

Transcript of Interview with Kristina Jordan by Kristopher Strebe

Interviewee: Jordan, Kristina (Tina)

Interviewer(s): Strebe, Kristopher

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Abstract: This interview was recorded as part of The Covid 19 Oral History Project, a project of the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute associated with The Journal of a Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive. Tina is an essential worker, working as a paramedic for an ambulance service in Southern Wisconsin. She is also a full-time faculty at the technical college where she trains EMS students. Her husband is also an essential worker as a volunteer firefighter. In this interview she discusses changes to clinical hours for her students, transitioning to using human simulators. Issues with PPE shortages. Transitioning to online learning and how teaching was different. How her local Governor response affected her and her community. Changes to her day-to-day life with family and friends. Fear for her parents getting covid, staying isolated and missing family during a years' worth of missed holidays and getting vaccinated. The effects on her community and the political aspect that crept into the COVID pandemic. Frustration with COVID deniers, mask refusal and social media blasting false information. Seeing the realities of COVID as an EMS driver and transporting COVID patients. Her feelings for those who lost loved ones during covid and their grieving process. Political, both state and federal, response to COVID. News outlets and how she chose to receive news. Comparing COVID to other world events like 9/11 and Desert Storm. Living in a rural area. Her hopes for the future and the lessons she hopes we have learned.

Strebe, Kristopher 00:00

My name is Kristopher Strebe, and I'm here with Tina Jordan and Elise Schrader. The date is April 7, 2021. The time is 12pm Central. Tina is in Juda, Wisconsin; Elise is in Indianapolis, Indiana; and I am in Janesville, Wisconsin. Tina, I'd like to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gift document that you signed. This interview is for the COVID-19 Oral History Project, which is associated with the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive. The COVID-19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history project focused on archiving the lived experiences of the COVID-19 epidemic. We have designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create and upload their oral histories to our open access and open source database. This study will help us collect narratives and understandings about COVID-19, as well as help us better understand the impacts of the pandemic over time. The recordings, demographic information, and the verbatim transcripts will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive, and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. Do you have any questions about the project that I can answer?

Jordan, Kristina (Tina) 01:25

I do not.

Kristopher 01:29

Taking part in the study is voluntary, you may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in the study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University, IUPUI, or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that your interviews will be recorded in digital video and or audio format, and may be transcribed. The recordings and possible transcriptions of my interviews, copies of any supplementary documents or additional photos that you wish to share, and the informed consent and deed of gift may be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System, and will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions?

Tina 02:33

Can't think of any.

Kristopher 02:36

Alright, a little bit more here. In addition to your signed document, would you please offer a verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to the following terms? I'm as..., I am asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the following license: the Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial Sharealike 4.0 International CCBYNCSA 4.0. Moreover..., oh. Do you agree?

Tina 03:11

I agree.

Kristopher 03:12

And that's what you signed off. Finally, I want to ask for verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview..., that your interview will be made available to the public immediately. Do you agree?

Tina 03:24

Yes.

Kristopher 03:26

All right. That's all that we have for that. So, um..., let's, uh, get into the questions here. Um. So if you could, could you tell me a bit about, you know, what is..., what are the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis? What..., what's your life like?

Tina 03:43

Well, I have multiple different..., different jobs. I work as a paramedic on an ambulance service in Southern Wisconsin. I also am a full time faculty at the technical college training EMS students, and occasionally I teach advanced cardiac life support and pediatric advanced life support at the staff at one of the hospitals here in Wisconsin. So, typically, that means my full time job is at the Technical College, but I run at least one day a week as a paramedic on our local ambulance. And, I am also on the small community fire and first response unit here in..., in my hometown.

Kristopher 04:33

That's Juda?

Tina 04:34

Yes.

Kristopher 04:35

Juda, yes. Um, so that gets to..., let's get to where do you live and what is it like to live there? What is it like in Juda?

Tina 04:43

I..., here in Juda, it's very, very rural. Um..., we have one small school with probably 300 students in the whole K through 12 district. So it's a..., a very, very rural area, um... And the thing that was very interesting, um..., during the whole COVID situation is I have three children and all of my children work in healthcare at different facilities. And, my husband is also an essential worker, and he is on our volunteer fire department.

Kristopher 05:33

You mentioned he's an essential worker. That's..., that is because he's with the fire department?

