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During my third-grade graduation my class members and I received a special light blue and black (my school colors) sweatshirt, with the phrase printed boldly on the back, 'Mahwah Class of 2020.' At the time, my 9-year-old self imagined 2020 being millions of years in the future. Little did I know how fast I would grow up and how soon that special year, 2020, would come creeping up on me. I dreamt of the feeling when I would walk down the aisle and receive my diploma while my proud family members applauded me for my hard work. However, in February of that special year, 2020, I would be sitting in a cold science classroom when my teacher discussed the possibility of school closing for sanitation due to the arrival of a novel virus called COVID-19.

I was naïve then and celebrated the idea of two weeks off from school. As it was the dead of winter my senior year, senioritis was really taking a toll on my brain. I loved the possibility of being able to relax for a little bit. My school did close and I expected to return feeling refreshed with brand new motivation to finish my last school year strong. However, I was unaware of the vicious way corona virus so quickly spread, harming so many families. Two weeks turned into two months and my anxiety kicked in. Rather than worrying about writing essays and completing homework assignments I was worried about my life.

Life during quarantine from February through out the summer of 2020 was extremely hard. I felt like a character in the movie, "Groundhog Day." If my fellow classmates were asked "What would you want future generations to know about what life during the COVID pandemic was like?" they may respond quickly with negative adjectives. Although the pandemic did bring

much grief, anxiety, devastation, and loneliness. I would want future generations to know life during the COVID pandemic was not all bad.

During quarantine, my whole family was home together which allowed us to grow a lot closer. My 11-year-old golden retriever received a lot more attention and daily walks. I was able to focus on myself and mental health. Being home gave me a lot more time to do things I never had time to do with my busy schedule. I read books in my free time, tried many Tik Tok trends, like whipped coffee, prioritized exercise and found a love for baking and cooking.

This lifestyle in the COVID pandemic has become the new normal and it is hard to think about life without masks, social distancing, sweatpants every day, and sanitizing whenever I get the chance. With the new vaccines I do wish for things to get better quickly, however, I am thankful the pandemic allowed me to build better relationships with my loved ones and put my health as a top priority.