

Transcript of Oral History Monologue by Debbie Woodall

Interviewee: Debbie Woodall

Interviewer: Self

Date: 04/29/2020

Location: Chicago, Illinois

Abstract: Retired nurse, Debbie Woodall reflects on how she felt and handled the COVID 19 virus. She discusses her desire to return to work to help her former colleagues and the moment she realized she just couldn't. She also discusses other ways in which she aided the effort to stop the spread.

Debbie Woodall 0:01

The date is April 29, 2020, time 11:08AM. My name is Debbie Woodall and I live in Chicago, Illinois. I retired from a 40-year nursing career about six years ago. When I first heard about COVID-19, my feelings were dominated by sadness and fear. I was very worried about some of my former colleagues who were still on the front lines working in hospitals. My natural impulse was to want to jump right back in to help as the healthcare systems appeared quite overwhelmed at first. However, as much as my heart and mind were willing, I had to accept that physically, I was no longer able. I struggled to figure out what I could do to help. My husband and I started calling our friends and family more often to check on their safety and wellbeing. I did make a few financial donations but I still had a deep sense of helplessness that weighed on my mind almost constantly. My heart was breaking for all the victims of this terrible virus, for the families that could not be with them, for all the people who lost their jobs, and for all the people living alone and dying alone. One thing I am very glad to see is how much my community is expressing their gratitude to health care workers, first responders, and so many other essential workers. I see thank you signs and windows all across my city. And every night at 8PM people are flashing lights from their windows, playing music and singing from their balconies as a tribute to healthcare workers. Since my husband and I are retired, the biggest change for us is not being able to enjoy exercising in the gym, going to sporting events, theater and restaurants. And especially not being able to socialize, we really miss seeing our family and friends. The state of Illinois went under shelter in place orders on March 20. I do however, still encounter people on my daily walks and while occasionally shopping for food and essentials. In the beginning, I started to notice that I wasn't even looking at people; mask or no mask, it seemed like people didn't even want to make eye contact. The more I thought about that, it did not make me feel very good about myself. So I decided to make a concerted effort to at least attempt eye contact or acknowledge people in some way. The fact is, we are all in this together and everyone deserves to feel like others do see them and value them as another human. I felt so strongly about this, I was inspired to write a song. Maybe this was something I could do to help. Music can be very therapeutic. It has really helped me feel better by giving me the outlet to express my feelings. My mediocre vocals aside, I hope that others can still appreciate the music and the message. Thank you.