

Beneath the rugged San Juan Mountain range in southwestern Colorado sits a small town I call home. These mountains are my playground every season of the year from snowboarding in Telluride to camping and hiking. No amount of weather has blown through that has kept me indoors because in Colorado there is always something adventurous to do outdoors. That was until a mysterious virus slowly crept in and changed everything. As a sixteen-year-old (turning seventeen in October) really active young man, the shutdowns were really disruptive to the outdoor lifestyle that I have always known. With closures, like Telluride Ski Area, I found myself home spending many hours a day by myself. This was not all a bad thing because I still had homeschool classes to complete. But as the days turned into weeks, it became more and more difficult not to have the social interaction with friends that I normally enjoyed on a daily basis. Thus, staying home was wearing me down more than I ever thought it would. I had to find ways to spend my time other than laying in bed later and playing video games on the couch. I had to take control of my situation during this coronavirus pandemic.

My name is Ethan Hartman, and I am finishing my sophomore year in highschool. I live in a beautiful rural town called Montrose. It is small with a population just under twenty thousand people, but I do not mind it at all since we have a great community. The year 2020 started out seeming to be a very typical year, not greatly different from any other, until March 11th came around. This was the exact day that I realized that there was a serious issue brewing around the world. This is what the news was now calling the coronavirus pandemic because of the large number of COVID-19 cases being reported nationwide. The COVID-19 virus soon caused the entire nation to begin shutting down day-by-day in March, but specifically my little hometown became lifeless. Colorado's Governor, Jared Polis, issued a mandatory stay-at-home

order on March 26, 2020. Very few businesses were still allowed to stay open, for food only the grocery stores and a few delivery restaurants that were categorized as essential. Our town only has a few elementary schools, two middle schools and one highschool which all closed very suddenly. Montrose was not prepared for school to be forced online; and it took a good month, until April 14th, to be able to get a system that enabled education to resume for everyone in our rural community to learn from home. Even with the start of online school it was never really the same, teachers cut down to one or two assignments per week. On top of this all sporting activity came to an early end. I personally was very disappointed that my lacrosse season ended before it even really began, but I understood that it was necessary to prevent the spread of the virus. Online school was much less of a shock for myself since I already took the majority of my classes online during the school year. I tried my best to stay calm through what I knew was only the beginning of the pandemic, but not knowing when or how things would end was worrisome. Having never experienced anything like this quarantine, it was like being grounded by your parents.

During this time at home I was able to learn a few things about myself. I began to understand what it is like to slow life down, and I really tried to focus on little things around me. As a committed athlete I found new ways to exercise and stay in shape at home, for example I would do push ups, pullups, situps, jumping jacks and more. These exercises were nothing new to me, I was just used to lifting weights for the football team every day at the school. Also, my coach began Zoom Meeting workouts where many of my teammates and I could get together to exercise virtually. As a student I have learned that to be successful you have to be responsible. Procrastination will make life so much more difficult, rather than just getting things done when

they need to be done. It may seem easier at the time to push assignments off, but it will only build up more and more. I also discovered a new hobby of building and woodworking to fill my time that was usually spent at sporting practice. With Home Depot deemed essential I was able to buy materials to build a 10 foot by 10 foot fort, a skateboard, and a guitar so far. Another thing that I learned is the importance of social interaction. It is one thing to see and talk to your family everyday, but I began to notice how much I missed taking in person to my friends.

Communication through technology is not the same as in person. Face-to-face conversations is something I will never take for granted again after life returns to normal. As unfortunate as COVID-19 has been, I have tried my best to make positive habits and work on things that are beneficial to my life during quarantine. For some, things were not as positive, many of my friends failed to do any assignments once school went online and their grades suffered. I know very few people trying to stay active around the house, but it is so important that you do. Our bodies need exercise to function properly.

Many people do not know how to react to a nation wide virus, and neither do I. The thing I keep reminding myself is diseases somewhat like the coronavirus have happened in the past and we have worked through them. For example, in the early to mid 1900s smallpox was sweeping the county much like the coronavirus is. Smallpox was deadly for some and not for others, but regardless I believe people were worried and uncertain much like we are today. There were other pandemics that changed history in the United States, like Sars, Aids, and serious flus as well. Americans continually worked through these health issues until vaccinations were created. History can teach us very important lessons and in this case maybe it cannot teach us to prevent the viruses, but it can tell us to have hope that the coronavirus will not last forever.

We need to use this as a reminder to practice sanitary habits all the time, not just when a pandemic is happening. Germs and other nasty infections are around everyone at all times. If each person does their part to work on healthy habits, maybe we can prevent future viruses before they ever start. Finally, there is hope for the future after COVID-19 is contained. Masks that you see people everywhere wearing will come off. Gas prices, now under \$1.50 per gallon, will go back up. Bare grocery store shelves will be restocked. It may look and feel a little different than what we are used to, but nonetheless you can find new ways to take control of your situations when things are not going as planned and we will adjust to our new situation.