 1, 2020, we celebrated the start of our fourth year in business in quarantine.

We tried to make the best out of a bad situation. Even though we couldn't celebrate with our customers, we celebrated as a family, a family who proudly owns a Mediterranean restaurant. As a family of eight, we keep ourselves occupied, and as Palestinians, our celebration was as fun as we could make it. •



STAGES OF GRIEF

Spark staffer Kelly Johantges writes about her thoughts on COVID-19 and how it affected her last few weeks as a senior. • personal narrative **kelly johantges** | art **alexandra fernholz**

I've had a lot of feelings surrounding the coronavirus: happiness, relief, disappointment, sadness, fear, anger, and of course, boredom.

March 12, 2020 was my last day of high school before Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine cancelled school for the rest of the year. On this day, DeWine extended Ohio K-12 schools' spring break to three weeks. I remember I was with other staffers in the Spark lab when the news broke. We were so happy and relieved to have a stress free few weeks. Little did I know, it would be anything but stress free.

That night, my sister, Sydney, came home from The Ohio State University as they officially moved to remote learning for the rest of the semester, and my brother, Adam, was sent home from his spring break trip to France. He went through three international airports on the way back to Cincinnati, exposing himself to lots of people who had been in places that were already infected. My parents took many precautions because they believed

my brother was at major risk for contracting the virus. I thought they were crazy. We started tracking our temperatures each morning and night with an ear thermometer to make sure we didn't catch a fever, and took vitamins to keep our immune systems up.

As it turns out, my parents weren't crazy with all their precautions, because Adam started to show symptoms for COVID-19. It started with coughing and then a fever developed. At first, I couldn't wrap my head around the fact that he had it until my father started displaying the same symptoms. He had it a lot worse. He had a cough, a fever, aches, shortness of breath, and fatigue. And while Adam only had it for about a week, my dad had it for almost two weeks.

With the limited amount of testing in Ohio at that time, they were not able to get a test because they were not at higher risk. With this, I decided to make sure that when I had to leave for the grocery store, I was wearing gloves and a mask. During that first week, I'm sure I looked like a crazy person, but later on, pretty much everyone was taking the same precautions. To limit my family's outside reach, I was deemed the 'errand runner' in my household. It was hard not to see my friends and to only leave my house once every other week, but I know that it's keeping my family and the community safe.

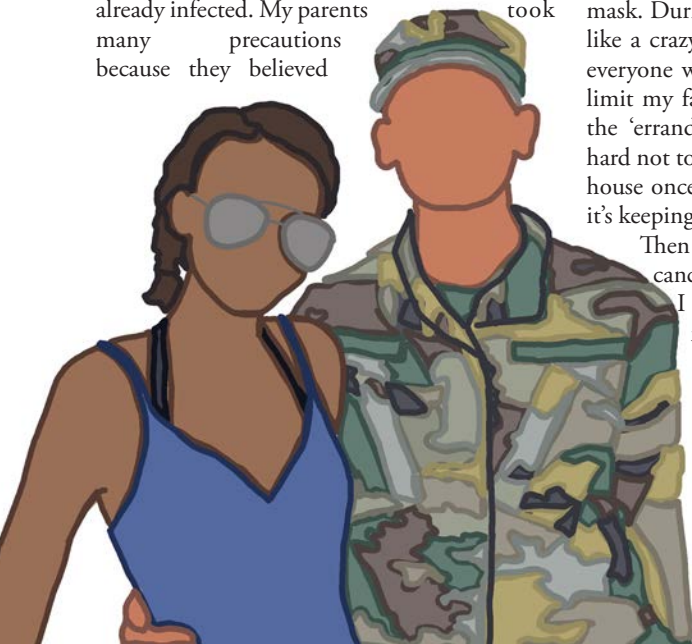
Then my senior spring break trip was cancelled. I was so angry, and when I had to see other people on social media getting to go on theirs, it just made that feeling worse. I was sad and disappointed to miss out on things that I had been planning for months.

At first, it was really hard for me to see my friends hanging out with each other while I had to stay home because I might be a carrier of the virus. But, as time went on and things got more serious,

I learned that I was doing the right thing by staying home. It upset me to see people breaking social distancing rules. I understand the boredom, but I just don't understand why people are willingly leaving their home knowing they can get the virus and spread it to their family and their community.

For me, this has now become the new normal. I've been in quarantine, following the stay at home order since Friday, March 13, 2020. At the time I'm writing this, I haven't left my house, except for essential purposes, in over a month. About a week ago, I woke up and started my day not thinking "a new day in quarantine," but just as a new day. Online school is relatively easy and just busy work to get my mind off things. I've started working on things that I never had the time to do before. I've spent less time doing things that were normal to me before quarantine, like getting on social media. My family and I have even started a weekly schedule so that we can keep our things in order and not fall into an unmotivated household. During the week, we work on stuff during the day. For me, that's schoolwork and then practicing a new song on the piano or ukulele. For my siblings, it's pretty much classes all day with zoom meetings and for my parents, they are working from home. Once our work is done for the day, we cook and eat together, and then we choose a movie to watch.

This virus has taken a lot from my senior year. I've gone through many different stages of grief. I was first in denial, then I was angry, then I felt depressed, and then I finally felt acceptance. I realized that although I was forced to stay inside, I was stuck with my family, my family that has never gotten this much time stuck together. My parents and I normally wouldn't see each other until 8 p.m. on a weeknight. My sister was at college and is terrible at communicating, and my brother went to school over 11 hours away. My mom thinks that this quarantine is like a last hoorah for her and my dad. After the end of this school year, they will be empty nesters and will probably never have the luxury of having us all home at the same time for this long. It's bittersweet, but I remind myself that every day we are in this, it is another day that I get to spend with my family. •



GOING VIRAL

Lakota and its students are working to stay safe from the biggest situation of the century: the coronavirus. • story **anna mullins** | infographic **frankie stull** | art **alexandra fernholz**

In late January 2020, an East senior traveled to Shanghai. Chinese New Year was just around the corner, and he had family there. They didn't know that there was a possibility that they would not be able to leave.

When Ben Lowry's family heard about the coronavirus, it was not yet in the Pudong district in China, so they were not worried about getting it. But soon after that, the U.S. planned to cancel all flights from China on Feb. 5, 2020. On Feb. 4, at 4 a.m. Eastern Time, Lowry and his family had to book a flight and come back to America before borders closed.

"In the specific district [Pudong] that I was in, there weren't any known cases," Lowry told Spark. "So it wasn't a huge concern while we were over there. But as soon as we heard that it started getting pretty bad, that's when we heard that the U.S. wasn't going to be doing any more flights. That's when we started worrying about it."

Despite the fact that there were no known cases in the Shanghai district in January, many people were still taking precautions.

According to Lowry, while he was in the city, in supermarkets everyone wore masks and usually only had interaction with the cashier. Most people, though, were staying inside and away from usually densely populated areas.

"There's a huge core spot, this huge shopping district we saw pictures [of], and it was like the streets had been deserted," Lowry says. "Everybody had basically bunkered down. It was completely devoid of people. I was talking to family in the area, and they were saying that this has never happened [before]. It's a huge city, like 26 million people, and they've never seen anything like this."

Separation during a pandemic is very important to stop the spread of the virus. According to Philip Smith, Assistant Professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Health at Miami University, if everyone was frozen in place at least six feet apart from each other for two weeks, the virus would be completely eradicated.

"In terms of the difference, the estimate is that for every one person who gets influenza,

they'll get about one other person sick," Smith told Spark. "And for every one person that gets [COVID-19], estimates vary, but the most consistent estimate is that they will get around two people sick. That number is going to change depending on how old the population is and how close people are to each other."

According to Smith, it is important for communities to make it clear that everyone is in this together and staying home. The best thing for people to do is social distance and to not congregate, but people can still stay connected.

"It's been so great to see so many people volunteering to help other people who are having a hard time with social distancing," Smith says. "[They have been] supporting social distancing on social media and also trying to connect with people. You see on the news people doing these wonderful things to help people stay connected and uplift spirits and keep mental health and all that during the pandemic."

Communities are continuing to communicate with people about what

source: washington post, new york times, bbc, CNN, ABC, the guardian



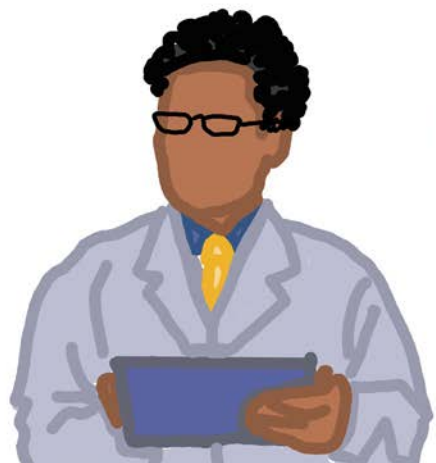
Dec. 31, 2019

First known case of the coronavirus is reported in Wuhan, China.



Jan. 21, 2020

The first COVID-19 case in the United States is reported.



Jan. 30, 2020

The WHO declares COVID-19 to be a global health emergency.



Feb. 29, 2020

The U.S. confirms first death due to COVID-19 in Washington state.

is happening. According to Director of Lakota School/Community Relations Betsy Fuller, Lakota has been using email, social media, and their website to reach out to families and community members about the district's response to the COVID-19 crisis. Superintendent Matt Miller has also begun sharing short video updates.

"As the number of cases of COVID-19 was increasing, we communicated with our families the steps we were taking to monitor the situation," Miller told Spark. "This included working with the Butler County Health Department and monitoring information reported by the CDC. This was shared with families on our website and through our district newsletter."

When the concerns surrounding COVID-19 first began to surface, Lakota administration began planning a remote learning exercise that would take place on March 13. According to Miller, the district wanted to find out how to transfer students and teachers to remote learning from a regular classroom setting.

"When we decided to plan a remote learning exercise, our first step was to determine how to best educate all of our students remotely," Miller says. "This would not only test our systems, but give our teachers the time to collaborate with their teams about how to continue teaching our students, should we need to close. Ultimately, this planned exercise worked in our favor,

as Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine ordered Ohio schools to close."

The Lakota Health Services and Communications departments partnered to create a health services website. It includes information from the CDC and the Ohio Department of Health, as well as information that is more focused on the district.

"Together with our Communications department we reviewed resources that were published from reputable sources," Lakota Manager of Health Services Lauren Brown told Spark. "We also included resources shared by members of the Lakota nursing staff. With so much general information being put out on [other] websites, we wanted ours to be specific to our schools and community."

Another concern for members of the community was students who rely on free and reduced lunch. The district made accommodations for these students as well as making resources, such as counselors, available to all students.

"Our child nutrition department is providing breakfast and lunch for our students at 11 locations throughout our communities," Miller says. "Our technology department has done an outstanding job ensuring that digital equity is met for our families. Additionally, we know that this is a difficult time for our families and students. Our counselors and mental health therapists continue to work with our students."

