

## Going The Social Distance

It all started when I received the news of being accepted into the Andover Summer program. All types of emotions shot through my body and I didn't know which one I was to convey to my mother who had given me the news. Ultimately, I decided to be sort of sad to lose half of my summer considering that I am a rising senior and this is like my last summer with most of my friends at home yet optimistic about new experiences. As I walked into the Hartsfield-Jackson Airport I realized that there was no turning back, I was going to be away from home for five weeks. Once I reached the campus I went into this mental frenzy where I was mad at my mom for allowing me to come to this place and sad because it felt like I was going to be left stranded in this place that was foreign to me. During the first week and a half of being at Andover everyone had been placed on a "modified quarantine" which meant masks everywhere and no leaving our campus. In my first class I was given the assignment to write about how I felt about things that were happening during our quarantine period. Here are some highlights from the diary I kept:

Day One: It was evident that there weren't many people in my dorm who were Black however I met two amazing friends. They have helped me to feel more "at home" and not to discredit my other housemates or classmates, but Maya and Maya are Black and look more like me so I just felt a bit more comfortable with them. My first night in that small, hot room was horrible. They have no air conditioning in the dorm rooms at Andover and I was tossing and turning all night to find a cool spot on my bed, but little did I know there were no cool spots. The next morning I made sure the first thing I did was call my mom and let her know that I had almost melted away the night before. I complained to my mom many times about how unbearable the heat was and repeatedly asked her to purchase a fan. When she called and told me that she had finally purchased the fan I was ecstatic and began waiting for my package to arrive.

Day Two: I imagined myself at home sitting with some friends and simply talking to them and having no masks. I've noticed that I get the most homesick at night because it's when I'm able to sit and think about how much I miss being at home, my bed, mom, family and dogs. I had a pretty busy day which is good because it keeps my mind off of missing home. One thing that has helped me a lot is playing volleyball because I play at home. It helps me to relieve stress and I am immediately able to recall many of the great times that previous teammates and I have had on the court. But I realize I'm just about already on week 2 here so time seems to move a bit quicker than I thought it would.

Day Three: The jump houses and bull ride at the carnival looked really fun, but I couldn't convince myself to actually get on the attractions. My group and I left to go play volleyball. I really love to play, but the fact that I had to play in a mask really irritated me because I get hot super quick in the masks. Nonetheless, here I am sitting around waiting for more saliva to

produce so that I can spit it into a tiny little bottle and prove that I am still negative for covid. It sounds absolutely ridiculous and I never thought I'd ever do something like this. I stared at the walls in this little sad room that I'm bringing life to and wondered about what life would be like as a student who actually went to school full time here...and I couldn't do it. Kudos to the very strong souls who can go to a boarding school like this year round, especially in an area like this. I'm happy that I got through one whole week here and now only 4 more.

Day Four: I do appreciate Andover for getting me into some type of routine again because when I return home I'll be going to school two days later and I feel like the program is not only helping me get reaccustomed to waking up early, but also prepares me for how classes may be in masks. I have a calendar in my room where I cross out days as they go on, like my personal countdown.

Day Five: While heading out for breakfast all I could think about were my packages and if they were going to be delivered, if I had to go pick them up or if the mail people were going to say my packages were too big and needed to be sent back. In my second period class we discussed how in each dorm, although everyone may be friends, there are different little groups within one big group. This reminded me of how my dorm was because everyone has their own cliques, but we also are able to come together as one group and hang out. While blinding me in most of my sets and making me hot, I was glad to have been able to see the sun because it's been quite gloomy with all the rain here. Now that I'm thinking about it, I would have to say that it has been easier to wear my mask when it's raining and the sun makes it look absolutely beautiful outside.

Day Six: I was excited to go to volleyball practice because it's absolutely one of my favorite ways to end the day. As soon as I walked to practice and began stretching, I heard thunder and without any warning we were all sent home for the day. This kind of upset me because I had no time to play at all and we couldn't go to the gym because it began storming almost immediately. Anyways, after dinner I came up to my room to cross off another day on my calendar (another one of my favorite ways to end the day because it's a constant reminder of how much time i have left before I can go home). I'm also kind of anxious to see how my work is going to be published on a website for lots and lots of people to see.

On day seven our modified quarantine had ended. We were now able to go on field trips off campus, walk to local stores and resstaraunts, and were allowed to not wear masks outside.