

Transcript of Interview with Mary Grace Arnets by Vincent Fortunato

Interviewee: Mary Grace Arnets

Interviewer: Vincent Fortunato

Date: 09/20/2020

Location (Interviewee):

Location (Interviewer):

Abstract: This is an interview with Vincent Fortunato's friend, Mary Grace Arents who lives in Sarasota Florida, about her experience during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Vincent Fortunato 00:00

What is your full name and date of birth?

Mary Grace Arents 00:02

My name is Mary Grace Arents, and my date of birth is December 20, 2001.

Vincent Fortunato 00:07

Do you give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project?

Mary Grace Arents 00:11

I do give consent to be interviewed for the COVID-19 archive project.

Vincent Fortunato 00:15

Awesome. Can you state the date and time for me?

Mary Grace Arents 00:17

The time is 5:05pm. And the date is September 20, 2020.

Vincent Fortunato 00:23

Okay. So, when was the first time that you heard about or talked about COVID-19?

Mary Grace Arents 00:27

So, the first time I heard about COVID-19, I was at boarding school, and a lot of international students from China were worried. I remember the American students all thinking that I would never come to the United States.

Vincent Fortunato 00:40

Yeah. When was the first time you got worried about COVID-19?

Mary Grace Arents 00:44

The first time I got worried about it, I was on spring break in the Bahamas with my mom and my friend. And we had just heard that the first case had come to Florida. That was worrying, and then the next day, a case have been discovered in my city. So, we decided to come back quickly because we were worried that the US border would close.

Vincent Fortunato 1:02

That sounds scary. Do you have any grandparents or older family members?

Mary Grace Arents 1:06

Yes, I have a grandmother that lives close by to me.

Vincent Fortunato 1:09

And how did she and the other older people in their life adapt to living with the threat of COVID?

Mary Grace Arents 01:13

My grandmother was very scared. She rarely left her house, and we had all of her groceries delivered to her. A couple of weeks ago, someone in her retirement community started running around and spitting on people and saying she had Coronavirus. My grandmother was terrified to even go outside to take a morning walk. So, she wanted to carry a bat on her morning walks to protect herself, but we convinced her to carry just a cane instead. She's like, terrified of catching the virus.

Vincent Fortunato 01:39

Wow. Did the pandemic ever make you worried or anxious?

Mary Grace Arents 01:43

Not really, because I was lucky enough to be able to stay home with my mom, and my mom started working from home. We only went to pub—to public to get groceries. And we also had a lot of free time to dedicate to self-care. Like we bought kayaks and started kayaking a lot around where I live, it was a good way to relieve stress

Vincent Fortunato 02:03

Yeah, what was the largest change that you experienced in your day to day life?

Mary Grace Arents 02:06

So, coming home from boarding school, I hadn't spent much time with my family. It was kind of a shock to suddenly have that much time at home. But I also couldn't see my dad because he's a pulmonologist. And he would have been the first one exposed, and we were afraid of infecting my grandmother.

Vincent Fortunato 02:23

Make sense. What was your favorite thing or tradition that came out of quarantine?

Mary Grace Arents 02:26

So over quarantine, I got to foster six kittens. It was fun and it was a way to help the world and everything felt so chaotic. I also went on an RV trip with my mom and my friend because we had planned so many trips that summer that were all canceled. So, we decided to stay away from people, go in the RV, and travel all around Florida for a week. It was good way to adventure without the risks of being near other people and that weren't in my pod.

Vincent Fortunato 02:51

Yeah. So, what were your thoughts on the local response where you were?

Mary Grace Arents 02:54

I don't think Florida did a very good job of responding especially since a lot of our population is older and therefore more vulnerable. Since it was near spring break when everything went crazy, the beaches started to close and to stop Spring Breakers from partying. The first beaches in Miami closed and then all the Spring Breakers went north to the next open beaches and then those closed and then the pattern continued. So, I was worried about a lot of young people coming up to my town in Central Florida and spreading the virus.

Vincent Fortunato 03:24

Yeah. Did you go anywhere else during the pandemic?

Mary Grace Arents 03:27

I did. I went to New York State for a month. I stayed with my friend and I quarantined before seeing anyone. That first New York and places like New York City and New Rochelle had the big numbers of Coronavirus. By the time I went there, Florida was much worse.

Vincent Fortunato 03:43

How's the response there different to what you're used to in Florida?

Mary Grace Arents 3:45

People were taking it way more seriously there, I think. I never saw anyone go out to eat or have large gatherings. I stayed in my pod and we had- we did stuff only in our small group. We went- we had fun together. I went to upstate New York and even had a fake prom, which we called 'morp,' which is prom backwards.

Vincent Fortunato 04:04

What did you wish you didn't miss out on due to COVID-19?

Mary Grace Arents 04:07

So, my school has a beautiful graduation tradition normally, and I had looked forward to it for three years. There was a virtual ceremony, but it just wasn't the same. It made me sad. We're supposed to come back in a year now to have a graduation celebration. But I'm not sure how many people will come back for that, especially since everyone is spread out all over the world, and we will have finished a year of college by then. I also missed going to Greece for my first semester of college to Northeastern and N-UN program. I've been very excited about doing that. I also made a bunch of plans to travel throughout Europe and visit my friends in Germany, Sweden and Spain and hoping to be able to do that once all the craziness stops.

Vincent Fortunato 04:51

Yeah. Was there any difference that you've heard of in the responses from students in other countries?

Mary Grace Arents 04:56

I don't talk to my friends a lot about that, but I do know that in Sweden masks aren't as common and if you do wear a mask, you're looked at the same way that here people look at somebody who's not wearing a mask.

Vincent Fortunato 05:10

Wow. Well, thank you for the interview.

Mary Grace Arents 05:11

Thank you.