To make Lakota buildings safe for all students in case of impending reaccess to the buildings, schools were disinfected. As of April 20, DeWine declared that all schools would be closed for the rest of the year, but maintenance and facilities teams will continue to do building checks.

"All the schools were cleaned and disinfected during spring break and the week following spring break by custodians," Lakota Chief Operations Officer Chris Passarge told Spark. "Buildings are closed, with the exception of those being used to support food distribution. These buildings have the space clean and sanitized after each use. Our maintenance and facilities team is on a rotation to do building checks while [Lakota is] closed to the public."

Lakota has put forth efforts to make sure that all students are kept safe and that all facilities are maintained. Because of the pandemic, many senior activities have been canceled, leading to an unprecedented senior year for the class of 2020.

"It's pretty easy for the last few months as a senior before we leave high school, but the whole college stuff is also hard to think about, because we don't even know if remote learning will be over by the time we are going to college in August," Lowry says. "The last day that we see our high school friends in that sort of environment was the Thursday before spring break, which kind of blew me crazy." •



2020
Lakota School District
announces its first
COVID-19 in
a state.



Mar. 9, 2020
Italy becomes the first
European country to impose
a national lockdown.



Mar. 11, 2020
The WHO declares the
outbreak of COVID-19 to be a
pandemic.



April 8, 2020
Wuhan, China, the original
epicenter, lifts its original 76
day lockdown.

POSITIVITY IN A PANDEMIC

The Spark staff presents a collection of positive stories from around the community.



POSTS WITH A PURPOSE

story **natalie mazey** | art **alexandra fernholz**

For four years of high school, students look forward to the day they will get to walk across the stage and receive a diploma, cementing the idea that all of the hard work was worth it. Within a sea of caps and gowns, smiling faces get to say goodbye to the life they have known and enter the next chapter alongside friends.

But due to the coronavirus, monumental moments like graduation have become something almost unattainable. Although the last year of the class of 2020's high school experience has virtually come to a halt, connection and celebration is still thriving. East senior Gretchen Angst is fostering this excitement through the Instagram account: lehsclass2020.

So far, the account has posted 257 times and has amassed 553 followers since April 5, 2020. Each post features a senior at East, with their name, college, and major. In the comments, people congratulate one another, proving a stay at home order cannot erase the thrill of graduating.

"I don't think it makes up for all the events

and activities we are missing out on," Angst says. "But I do think some of the students and parents appreciate getting the recognition of their plans after Lakota East."

Angst was given the account from fellow East senior Brock Schwind a few days after it was created, and spent the day she received it catching up on creating posts for the people who had previously direct messaged the account with the help of her friends. Now, she is able to wait until a few messages have piled up before creating a bunch at a time. She is active on the account at least once a day, and is grateful that she is able to spread positivity during a difficult time.

For seniors like Victoria Sims, the account is able to show students where their classmates are going, and what they will be doing the next four years.

"It's really interesting and cool that we can all share what we are doing after high school," Sims says. "Even if we have less communication right now, we can still connect."

Angst enjoys seeing where her classmates' journey is going to take them, and running this account is a small way for her to spread hope. Recognition may not take place on a stage for this year's graduating seniors, but an Instagram account is making sure they are still seen. •

ENGINEERING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM story rehab jarabah

When Lakota announced that Friday, March 13 would be a “test remote learning day,” Joe Schorr, Butler Tech and Lakota East Freshman engineering teacher, got right to work.

“Throughout spring break and the first couple days following spring break, I had been looking at software for my students to continue their projects that they were doing in class,” Schorr told Spark.

All six of his periods were doing the same project: designing a miniature golf course. It could be any theme of their choice, granted it was school appropriate. Themes included Disney, Marvel, and other such things.

Although this was meant to be a hands-on project, his students adapted quickly after Schorr introduced Onshape, their new, school chromebook-friendly software.

Although Butler Tech recommended some software to the engineering teachers, Schorr said he “found Onshape easier to adapt to.”

After talking with some technicians, he filled out the paperwork for Lakota and turned in.

“The good thing about Onshape is how easy it is to navigate, as well as their friendly staff,” Schorr says. “They have plenty of tutorials that are easy to locate, and my students seem to be able to navigate through it well.”

The majority of Schorr’s 125 students have said the same thing. They understand it isn’t ideal, but many have preferred Onshape to the software, Inventor, they had previously worked with in class.

Although he knows that working on a group project online can be difficult, Schorr is trying to look at the positives as well as keep his students motivated.

“I told my students that when I used to work as an engineer, the company [I worked at] had 13 different plants, and I couldn’t travel when I had to collaborate with someone from a different plant,” Schorr says. “I just kind of related it to a real-life situation.”

Schorr has also checked up on his students to make sure they’re not overwhelmed in class or at home. For many, he’s setting up private Zoom calls to talk with them and help them see the positives.

“I’m an engineering teacher as well as a baseball coach for both East Freshman and my son’s league,” Schorr says. “I look at this time as a positive, because although I miss my students, friends, and colleagues, I get to spend more time with my family, and I can still talk to my students, even if it’s not as often.”•



POSITIVITY ON THE RUN

story mary barone | art alexandra fernholz

On Saturday, May 2, West Chester resident Andrew Suski accomplished the seemingly impossible. In just under 16 hours, he ran every street in Beckett Ridge, a distance adding up to 75 miles.

Suski’s mission started just weeks ago when the Flying Pig Marathon he had planned on participating in was postponed due to health concerns surrounding the coronavirus pandemic. Determined not to let this inconvenience get him down, Suski created the hashtag “#runbecketttridge” and began to promote his purpose through social media.

His initiative quickly picked up steam, and opening up the opportunity for him to partner with Reach out Lakota (ROL) to raise money for families in this time of need. Linked in the bio of his instagram @ultra_suski is a page where community members can donate money, all of which goes directly to ROL. As of Monday May 4, Suski Currently hasing collected \$6,350 as of Monday May 4. He

placed his goal at raising \$100 for every mile that he ran on Saturday, approximately \$7,500. The donation is open until May 16, 2020.

“I didn’t really set a goal when I first connected with ROL,” Suski told Sparks. “My thought was that even if I was the only one to donate, at least some good was to come out of it.”

Suski, father of three, has been a dedicated runner since 2016, and between training for various challenges and #runbecketttridgeRun Beckett Ridge, he’s already run over 600 miles this year. Despite his plethora of accomplishments in the world of ultrarunning, even this running junkie had never attempted a feat this large before. Before Saturday, Suski’s longest run had spanned an impressive 50 miles, but according to Suski, he felt that he still had more “left in the tank.”

“My family has felt blessed during these times,” Suski says. “So we wanted to think of a creative way to do good in the community.”•

VIRTUAL RELAY FOR LIFE

story **hannah fuller**

Sitting in the comfort of her own home, East junior Ellie Ford talked with her fellow Relay for Life student chair members to decide what they should do about the event that so many students and teachers look forward to each year.

After the decision was made for Ohio students to continue with virtual learning for the rest of the school year, the in-person Relay for Life, a charity event that raises money for the American Cancer Society, was changed from May 8, 2020 to be a virtual event which would take place on May 15, 2020.

During the virtual Relay for Life, activities will be posted on the East Relay for Life Twitter and Instagram from 10 p.m. to 1 a.m.. A guest speaker will talk about their relationship with cancer, and seniors will explain why they relay every year, via pre-recorded videos. There will be the annual "Miss Relay" pageant with four boys from each grade level and a zumba class.

Ford has been participating in Relay for Life since she was a sophomore, but has a special connection to event after surviving cancer herself. She is now the junior Chair for East.

"I'm excited to see everyone participate in Relay for Life in a way that has never been done before," Ford told Spark. "We want people to simply have fun with this."

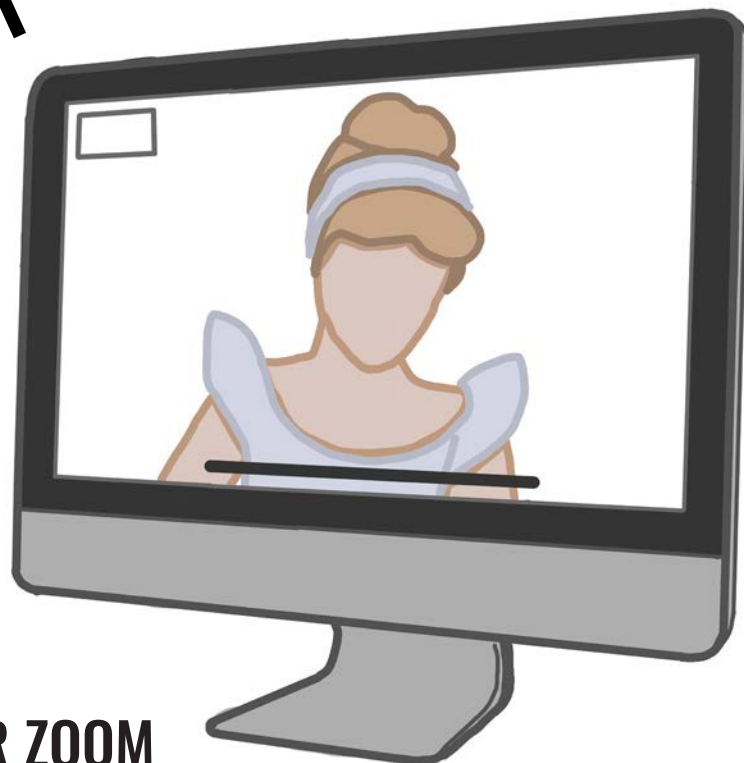
The Relay for Life committee worked for two weeks, using Zoom to communicate, to create the event.

Although Relay will look different this year, students at East are still looking forward to it. East junior Sophia Smolyansky has been participating since she was a freshman.

"I'm really excited to still have Relay this year," Smolyansky says. "Even though it won't be the same, I'm still looking forward to it."

Despite the event not being the same as years past, Ford is still optimistic and hopes the event will spread joy and bring awareness to the American Cancer Society.

"During this time in our lives, we want to bring as much hope and positivity as we can," Ford says. "Many students look forward to this night all school year, so [the chairs] decided this was the best option." •



Z IS FOR ZOOM

story **marleigh winterbottom** | art **alexandra fernholz**

When Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced on March 22, 2020 that schools would be going remote, Wyandot Early Childhood School (ECS) teacher Abigail Detcher feared for the worst. While older classes have been able to move to platforms like Canvas, early elementary grades, such as kindergarten, have had a difficult transition.

"It's a hands-on classroom. The kids don't use a computer all day long," Detcher told Spark. "[Students are] usually talking in small groups or collaborating, but they don't get all of that [right now]. It's been hard to figure out how they can talk to each other and collaborate."

Teachers like Detcher have had to get creative with new approaches to collaborations and activities. One of the most utilized tools has been a video call program called Zoom.

"For most kids, it's like an appointment, and they don't miss it," Detcher says. "They are just so excited that I have to mute the call a lot so I can hear myself think, because they just can't wait to share." •

One of Detcher's students, kindergartener Kendall Uhl, has enjoyed the experience.

