

March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Sometimes better known as “the day the world shutdown”. I remember exactly what I did that day, where I was when I heard that my junior year of high school was taking a “weekend-long break for sanitation”. I recall the phone conversation that I had with my mother that morning in gym class, where she told me that the private institution that she worked at was taking some time off as well. This important year was getting a little stressful, so I wasn’t opposed to the idea. I had a World History essay due soon that I would not mind if it got postponed...

I was sitting in my car when I got the news. My friend, who had a mother that worked in the school system, broke it to me. “No school until Monday” the text read. The group I was with celebrated. What could be better than a surprise 4-day weekend? Extra time to hang out and be together. We began to make plans, talking about how crazy this whole situation was and how the NBA suspended their season.

It’s safe to say that was short-lived. Over that weekend, the concepts of quarantine and social distancing came to life. The pandemic turned into one of the most stressful times over a short period. The virus had reached the U.S., and I began to hear that people I knew had been affected. Friends of friends, celebrities, and other familiar names. It dawned on me that this was serious. I took a trip to the grocery store on March 13<sup>th</sup>, and the shelves where rolls of toilet paper, milk, and meat once lay were essentially empty. Shoppers were sanitizing their groceries and wearing disposable surgical masks. Each day, new facts about the pandemic were released from the CDC and the WHO, causing more and more chaos. Businesses closed, sit-down restaurants became takeout-only, and events were cancelled. Little did we all know on March 13<sup>th</sup> that we wouldn’t see each other in person for longer than we could have ever imagined, and the world would never be the same.

Without a doubt, COVID-19 greatly affected the world more than anyone could have predicted in February and March. Despite the stressful times and the pain of being apart, the infamous “Quarantine” period gave people time to think, spend time with family, enjoy the outdoors, and work on things that they were passionate about. For example, with all this time to herself, a friend of mine was able to start a painting business that she had always wanted to create. Another was able to get into photography, another into running. Although it’s easy to see the negatives of being “stuck” inside, I think it’s important to remember the creativity that this free time encouraged.