"I get to see all of my friends," Uhl says. "It's so crazy outside so we can't go anywhere."

Wyndot's annual ABC countdown, a series of activities held on the last 26 days of school for kindergarteners, has been adapted to fit the needs of students at home. This includes the switch from the "Zip Up your Backpack" last day of school, to "Zoom Day" which provides a final goodbye that all the students can enjoy virtually. "Kindness Day" also allowed the students to share their acts of kindness with their classmates through a video call.

Detcher also asked a friend to dress up and join a Zoom call as Cinderella to sing to the kids. Other special guests included instructional aids, Wyandot Principal Liz Gruber, Resource Officer Deputy Katie McMahon, and school librarian Edna Casey.

"I've been around kids for 30 years and I'm telling you, they still surprise me," Detcher says. "And I love that, I love the variety, and I love the surprises that they bring. And that's why I miss them so much right now." •

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

story **mia hilkowitz** | art **alexandra fernholz**



He sits on the runway of Middletown Regional Airport ready for takeoff. Cherokee Elementary fifth grade teacher Dave Fugate has spent the whole day crouched over a computer, emailing parents and entering grades, but he's decided to turn to the sky as a way to unwind.

Fugate has been flying planes for more than 30 years, beginning his journey when he and a friend decided to take a flying lesson in high school. From that moment on, he was hooked. Fugate would save \$50 from his McDonald's paycheck each week to put towards another flying class, eventually gaining his pilot's license in 1988.

But on March 25, 2020, after Lakota's first

day of remote learning, Fugate decided to use his skills to brighten his students' day.

"It was just a spur-of-the-moment thing," Fugate told Spark. "I was sitting in the aeroplane taxiing out to the runway and I had access to my phone. So I just sent out a quick email to all of my science students [that said] 'hey, I'm going to be flying over your neighborhoods so just come out and wave.'"

Within five to ten minutes, Fugate was soaring over the homes of Cherokee families in his 1948 Luscombe plane. Although he was 1500 feet in the sky, Fugate was still able to see the figures of his students waving back up at him. Pam Dieterich and her grandson Jauden French, a student of Fugate's, saw the flyover.

"Jayden was very excited," Dieterich told Spark. "[He was jumping up and down [and] waving his hands.]"

After seeing the positive reactions from families on social media, Fugate was elated.

"I think it's exciting for kids to see a lot of teachers have lives outside of school, and some of us do crazy things," Fugate says. "It made me proud, and I'm happy that they enjoyed it."

Fugate plans to perform another flyover this school year. He believes that it is important to continue these acts of positivity while under quarantine.

"Everyone's kind of losing their minds right now," Fugate says. "This is a chance to do something a little bit different with your days." •

ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

story **frankie stull**

The once thundering stage of Lakota East High School was silent on March 27, 2020. What was expected to be a night full of laughs, tears and monologues was now just another, uneventful day for Pippin directors and cast. However, when the world goes silent, East can always count on its drama club to lift their spirits.

Among the numerous concerts, sports events and festivals that have been cancelled due to the novel coronavirus is East's spring musical Pippin. The musical is an inspirational story with a score of songs that details a young man's journey of self-discovery. The musical was previously set to be performed March 27-29 and April 2-4.

Throughout the play, Pippin can be seen in a state of desperation while figuring out who he is as a person. East senior Alex Pletikapich plays Pippin, the leading role. Pletikapich re-enacts various scenes across the stage such as going to war, becoming king, and eventually falling in love with young Catherine.

"[The cancellation] affected all of us, the cast, crew and directors. This show is an incredible story and we had worked so hard to

perform it for the audiences," Pletikapich told Spark. "I was most disappointed that it was my final show with Thunderhawk Theatre. It was heartbreaking when we had to put it on hold."

Despite the challenge, many members of Pippin were able to channel their unutilized energy into a project that helps spread positivity in the community during these difficult times. The idea was simple: post videos to Twitter and Instagram that highlight the group's enthusiasm for the show and their talents. It started off as a way to cope with the stress that the pandemic produced, but the online videos quickly took off and became a local internet sensation. The most popular clip features Pletikapich and East junior Lauren Dendler singing "Love Song," a duet that appears in Pippin. The Twitter video amassed nearly 6,000 views and even gained the attention of Broadway actress, Laura Benanti who commented, "you two are amazing." Benanti has starred in numerous productions including The Sound of Music, Gypsy, Into the Woods, and Pippin.

"[Love Song] was my favorite song of the show! Many people sympathized for us knowing how much the show meant and how

much we were looking forward to performing," Dendler says.

"Something that has stuck with me is a lyric from 'Pippin,' which reads, 'Everything has its season, everything has its time.'" Pletikapich says. "This lyric has allowed me to understand t h a t everything happens for a reason and it will all turn out ok, i t ' s just a matter of time." •





SERVING SMILES

story **gavin mullen** | art **alexandra fernholz**

What started as a news headline from across the world has escalated into a global pandemic with over 5 million confirmed cases and over 300,000 deaths. The coronavirus has affected the entire world over the course of a couple of months. For Lakota parent and medical surgical nurse Carol Tuttle, COVID-19 has affected her and her family's lives beyond the average person.

Tuttle has worked at the Good Samaritan Hospital for 24 years and is exposed to the virus during her 13-14 hour work days. The fear of bringing the virus home to her family is a constant. She and her husband, as well as their three teenagers, are coping with the pandemic as best as they can.

Despite the trying times and difficult situations, Tuttle and her coworkers try to give hope to the patients suffering from the virus.

"I try to hold their hands, talk about their families, pets, and what is important to them," Tuttle says. "The [patients] have hospital-provided phones and their cell phones and we encourage them to keep in touch with loved ones if they can."

The hospital also has free movies, music, and a meditation relaxation channel on their televisions, so the patients can disconnect from the 24 hour news of the world.

After her long shift, Tuttle comes home to her family exhausted. Her work is mentally and physically challenging, and both her and her family are aware that there is a chance that she could be bringing the virus home with her.

"I try to keep the same demeanor and energy at home to make sure no one worries, but it is very tough and draining," Tuttle says. "Some days are better than others, and I'm able to power through."•

When members of the Liberty Township community walk into their store, Lourie and Glen Huey always greet them with warm smiles. Opening the same week that Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced the mandatory stay at home order, these Liberty Township locals started their own mom and pop donut shop: The Donut Dude.

"The community has been extremely helpful in these times, [there's] support pouring in from left and right" says Glen, the Donut Dude himself.

A typical morning has a line as soon as the doors open at 6 a.m. until they close at 1 p.m. . According to Glen, the wait can usually get up to 30-45 minutes and stretches around the store.

"During the weekend, we can sell anywhere from 120-150 dozen in one day," Laurie says.

The Donut Dude is repaying the generosity that the community is showing by donating all the leftover donuts from the weekdays to local hospitals and fire stations.

"We usually send out one of our team members to anywhere people help serve the community and give them donuts, just to say thank you," Laurie says.

The Donut Dude also gives all uniformed nurses and police officers 10% off their purchase.

"It's not much," Laurie says. "But it's a little something from us to show that we appreciate them for everything they do and putting their lives on the line everyday."•



NOT ALL HEROES WEAR CAPES

story **evie colpi** | art **alexandra fernholz**



PANDEMIC PAWSITIVITY

story **hannah bui** | art **alexandra fernholz**

Scrolling through Facebook, everything is dark, angry and scared. The news of COVID-19 haunts people's feed. It feels like there is no way out.

This all comes to a stop when Robyn Knappenberger's Facebook page pops up. Instead of doom and gloom, she's posting small kittens playing around her home. Knappenberger has been fostering kittens while she is all stuck inside of her home.

"There is so much bad news and stress in the world right now," Knappenberger told Spark. "Anything people can do to spread a little happiness and joy is helpful."

Knappenberger has had a long time love for cats, starting when she was a child, when her family had a cat that lived until Knappenberger's graduation from high school. After that, she has always had a cat in her life.

"I can't imagine not having at least one cat in my household," said Knappenberger, who has already adopted four cats, but decided six months ago that she wanted to try fostering through HART Cincinnati, an organization that rescues homeless animals, saving them

from euthanization, abandonment, and abuse with the goal of placing them in a home.

"We (her family) were on a track to end up with a house filled with cats," Knappenberger says. "So fostering seemed like a good way to enjoy having kittens in the house without permanently going overboard."

During the coronavirus pandemic, she decided to post pictures of the six foster cats she has on Facebook to get people to meet the kittens without having to come in person.

"That allowed me to share the kittens with many more people at one time," Knappenberger says. "We even have someone in Peru who is following the kittens."

Fostering has sometimes gotten overwhelming for Knappenberger. With more people at home due to the pandemic, nationwide adoption has taken off which excites Knappenberger.

"We had a kitten earlier this month who was adopted within 24 hours of her picture being posted on Facebook," Knappenberger says. "Kittens bring us so much joy because they are so adorable and it has been fun to see them develop even over the last few weeks." •

JOY TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

story **emily hormann**
art **alexandra fernholz**

Lights illuminate the street, dancing along to "We Didn't Start the Fire" by Billy Joel, which plays on the radios of the cars lined up across the street to watch the show. While Christmas lights are usually set out for the holiday season, nine-year-old Matthew Erickson and his family saw the somber moods of those around them and wanted to take action.

"We decided to put up our Christmas lights [in order] to provide some much needed joy to those around us," Erickson told Spark.

On the night of March 23, 2020, the Erickson family's Christmas lights brightened the outside of their house after three long days of setting it all up. They hope to keep the lights running nightly until the beginning of June at least. All of this was made possible by Erickson, who has been using computer-synchronizing software to set up a Christmas light display with the help of his parents since 2013. He was inspired to create the display after he and his family saw a display in Canton, Ohio the year prior.

The special "Corona Light Display" features all multicolored lights, a blow mold Easter bunny, and an all new sequence of songs that can be broadcasted through a radio. The new playlist includes "My Corona" by Chris Mann, "We Didn't Start the Fire" by Billy Joel, and "Keep Your Head Up" by Andy Grammar.

"The songs [we picked] were based on the current situation and what we thought would bring people joy," Erickson says.

To make sure viewers comply with social distancing, a few rules were set in place. Families must stay in their own cars with their windows rolled up to avoid contact with other people.

Erickson and his family have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from their neighbors and community members regarding their decision to set out their Christmas lights. One neighbor in particular, Alisa Kanfi, was happy for the chance to "sneak out" of her house with her two kids to see the lights.

"I admire Matthew and all of the Ericksons for committing themselves to spreading hope and joy in creative and safe ways during this time," Kanfi says. "Matthew puts a lot of work into setting up the lights and coordinating the music, and he does a great job. I am lucky to be neighbors with them." •

LOW ON SUPPLIES, BUT NOT MORALE

Hospitals and stores struggle to keep up with increasing demand of supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic.

story **ava huelskamp**
art **kelly johantges**

In the wake of a devastating pandemic plaguing the world, walking into the fluorescent-lit aisles of grocery stores that used to be stockpiled with cleaning supplies, toilet paper, or disinfectant wipes has become the equivalent of walking into a barren desert.

The coronavirus, or COVID-19, has symptoms described by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) as “fever, coughing, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, or new loss of taste or smell.” As the virus began to grip China by the neck in late 2019, it quickly spread to the rest of the world, including Butler County, and in the past few months has affected the lives of thousands.

A big repercussion of the deadly disease has been the shortage of protective supplies in hospitals and homes, like toilet paper, masks, hand sanitizer, and wipes. Out of 158 East students surveyed, 97.5% say they’ve noticed a smaller or depleted supply of these items at the store.

The increase in demand of certain products

has placed a strain on the supply chain, which Peter Lukszy, professor of Supply Chain Management at the University of Wisconsin, told Spark can be attributed to the fall of China at the feet of the virus first.

“A lot of our goods in the U.S. come from overseas from places like China and other foreign countries. When [China was] hit by COVID-19 first, many of their factories shut down,” Lukszy says. “That impacted the supply side of the supply chain, and the demand side was also impacted because China is one of the largest economies [in the world].”

University of Wisconsin Supply Chain Management Professor John McKeller expects the high demand for products as a result of COVID-19 to change the algorithm of supply chains and make consumers re-evaluate where they’re sourcing their products from.

“People will realize that your supply chain is only as resilient as the weakest link in it,” McKeller told Spark.

In response to the low number of supplies available in stores, people have turned to online sites to attempt to get their supplies, with 47.5% of 158 East students surveyed saying their family has ordered supplies online.

Even more so than the supply shortages in grocery stores for everyday citizens, hospitals around the world are struggling to keep Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that is needed for COVID-19 patients and the medical personnel caring for them in stock.

Christina Salyers, a nurse in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital says Children’s has not run out of the supplies they need as of the beginning of April, but no one knows what could happen in the future. She knows that supplies are scarce, and it puts lots of pressure on all Children’s employees.

“I have been told we have what we need to protect us at this time, but of course, that changes every single day,” Salyers says. “Children’s, along with every other hospital in the tri-state, is monitoring all of their PPE. They’re finding ways to preserve it as much as possible.”

One way Children’s has been trying to preserve their supplies is to have their nurses clean and re-use the PPE they wear during their shift.

“Our eye shields are cleaned off at the end of our shift and then we wear them on every shift that we work, so we don’t get a new pair of eye goggles every day,” Salyers says. “We do get a new mask every day, and that’s just a regular basic mask.”

Spirit Homecare Administrator Sajjad Khan has felt stress about getting enough supplies for his hospital, as the hospital has COVID-19 patients in their care.

“[N-95 masks] are almost impossible to find. I had to go on eBay and buy them at a very high price,” Khan told Spark. “Normally they cost around 70 to 80 cents per mask. I had

“Our eye shields are cleaned off at the end of our shift and then we wear them on every shift that we work, so we don’t get a new pair of eye goggles every day. We do get a new mask every day, and that’s just a regular basic mask.”-Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Nurse Christina Salyers

to buy them on eBay for between \$11-\$15.”

Battelle, a Columbus-based non-profit organization, has tried to do its part during the pandemic by creating technology to sterilize the essential N-95 respirator masks needed for COVID-19 patients.

Battelle says the company is able to sterilize up to 80,000 masks per machine per day, with two operating machines in Ohio sterilizing a total of 160,000 masks per day.

Salyers is not aware if Children's is using the new Battelle technology to sterilize masks, but says all hospitals in the Liberty Township area currently have enough supplies, and though the number of cases changes every day, the problem is thankfully not as large in Ohio as

other states.

“When you see New York, their hospitals have been full, they are having a very high influx of patients,” Salyers says. “A lot of them are positive for COVID-19 or suspected COVID-19. Those types of hospitals are the hospitals that are having the biggest issues.”

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine has been providing daily updates on all things COVID-19 on The Ohio Channel, Facebook Live, and his twitter account, including PPE shortages in hospitals. Based on his tweets, the governor seems to feel anxious about the current state of Ohio's PPE.

“I want to make a public plea to everyone

using these [N-95] masks—every mask is precious. Please do not throw them away,” DeWine said on Twitter. “We can reuse them up to 20x because of this Battelle technology. When you throw a mask away, you are depriving someone else of having a mask, because we only have so many.”

According to Salyers, repercussions could be deadly if hospitals were to run out of supplies, which would put nurses like herself at risk.

“[Instead of] using PPE for one patient and disposing of it, you would have to probably reuse it multiple times,” Salyers says. “The worst part of that would be cross contamination. You would definitely be spreading COVID-19. [Reusing supplies] would also risk other patients getting COVID-19, as well as staff.”

Khan has friends also in the medical field who are experiencing some of these possibly deadly repercussions first hand.

“[My friends] have mentioned that they are not able to get any supplies at all. They don't have any masks. They don't have anything to treat [COVID-19] patients,” Khan says. “I've [also] been reading about nurses in [some] hospitals being asked to treat patients without an N-95 mask. The repercussions for [these nurses] is that they are putting themselves in danger to help patients.”

The supply chain is expected to take a while to catch up, considering the impact COVID-19 had on China that caused factories to shut down and workers to stay home.

“Because a lot of the factories were in China and they just came back online slowly —[the] Chinese government sent back their employees March 11, 2020—they're still not at full capacity, and will not be for a while,” Luksyzs says. “A lot of [supplies] are being air shipped over [to the U.S.]. That's not as much the constraint of transportation as one of the constraints of manufacturing. It's limiting getting goods.”

Despite the risks that come with enough protective supplies being at the ready for sick patients, there seems to be a silver lining. Members of Khan's community have seen the need for masks and stepped in to try to help, which warmed his heart.

“Our county was kind enough to donate some masks to us,” Khan says. “That was a big help. I'm very grateful to Butler County [citizens] for doing that.”•



According to MIT scientists, the average American goes through 42 rolls of toilet paper a year.

CANCELING THE GOLDEN GALA

Due to Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's order of no social gatherings above 10 people, East had to cancel their 2020 prom - The Roarinig 2020's: The Golden Gala.

story and art **rachel anderson**



“For future high schoolers: make sure you go to school events, dances, join clubs, and get involved. Don’t take anything for granted, enjoy your high school experience, and have fun.” -East senior Macey Palmer

The invitations were printed. The t-shirts were made. The posters were decorated. The spirit week was finalized. The decorations were ordered, the venue was mapped out. The only thing left to do to make the East 2020 prom perfect was to sell the tickets.

However, on April 23, 2020 prom was canceled due to Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine’s order for all schools to continue remote learning through the end of the school year.

This year’s prom theme had been the Roaring 2020’s: The Golden Gala. It was originally scheduled for April 18 at the Sharonville Convention Center.

On March 12, 2020 DeWine extended all Ohio school’s spring breaks to three weeks due to the outbreak of the coronavirus. Lakota’s spring break was scheduled for March 14 through March 22, but according to the original order, students wouldn’t go back to school until April 6.

After the scheduled spring break, Lakota began remote learning. On March 30, DeWine extended school closures until May 1, 2020 and kept the social gathering limit to 10 people. At this time, East decided to postpone prom until May 16.

“I was happy because it hadn’t been canceled,” East senior and prom committee member Andrea Davis told Spark. “It is senior prom and you only get one senior prom. It is also the last dance [seniors] could ever have.”

When DeWine announced that no schools should meet for the remainder of the school year on April 23, 2020, he extended the social gatherings limit of 10 people until the end of May. Because of this, the Sharonville convention center had to cancel all of their

events, leaving East no choice but to cancel their prom.

“It breaks my heart to cancel. Our prom committee put so much work into this event, but having large group gatherings at this time is not safe,” East prom committee advisor Susanne Linder told Spark. “However, if [the Sharonville Convention Center] did not cancel, we still would have to reschedule for the safety of our students. Last year, we had 1,100 students attend prom.”

The East prom committee had been meeting almost every Monday after school since October.

“We picked out decorations and planned how we would decorate and set up. All the invitations were counted and handed out to extra help [classes]. We met with the DJ for songs and set up,” Davis said. “There was a lot of planning that went into prom over the entire school year.”

According to Linder, the decorations, such as the cardboard silhouettes used to decorate the entrance, had already been purchased. However, most of the decorations can be used for next year’s prom. The flowers for the centerpieces had not yet been purchased, so East did not lose any money.

“All the contracts and deposits were returned to the account,” Linder said. “The purchases made from the account will be re-purposed in new ways, so no money was lost.”

The cancelation of prom has not only impacted juniors and seniors around the country, but also business owners, such as formal wear shops, nail salons, restaurants, flower shops, shoe stores, cosmetic shops, and hair salons.

Kelly Grubb, who works at Salon Lofts VOA, sees the impact prom cancellations have on not only her business, but the U.S. economy as well. While Grubb does not specialize in styling hair for formal occasions, she still styles around 20 girls’ hair per prom season.

“My business being closed down has meant no unnecessary spending, no eating out, no business supply store runs, [and] canceling monthly subscriptions,” Grubb told Spark. “This [quarantine] could have a great impact on our local economy. These businesses count on us.”

Grubb believes that there is “no way of recouping the income” she’s lost, even if she is busy when her business reopens.

While some students were disappointed about not being able to attend prom, others took action. East junior Lindsay Patton already had a dress, so she and her sister, East senior Katie Patton, decided to have a prom of their own.

“I did my hair and makeup, put on my dress, and then my boyfriend came over wearing a bow tie and nice clothes,” Lindsay said. “He brought me a corsage and a matching boutonniere. Then we took prom pictures together.”

East senior Macey Palmer, who has been to all seven of her high school dances, said the best part about prom was the “community.” She loved getting together with friends and having a good time.

“For future high schoolers: make sure you go to school events, dances, join clubs, and get involved,” Palmer told Spark. “Don’t take anything for granted, enjoy your high school experience, and have fun.” •

CLOSING SMALL BUSINESSES

Spark interviews local small businesses in the Liberty Township area that have been affected by Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's Stay at Home order

story **mia hilkowitz** | art **rachel anderson**

For years, Niederman Family Farm has been a staple in the Liberty Township and West Chester community. Hundreds of families visit for birthday parties, field trips, and weddings, or to play around at the farm's Paintball Country. But this spring, the once-bustling establishment is completely empty.

Niederman Family Farm is one of Ohio's over 940,000 small businesses that has been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Following Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine's March 22, 2020 announcement ordering the shutdown of "non-essential business," Niederman Farm acted quickly to adapt to the regulation. Owner Bethann Niederman described the chaos of the ensuing hours.

"The first thing we thought about was the birthday parties that were already booked to have a party at Paintball," Niederman told Spark. "We had to call right away and say 'I'm so sorry,' and that was heartbreaking because families had plans to make memories with us, and we had to break those plans."

Niederman's next concern was for their farm's employees.

"The next thought was, 'oh my goodness

if we can't open we have to contact all the staff and say 'I'm sorry we don't need you this weekend,'" Niederman said. "They've all had to go home because there are no people or parties on the weekends."

Niederman Family Farm was not alone in this. According to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the total number of statewide unemployment claims made in the three weeks leading up to April 4, 2020 was 696,519, doubling the number of claims made in all of 2019.

Currently, the Cleveland Clinic predicts that COVID-19 cases in Ohio will peak in mid-May to June and start to gradually decrease in July. A projection like this leaves Niederman and many other local small businesses worried for upcoming months.

"The concerns that we're looking at now are for the future," Niederman said. "What does it mean about our spring? What about the events we have booked in the summer? Fall is our largest season here on the farm, so how will that affect business [in the fall]?"

In addition to entertainment aspects of the establishment like Paintball Country, field trips, and parties, Niederman Family Farm

operates a farm that both grows crops and takes care of farm animals. Under the Ohio stay at home order, implemented on March 22, farms are considered essential businesses and continue to operate. But Niederman feels that shutting down one part can still affect the rest of the farm, as well as surrounding businesses.

"There are no people or parties on the weekend, so I don't have the need for [supplies], affecting the companies or businesses that we order from," Niederman said. "I don't need to order jams, jellies, or pizza because there's nobody here."

This ripple effect is an issue concerning the entire country. In hopes of minimizing the economic fallout from the pandemic, a \$2 trillion economic stimulus has been passed by Congress that aims at helping small businesses grapple with the financial obstacles to come from the long term closure.

But until the stimulus takes effect, small businesses are finding new ways to adapt to social distancing regulations and closures. Crossfit Ironside Owner Melissa Anguiz said her business is adapting to the change.

"We've been putting out workouts every

single day for gym members to do at home,” Anguiz told Spark. “In addition to that, we are doing online workouts through Zoom, so we have certain times in the day where we have everybody log on and participate.”

Anguiz feels that the online transition has been a challenge since Crossfit Ironside’s service is difficult to replicate outside of the gym.

“Gyms don’t have a certain good that we are able to ship out and deliver,” Anguiz said. “Gyms are so much more of an in-person experience. We’re able to do a lot at home, but there’s nothing you can fully replace.”

Anguiz is also concerned about the impact that a long-term closure could have on the gym.

“[Crossfit Ironside] as a small business has less freedom in a time like this,” Anguiz said. “The pressure and the timeline of the closures may last, but we have a limited budget to enable us to survive through that.”

Down the road, pastry shop Donut Dude found themselves in a unique situation for a small business. Opening on March 21, 2020 the day before DeWine issued Ohio’s stay at home order, owner Glen Huey feared the worst.

“When [DeWine] made the announcement that they were closing everything, my first thought was ‘well, we’re shut down and we’re not even going to get a chance to open the doors,’” Huey told Spark. “When they said that you could still carry out, I kind of felt like it wasn’t really going to bother us a lot.”

Fortunately for Huey, who owns the shop with his wife Laurie, Donut Dude had an unexpectedly busy opening week, with members of the community coming out to support the new business.

“It didn’t affect us the way most people would think,” Huey said. “People couldn’t go out and sit down at restaurants, they could only pick up or have delivery, and we were a place where you can come in to get doughnuts. So people say, ‘let’s try them,’ and give the business a chance.”

Donut Dude has adapted to new social distancing regulations by allowing only two customers in the store at a single time and increasing cleaning practices. But even with this early success, Huey is worried about an extended closure.

“It’s going to be a big money problem for

us,” Huey said. “We still have to pay all our suppliers, [and] we have to pay all our rent on the location.”

Still, Huey remains optimistic and reflects on how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted the surrounding Liberty Township community.

“I think [the pandemic] has made people more aware of who’s around them,” Huey said. “The community support has just been phenomenal. We wouldn’t be where we are today if the community hadn’t got around and behind us.”

For Niederman Family Farm, owners and staff are depending on this same sense of community to help their business recover. To show this, they are running a social media campaign called “A Dozen Thank-

You” until May 8, 2020, where people can purchase a bag of donuts for a “hometown hero” who helped during the pandemic.

“Everybody’s trying to figure out a way to do something, because we get concerned about members of our community that we want to help,” Niederman said. “This way we’re not going away from the social distancing rules, and also giving other people the opportunity to help.” •

According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, small businesses make up 44% of the nation’s economy.



THERE'S ALWAYS NEXT YEAR

The remainder of OHSAA winter sports tournaments were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, ending the postseason runs of the East boy's basketball team and two East senior wrestlers.

story **brayden barger** | art **abbie westendorf**
infographic **rebecca breland** and **brayden barger**

The atmosphere was electric. East students and members of the pep band packed one side of the Cintas Center while Beaver Creek students and their band packed the other. Fans and family members filled the rest of the Xavier University arena, eagerly awaiting the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA) boys basketball showdown between Lakota East and Beaver Creek for the 2020 District

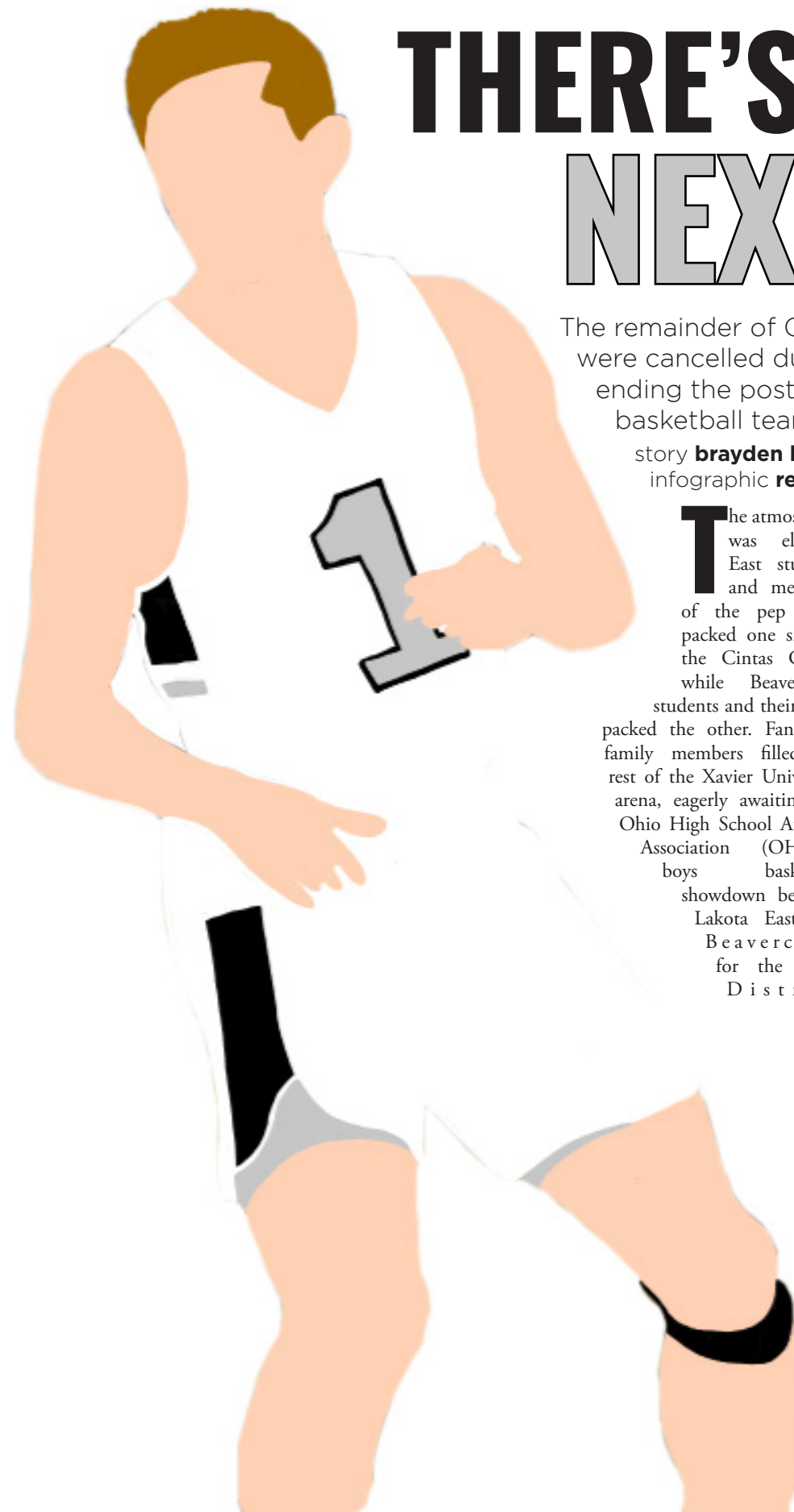
Championship on March 7.

The two teams fought it out to the very end, with Beaver Creek almost coming back at the last second with a half court buzzer shot that missed by the width of hair. But East ultimately came out on top with a score of 33-32 to capture their second consecutive district championship. The celebrations and energy after the win could be felt throughout the arena. Though East's next game had a similar outcome, the atmosphere was polar opposite.

Following guidances given by the CDC and the Ohio government on March 10, fans were barred from the Regional Semifinal game between Lakota East and La Salle. Only the media, immediate family members of players and cheerleaders, and up to four guests per athlete were allowed into the Cintas Center in northern Cincinnati. The packed East student section from the previous game now only consisted of four individuals.

East won the highly competitive game with a score of 44-35, capturing their first regional semifinal win in school history. Though the crowd was minimal, East senior Alex Mangold says his team knew they had plenty of support from fans at home, and the crowd that was present still managed to be loud and supportive,

East senior Alex Mangold has won many awards but never thought this would be his last time wearing the jersey.



“We are just devastated that the tournaments cannot be completed. But our priority is the safety of our student athletes, coaches, communities and officials.”

-OHSAA Executive Director Jerry Snodgrass

getting the team through the game.

“It didn’t feel like a sweet 16 game,” Mangold told Spark. “But we knew from home we had the supporting crew we needed and I think the support was pretty good from the crowd that we had. The parents got into it and I loved it, and we need the same thing when we play Moeller.”

However, the Hawks would never go on to face Moeller for the regional title, as the OHSAA announced on March 12 that all winter tournaments would be postponed indefinitely. Then, two weeks later, on March 26 the OHSAA announced that the tournaments would be cancelled, ending the Hawks’ historic postseason run.

These cancellations, along with a few events during World War II, are the only sports cancellations in the history of the OHSAA, which was founded in 1907. In a press release, OHSAA Executive Director Jerry Snodgrass expressed the importance of health and safety, and the cancellations are necessary in order to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

“We are just devastated that the tournaments cannot be completed,” Snodgrass says. “But our priority is the safety of our student athletes, coaches, communities and officials. Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine is asking all Ohioans to do everything they can to stop the spread of this virus. That request means that school sports cannot happen at this time. Even if our schools reopen this spring, it will be difficult to find facilities willing to host the tournaments. Most campuses are shut down until mid to late summer.”

Ohio is far from the only state impacted by COVID-19 related school closures. All 50 states have mandated the suspension of in-person instruction. Currently 44 states have mandated or recommended schools be closed for the rest of the academic year, as of May 1.

This means that all of the nearly 8 million high school athletes in the U.S. are impacted in some way, according to the National Federation of State High School Associations. Whether it be tournaments for winter athletes, seasons for spring athletes, or training for fall athletes, all high school athletics are impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

East junior Nate Johnson, who had been a key player on offense this season with an average of 17 points per game, says that the tournament cancellation came as a surprise.

“When we first heard [that the playoffs were postponed], we didn’t think that it would be for the rest of the year. So we were all kind of in shock that all of our hard work went to waste,” Johnson says. “We all felt for our seniors, since their last year didn’t really have an end to it.”

East Varsity Basketball Coach Clint Adkins says that being deprived of the chance to make the Final Four and beyond is devastating for the team and coaching staff.

“As a kid I’ve always dreamed of going to the Final Four,” Adkins says. “When you’re a player, or you’re a coach, that’s just something you dream of, and to be that close and not be able to even have an opportunity to do it was difficult,” Adkins told Spark. “But more importantly, for our guys and our coaching staff, I felt horrible for them. I know the amount of time they invest in it as well. They work so hard to get an opportunity to do something that is special, that very few people get a chance to do, and to know that it’s finally over, it was a rough couple of days.”

On the East wrestling team, seniors Alex Epstein and Aaron Sharp were set to compete at the OHSAA State Championship in Columbus, as Epstein placed third overall at the 138 weight class and Sharp placed fourth at

the 285 weight class at Districts.

Sharp, who was committed to the now defunct Urbana University, says he was angered by the OHSAA’s decision to cancel the state tournament.

“When I was first told I was angry, because I worked so hard to make it to that point, but then I realized no one could do anything about it so I wasn’t worried,” Sharp says. “I’m not sure how everyone else is handling it. Though I know Alex [Epstein] was pretty much in the same boat as me, but he was happier since he could finally eat again.”

Epstein, who is committed to the University of Findlay in northern Ohio, says that he is trying to look on the bright side of things rather than dwelling too much on the missed opportunity.

“My initial reaction was disbelief at the whole situation and it never became reality until it really was all over,” Epstein says. “Aaron [Sharp and I] have gained weight of course, but I’m quite happy about living the fat life. For the most part, I’ve dealt with state [being cancelled] by staying busy and just looking forward to my college career next year.”

East wrestling coach Chad Craft says that he and his coaching staff are disappointed that Epstein and Sharp weren’t able to compete.

“Our entire coaching staff was very disappointed that our two state qualifiers were not able to experience the state wrestling tournament,” Craft says. “It is something that every high school wrestler should be able to experience.”

Socially, the tournament cancellations have had a major impact on athletes and coaches. But they also have a costly economic impact. According to the OHSAA, ticket revenue from postseason tournaments makes up 80% of their operational budget, with the other 20% coming from officials’ dues and corporate sponsors.

Snodgrass says that cancelling the tournaments could cost the OHSAA around \$1.5 million in revenue.

“I think without question there is a huge financial impact on this organization,” Snodgrass says in a press release. “We have a separate team that’s working on not only the impact of it but how we are going to deal with it. I think it’s twofold.”

For East’s basketball team, Adkins says that it will also be costly for them if they are not able to put on fundraisers that are planned for this year.

“If we can’t have our two Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) fundraisers in May, if we can’t have our basketball camp in the gym, there’s going to be a financial impact on us as well,” Adkins says. “You have the social side of things and then you also have the economic side effects, so [the pandemic is] having a negative impact all the way around.”

East Athletic Director Richard Bryant says that the long term impact COVID-19 will have on East athletics is uncertain.

“For our winter athletes we will never know what the lasting impact might have been; did we lose a state title?” Bryant told Spark. “[The winter and spring cancellations are] an incredible setback for East Athletics, an understandable one, but incredible nonetheless. The successes, experiences and opportunities are not items that can have a value placed on them.”

Despite the tournament cancellations, school closures, and all of the negative that has come from the COVID-19 pandemic, Mangold keeps a level head, and says that while everything that has happened wasn’t expected, it is unique to his generation and something that they will always remember.

“It’s weird to think that in my high school career, I will have had homecoming and graduation on the football field,” Mangold says. “But it’s unique to our class I guess. It’s something we will always remember. My hope is that we reschedule prom for a safe date as soon as we can, but the most important thing is graduation for sure. After many years of schooling I would like to walk across some sort of stage and live through that moment that I’ve been wanting to do all these years.”•

INDIVIDUAL ATHELETE AWARDS

BASKETBALL:

Alex Mangold

Second Team All-GMC
First Team All-District 15
All-Southwest District Honorable Mention

Nate Johnson

GMC Player of the Year
District 15 Underclassmen of the Year
First Team All-Southwest District
Second Team All-Ohio

Clint Adkins

GMC Coach of the Year

WRESTLING:

Alex Epstein

First Team All-GMC
Second Team All-Southwest District
Sectional Champion
#1 Seed District Qualifier
State Qualifier

Aaron Sharp

Second Team All-GMC
First Team All-Southwest District
Sectional Champion
District Qualifier
State Qualifier

source OHSAA

GAINED SAFETY LOST TIME

East athletes speak on how the coronavirus has impacted their spring season and the start of their collegiate careers.

story **rebecca breland** | art **alexandra fernholz**

They left practice Thursday evening, expecting to return to practice the following day. They knew they would have Friday off as a day to practice remote learning, but never expected every day after that would also become remote learning. Thursday night, they recieved the news: their season had been postponed until they were back in school.

Then, as of April 20, 2020 Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine announced that all schools across Ohio were to remain closed for the remainder of the school year. The decision came as no surprise to many, but for spring athletes across the state, the news was devastating. Along with the cancellation of school came the cancellation of spring sports seasons as per the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA).

All across the U.S., Ohio, and the Lakota District, students have lost their ability to play their sport this season due to the coronavirus pandemic. For many, this was heartbreaking news, especially for seniors who lost out on their final season with their high school teammates.

East senior Preston Dorsey is among that group. Dorsey plays varsity baseball for East and will continue both his athletic and academic career

at Wittenberg University in Ohio next fall.

"At first I

was a little bit upset just because baseball is an outside sport and I really wasn't worried about coming in contact with other people too much, but I completely understand the ruling [sent down from the state]," Dorsey told Spark.

Dorsey would have gotten the most playing time out of all his years this year and he would have been able to play his main position as first string.

"Senior season is really something I've been looking forward to a lot because with a school as big as East and the team being so competitive [your senior season is] really your only chance to play a lot," Dorsey says. "This year would have been my year to play my position, play with all my friends that I've known for years, and it really would have felt like all my work paid off."

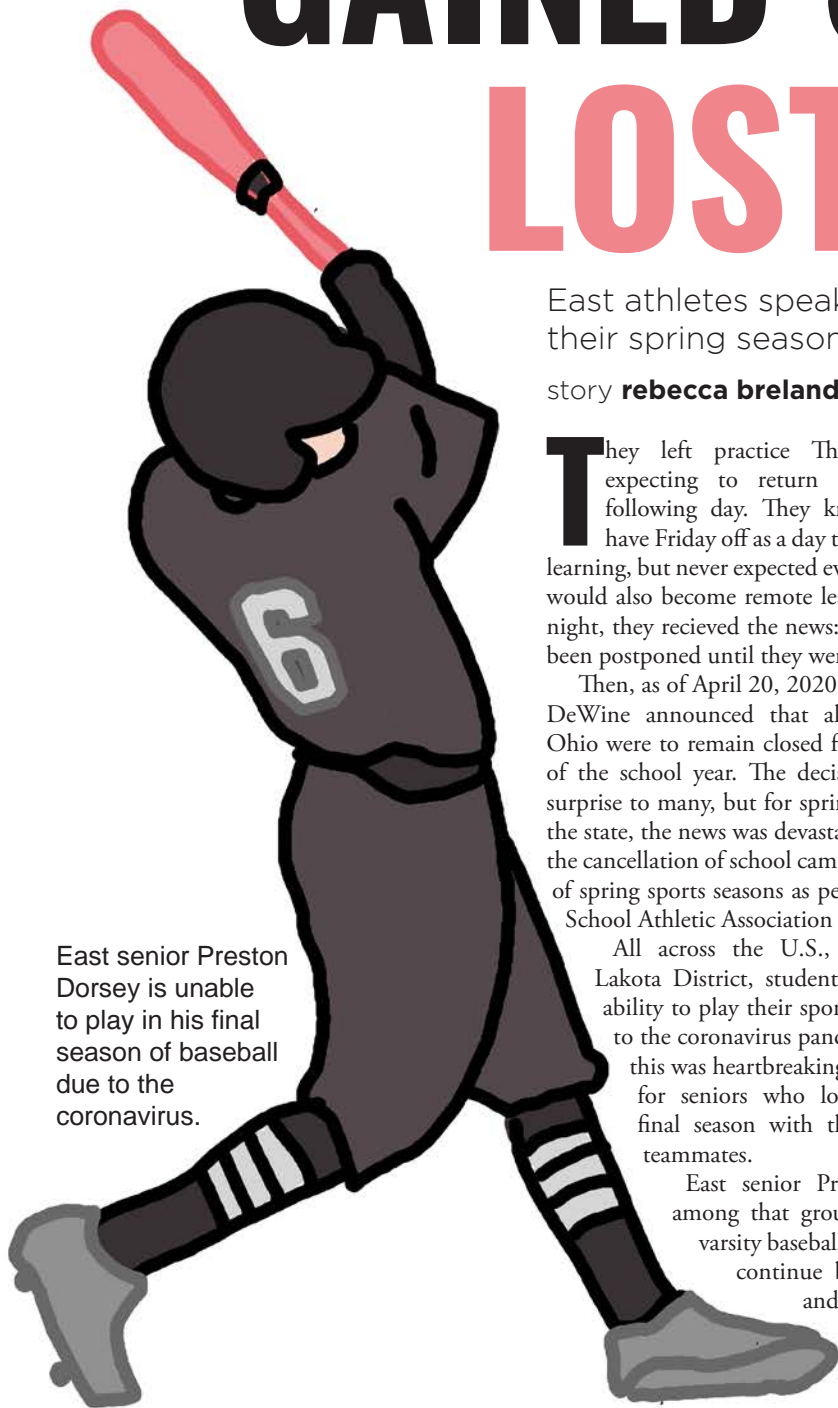
Dorsey believes that it is completely valid to be upset and that no one is overreacting about their sport being cancelled.

"I really feel sorry for [other athletes in my position] because I know personally how hard I've worked," Dorsey says. "If I could say anything to them I really just want to say I know what they're going through. I've gone through the grind and I've worked hard all three years, I completely understand that it's something to be really upset about."

In the midst of all of the information coming from the state, a key role was played by Lakota's own athletic staff, who are trying to help the athletes in this difficult situation.

"Our response has been to make sure our

East senior Preston Dorsey is unable to play in his final season of baseball due to the coronavirus.



student athletes are okay. I am worried about them,” East athletic director Richard Bryant told Spark. “Coaches have been instructed to continually make contact with kids to make sure they are in a good place psychologically.”

Bryant sees the implications this cancellation can hold for all of East’s student athletes, especially the seniors. He believes seniors being unable to have their final season of their final year cannot be discounted.

“My heart goes to our seniors, not being able to compete for a state title, for their school or with their friends. It is critical not to belittle this, it is incredibly difficult for all of our athletes. We will support our seniors in a very visible way to make sure that they are ok.”

Aside from the mental health aspect of the situation, East has been making sure that student athletes are able to stay in shape as well as heal during the

quarantine.

“Physically, coaches have provided plans for physical conditioning and health in hopes of kids being in shape to start their season,” Bryant says. “Trainers have been providing kids with rehab and workouts to remain healthy. For example, we have several kids coming off ACL surgeries. These kids have to have a rehabilitation plan in place to make sure that kids are able to continue to move forward in their healing.”

According to Bryant, teams are meeting, coaches are doing wellness checks, where they reach out to their athletes just to see how they are doing, and updates are still coming out of his office for all student athletes. East hopes to still honor athletes and recognize their achievements and have plans in place to do so.

Throughout all of this Bryant believes that what is being handed down to him from the state and from OHSAA has been the proper rulings.

“The OHSAA has been on point from the beginning,” Bryant says. “Perspective is important here for all of the naysayers and second guessers. People are dying in our country, our state and in our county.”

East junior and varsity volleyball setter Grant Hubbard also agrees that OHSAA’s actions and rulings during this time have been warranted.

“In light of the health situation, it was a very good choice to cancel [the season], just for everybody to be safe,” Hubbard told Spark. “When we get the chance to come back and actually play, then we can just come back even stronger. We have that mentality since we have all this time off, we’ve been preparing, so when we come back we’ll be better than ever.”

Like other spring athletes Hubbard,

along with the rest of his team, has received workout plans from the athletic trainers given to him by his coach. Hubbard believes these plans are vital in staying in shape during this time.

“I’ve been making sure my teammates are doing [the workout plan] too and checking up on them,” Hubbard says. “I’m trying to initiate that if they don’t, I try to encourage them, because this time off is just more time to prepare for us to succeed.”

Though Hubbard is saddened by the news of his season being cancelled, he chooses to look at the big picture and take every aspect into account.

“I was really devastated, but I realized that health is more important than sports,” Hubbard says. “Of course, I wanted to play in front of my friends and play with some of my best friends from high school, but we don’t want to keep spreading the virus to more people. We have to wait for this to die down and when it dies down we can come back better than ever, and take the GMC.”

Hubbard is hopeful that both he and his teammate will take this time to continue to grow as athletes. To others in similar situations, he says to keep working.

“Even though this is happening, I feel like [spring athletes] have got to keep working at it. They have got to keep getting better and better,” Hubbard says. “Some of the players from JV that want to move up to varsity are feeling bad about themselves, because they’re not getting the playing time. But you don’t need to be on the court to start getting better. You have to keep working at it; keep doing drills at home and keep working out so you can get better and better.”

Hubbard hopes to continue his athletic career in college after his senior year at East next year. Luckily for both himself and Dorsey, COVID-19 has not had a major impact on Hubbard’s recruitment or Dorsey’s preparations. Others, however, are already seeing the impact of coronavirus for their college seasons.

East senior, Keeley Goldberg, is not as fortunate when it comes to the impact COVID-19 has had on her collegiate season.

East senior Keeley Goldberg’s tryouts for her college dance team at University of Kentucky were forced to move online due to the coronavirus



Goldberg is a member of the East dance team and, though school dance is a winter sport, her club team competes throughout the year and the spring time is vital to her college dance process.

In the fall, Goldberg will be attending the University of Kentucky where she will be studying middle level education. For dance you must commit to the school before trying out and the tryout period is in the spring months of your senior year.

Normally, prospective dancers would attend different dance clinics throughout the year to learn a routine, the fight song, and work on their technical skills. From these clinics athletes are able to get a feel for the team as the current team is all there to watch the performances. Prospective athletes also have a chance at getting a video bypass, which allows them to bypass a portion of the tryout.

Because of the situation surrounding COVID-19, the University of Kentucky, as well as many other schools were forced to move their tryouts online using platforms such as Facebook Groups and different apps such as Band. This online platform is also leaving many dancers confused as to what they should do to prepare.

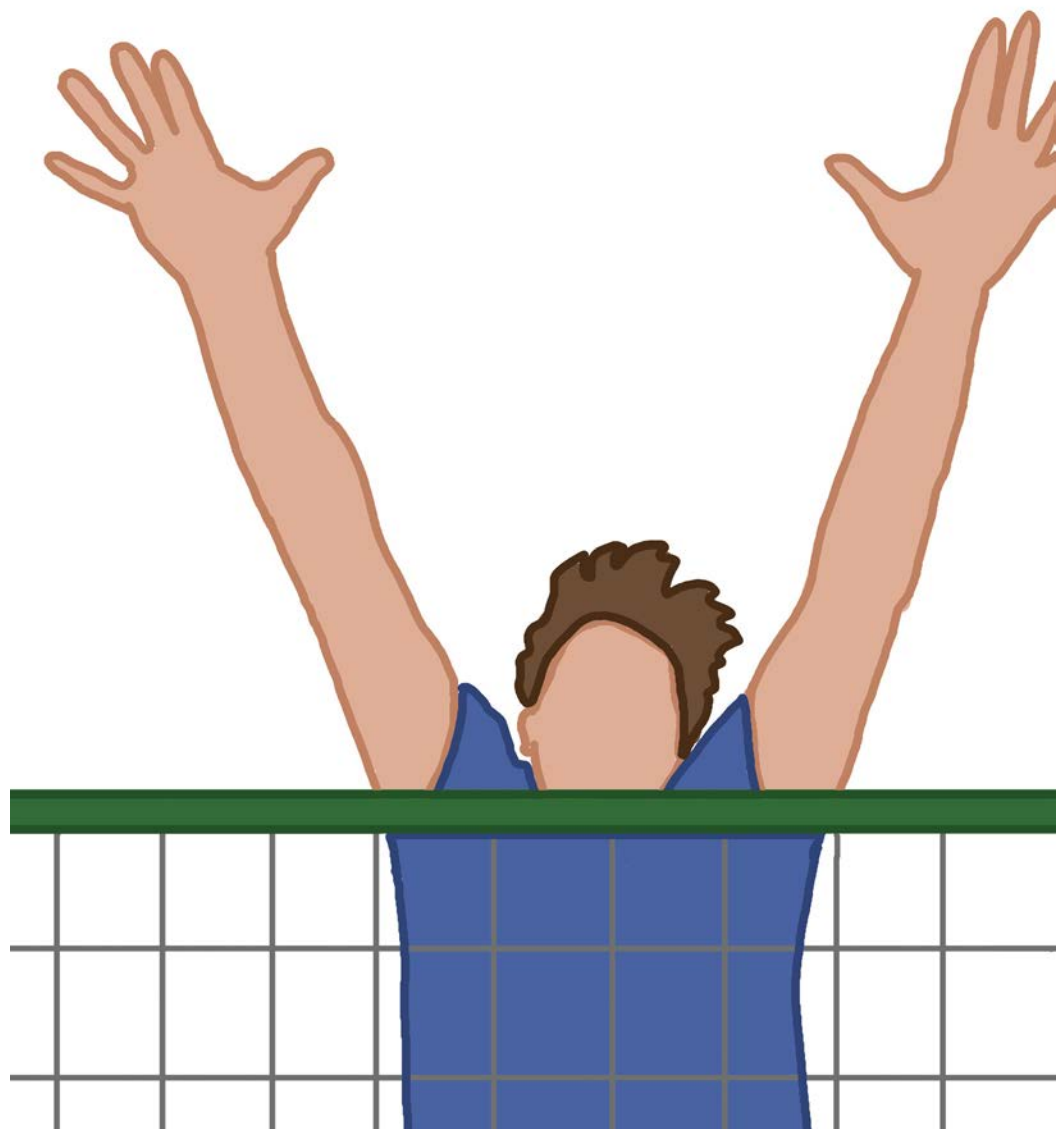
"There's a lot of girls that are stressing out right now," Goldberg says. "They updated it and they say you turn in a video of yourself doing your routine, and then they'll give you a video bypass."

Goldberg believes that having the tryout process moved online will impact how many dancers will receive video bypasses. She believes that it will be harder to see someone's personality on a video and therefore coaches may be more reluctant to give out bypasses.

"I've been trying to practice the stuff I would need for tryouts because usually I would have a certain day where I have private coaching for my tryouts and now I can't have that," Goldberg says. "So I'm not able to prepare properly and it's pretty stressful."

Goldberg's main worry concerning video tryouts is surrounding perception through a video.

"In person, it's so easy to stand out from a crowd," Goldberg says. "Standing out on



East junior Grant Hubbard's junior volleyball season was cut short due to the coronavirus, yet he tries to keep a positive outlook on the situation.

a video is so much harder and it's become a process of me, my mom, and my coach trying to figure out how I make myself stand out on a video."

Aside from the issues of the tryout itself, Goldberg is worried that this lack of in-person communication will affect the team dynamic down the line. At tryouts, the girls usually have around three days to meet each other and make new friends, but now all communication will have to be moved online. Nevertheless, Goldberg believes the team will come together in the end.

"I think that we'll be able to come together," Goldberg says. "It's just gonna be a little hard

at first having never met these girls. I have hope that we will click, because we're all going to the same place, same school, same dream. It'll be a little bit tough at first."

Dancers including Goldberg are not letting this hinder their passion though. No matter the circumstances, Goldberg says that she will continue to work towards her dream of being on the University of Kentucky dance team, no matter how the tryouts pan out.

"I'm trying to be positive about it because I want people to know that like there is hope, and everything will work out in the end," Goldberg says. "It's just gonna be a hard patch right now but it's all right. We're in this together. •

Time and time again, the press has proven necessary to our understanding of the world around us, informing us when we need to take action. Even now, journalists from all over the world are working tirelessly to give us real-time updates. They are the reason we all heard about the spread of the new coronavirus, an infectious, upper-respiratory virus that originated from Wuhan, China, as soon as we did. Because of all of their hard work, we knew very quickly when the virus was spotted in other countries, when the virus was named a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), and even when many schools and workplaces across the world were shut down.

The media is providing the facts about the virus and how to stay safe, not exaggerating the virus and causing mass panic. The main goal of the press is not to rouse panic by overexaggerating COVID-19, it is to inform the public about what is going on around the world and provide measures on how to stay safe. In fact, a worldwide survey conducted in March 2020 found that only 4% of US respondents saw no threat whatsoever from the pandemic, while 54% were either very or extremely concerned. This shows that with the spread of news by the press more people are looking at the virus in a serious light as opposed to an insignificant one.

However, an immense public panic over the pandemic has still occurred. This is not because of the media itself, but because of

with a stressful situation or idea. The brain releases neurotransmitters, chemicals in the brain transmit messages between nerves that mobilize the body to action by energizing muscles, quickening breath, and many other things known as the fight-or-flight response. Fear is a natural response to threats we perceive in our daily lives. When others are frightened or in high alert, our survival instincts kick in and we instantly assume we are in danger as well, which is a prime example of emotional contagion—the phenomenon of having one person's emotions and actions directly trigger similar emotions and reactions in others.

An effective way of spreading fear in today's world is through social media. Not only do online platforms such as Twitter and Instagram provide solace for many different people during this stressful time, but it can also be used for the spread of fake news not associated with the press or exaggerated comments from people who are either experiencing extreme levels of fear and anxiety, or just spreading panic. In fact, according to Heidi Larson, Professor of Anthropology, Risk and Decision Science at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, conflicting information, misinformation, and manipulated information spread by social media could hinder the public's faith in both their own safety and their trust in vaccines in an epidemic.

People can go to extreme lengths to help themselves feel safe once more. Whether that be buying out the shelves of toilet paper at

HEAD TO HEAD

Is the media overreacting to the coronavirus pandemic?

NO

column **emily hormann**
art **cassandra mueller**

Emily Hormann

each person's own perception of the media.

Each person perceives the news presented to them in a different way. When it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are two prominent reactions that are most prevalently seen: panic and composure. Fear is contagious. If one person sees a potential threat from the information provided to them, they can easily influence others to see the same.

According to HowStuffWorks, fear is essentially a chain reaction that occurs in the brain when a person comes in contact

the supermarket, wearing homemade masks, or dousing their hands in hand sanitizer is dependent on the extent of one's own fear. The larger the number of people frightened, the more extreme one's personal fear will be. Emotional contagion is at play here as well. By looking at posts about people stocking up on necessities out of fear, individuals can feel driven to engaging in similar practices to quell their own fear.

The press is the reason we hear about what
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It is simply human nature to blame. When there's a problem, people desperately try to find the cause and lay blame in order to fix the problem from the root. However, blame is a very powerful response. With the right influence, it is possible to lay blame on something that had little to nothing to do with the cause of the problem.

In those cases, finding an irrelevant scapegoat for the problem is counterintuitive. The purpose of blame is to acknowledge the root of a problem, so if you are focusing on something that is irrelevant to the root then you are simply not helping to fix the problem. Perhaps even making the problem worse.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the biggest problems the world has faced in a very long time. So naturally, blame was guaranteed to fall somewhere. In the United States, many media outlets have chosen that blame to fall upon President Donald Trump.

Is this a surprise? Not at all. A columnist from The Washington Post could trip on a pebble and would probably spout that Trump isn't doing enough to protect the American people from stray rocks. That example is obviously exaggerated, but the way many outlets are covering Trump speaking about the problem more so than the problem itself is worrisome.

Much of the blame is directed at the idea that Trump did not act soon enough to protect America. While it is true that there could have

Experts from the Harvard School of Public Health and the Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy say the pandemic could last two years, while scientists at Oxford University say they could have a vaccine out by this fall. The truth is it was unexpected and Trump shouldn't be expected to have known more than actual experts on the matter.

There are also blatant inaccuracies published by the media about Trump's response. A popular notion right now is that Trump cut the White House Pandemic Response team in early 2018. But the truth is while the position was indeed eliminated, the same responsibilities of that office were simply restructured into the National Security Council. So the pandemic specialists were still there, just not under that specific banner.

Not only is Trump blamed, but he is also scrutinized for everything he says on the issue. Near the beginning of Trump's briefings on the coronavirus, he referred to it as the Chinese or Wuhan virus. Then multiple media outlets proceeded to shame him for it. Though the facts are the facts, and the virus did in fact begin in Wuhan, China.

It is irrational to assume Trump meant anything racially charged by referring to the coronavirus by its originations. But the fact

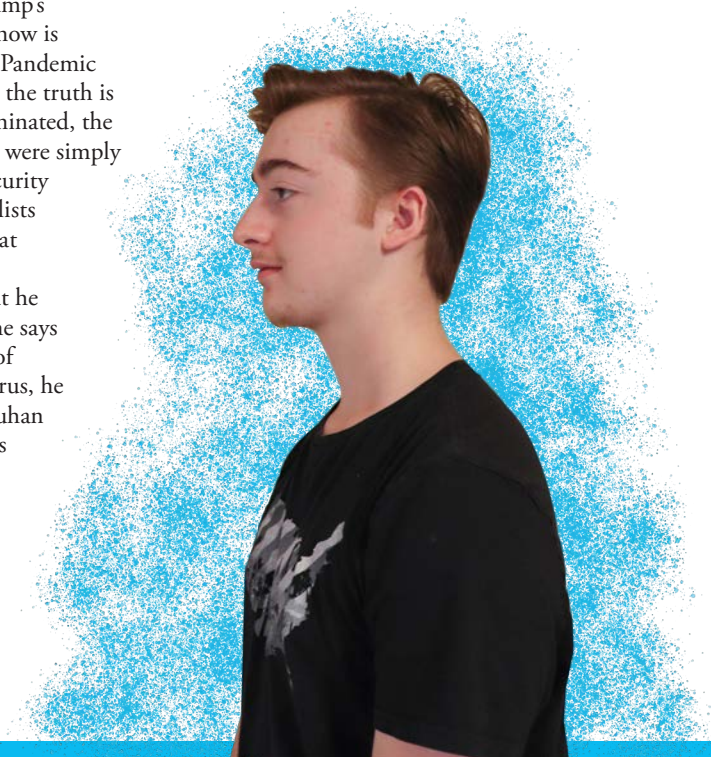
Amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Spark debates whether the media has overreacted to the severity of COVID-19.

been more done to prepare, the fact is that no one could have expected COVID-19 to spread the way it did. Hindsight bias may tell you otherwise, but in reality, coronavirus in humans is new, and it is difficult to prepare for something which has never experienced.

In 2009 when the H1N1 Influenza virus hit, it was nothing like the coronavirus. Experts have seen flu outbreaks before and knew how to respond accordingly. Though in regard to COVID-19, there isn't even a timetable for how long it could last.

that publications felt the need to cover the reference of the virus' name instead of developments of the problem itself is concerning. It is the job of journalists to deliver the facts and the news, not blind assumptions.

When the media does cover the coronavirus pandemic itself, in many cases they tend to frame the case numbers in a way to make a not so significant number seem like a lot more. As an example, The Washington ...continued on page 40



YES

column **brayden barger**
art **cassandra mueller**

Brayden Barger

POLITICAL CARTOON: HOW TO GRADUATE IN 2020 BY ALEXANDRA FERNHOLZ



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is going on around the world on a daily basis.

Without journalists risking their lives each day to inform us, we would not know half of what we see now as common knowledge. If not for the press, we would not have known about the secrets written in the Pentagon Papers, the shocking Watergate Scandal, or the harsh reality of the Vietnam War. If not for the press, we all would not know as much about the new coronavirus as we do now.

Together, we can stand up against these false reports and attempts to spread panic. By spreading awareness and a bit of positivity, we can get through this pandemic. •

-Emily Hormann

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Post published a story titled, "Another grave milestone: More than 10,600 cases in D.C., Maryland and Virginia." Which indeed sounds like a grave milestone, until you consider the fact that only makes up 0.0007% of that specific population.

Framing the case numbers in that light leads to more fear and ultimately more panic, as is seen with the panic buying that ensues at grocery stores across the country. Which especially isn't good as grocery stores are one of the most likely places to contract COVID-19, as it is one of few places where gatherings of 10 plus people still take place. If the media reacts to the pandemic by instilling even more

fear into the public, the problem will only become worse.

The purpose of journalism is to cover the news and to convey the reality of facts. However, journalists and media outlets today seem more concerned with pushing their agendas by painting a false narrative of Trump being the sole scapegoat to blame for the pandemic in America.

What the media should be covering more is the vaccine. That is what really matters and what will ultimately end the pandemic. As much as left winged media may want it to, demonizing Donald Trump will not solve all of the world's problems. •

-Brayden Barger

IN THE MIDDLE

ANNA MULLINS photography alexandra fernholz

In the middle of a pandemic, I stood up from dinner with my family, when time seemed to slow. I felt a pain in my chest and then everything went dark. I awoke lying on the floor with a pain in my foot from where it had scratched against the table when I fell. My sister was on the phone with a 911 operator.

Though my vision was blurry, I could hear everything going on around me perfectly. The operator asked questions like 'Does anyone in your family work in the medical field?', 'Has anyone in your household been sick?', and, 'Has anyone in your family been in contact with anyone who has been sick?'

These questions are additions to standard operating procedure, which would include asking about previous medical conditions, if the person is still breathing, etc. But while a global pandemic is occurring, 911 operators need to make sure that emergency personnel will have access to all of the required safety precautions, like knowing if they might be going into an infected area, while taking care of the public.

Soon, flashing lights were outside my front door and two paramedics walked in. Both were wearing face masks and gloves. Instead of carrying their own thermometer, they asked my parents if we had one to use. All other instruments that they used were disposable. While they waited to see if I was feeling better, they asked my parents the big question: whether or not they wanted me to be taken to the hospital.

The debate posed quite a difficult question: I would be offered better care at the hospital and easier access to medical professionals in case something was seriously wrong with me, but on the other hand it might also put me right in the line of fire for everyone's biggest worry of the 21st century. While the hospital would do everything it could to keep me safe, it was no guarantee.

Eventually, my parents decided that it would be safer to monitor me at home and to call our family doctor in the morning. If my parents had decided to send me to the hospital, according to a Facebook post by Cincinnati Children's Hospital, two healthy parents/guardians/caregivers would be allowed to travel with children to the hospital despite previously spread misconceptions.

Even though I was kept from the danger of being out in public during a pandemic, our emergency response teams are not given that same protection. Six firefighters tested positive for the coronavirus at the West Chester Fire Department. Their commitment to their job and line of service put them straight in the way of danger.

They do the difficult work that puts them at risk because they are committed to protecting the community. The least we can do is give all firefighters, EMTs, and medical personnel the proper thanks for their hard work and dedication to making sure the rest of us have access to emergency care.

Living in a time of such uncertainty, it can be unnerving to realize that resources I previously took for granted might no longer be easy to access. Lakota is located in an affluent suburb with three hospitals within 10 minutes of each other. There is also easy access to police stations in West Chester and Liberty Township as well as fire departments. These public services are all the more at risk because of the pandemic.

Despite the fear and unpredictability of the current world there are still people out there risking everything to make sure that we can make it through. We are protected by heroes serving on the front lines, doctors, nurses, and paramedics. Protected by those who serve in the middle of the storm. •

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