Tina 05:38

Uh..., he is a volunteer on the local fire department, but he works for the, for the municipality as a mechanic for the street department. So he never stopped working during the whole pandemic, either.

Kristopher 06:03

So when you first learned about COVID-19, um..., what were your thoughts about it? And then, if you will, um..., how might your thoughts have changed over time?

Tina 06:14

Well, it seemed like it all happened so fast. We were on break from the technical college, and I was on spring break, visiting, um..., with my friend, her family in Arizona. So, when I first left at the beginning of the week, to go to Arizona, it..., it felt to me like COVID was something you were just starting to hear about on the news. It wasn't really here in Wisconsin, or so it felt at the time. And, when we went through multiple airports, there were only a couple people who were wearing a mask. And, by the end of the week, we we're getting all these emails from the Technical College, that we were going to shut down for a few days until we figured out how to teach a lot of these classes online. And basically, in just a few days, the whole, um..., you know, the whole academic world changed at the technical college. And we weren't allowed to have face-to-face classes for a couple of weeks. By the time I got back, and I went back to working on the ambulance, we were very, very concerned about COVID. We were, you know, disinfecting everything, we were wearing, um..., you know, full PPE. We were wearing mask on every call, we would designate one person to go into the home when we responded and approach the patient, have the patient put on a mask, and immediately take the patient's temperature and see if they had a fever and, um..., start asking, you know, questions about if they potentially had been exposed to COVID. So, any patient who had any type of respiratory problems we treated as if they could have COVID. As..., as far as the ambulance, it was..., it was crazy at first, because there wasn't enough personal protective equipment for everybody. And, we were literally wearing plastic rain ponchos for gowns because that's all we could get. Um..., when things first started..., the N95 masks that the health care workers were wearing were hard to come by.

So, we wore the same one for up to eight hours or eight patient contacts. So, we would wear those until they started to fall apart or they weren't effective anymore, because they were so rare and..., and hard to find. As far as the school was concerned, we started having face to face classes again, uh..., after..., a couple of..., a couple of weeks, we would have the students wear masks and protective eyewear; take their temperatures as..., as they came into the classroom. We had to teach the new EMTs that were going out into the workforce these skills that we were unable to teach them online. So, we would have social distancing with small groups, we would be disinfecting everything after each practice session. And we lost all of our clinical sites for all of our students. So normally, our students go into the emergency room and do certain skills with, um..., you know, a certain number of hours in the emergency room, and all the hospitals stopped taking students. So, the state - well, first of all, the governor said that, even though schools, the technical colleges were closed for face-to-face contact for most programs, there was an exception made in that spring semester for students who were in police, fire, EMS type of training. Nursing came later. So, there were many students who were actually set to graduate that May, that weren't able to graduate on time for other programs. But we were lucky because the governor made that exception for protective services, public safety type employees. So, what we ended up doing is we ran our human simulators in scenarios, from 8am to 10pm, five or six days a week, with a whole fleet of lab instructors. So students would come in, and they would literally pretend they are in an emergency room environment. And they would go through that simulated training. And it took a lot of manpower and a lot of time, but we were able to get all of our advanced EMT students, and all of our EMT students through that clinical component. Our department of health made an exception during the pandemic, that students would be able to do that clinical experience in high fidelity simulation at the college, rather than in the ER, so those students could get into the workforce in a timely manner. So that was - those were very interesting, interesting times. So, although, as the semester - we did the summer semester, fall semester, and now here we are a year later - we're..., we're sending students back into the emergency room again now. But as far as having more content online, and smaller groups, learning those hands on skills, and everyone's still wearing a mask, we're..., we're still in that..., that mode. We were able to get all of our students - finally, now, a year later, all of our students that are going into the clinical setting, were able to receive the COVID vaccine. I was lucky enough that I received my COVID vaccine - because I work on the ambulance - about the same time as the emergency room staff received it. So we were pretty much in that first group of people. Things seem to be, now, much more relaxed and less fearful than they were a year ago with the vaccine rolling out. It was once I received my second vaccine, I felt like a..., you know, a huge weight had been lifted off of me and there was a lot less worry. Um..., you know, we worried a lot simply because the people here in my home working at different health care facilities - that we were all getting exposed and we were all taking care of patients that were that were, um..., you know, potentially COVID patient or known COVID patients. So then because we all worked in different facilities, and we would all come back home here with each other, that we were going to expose one..., one another. So we were..., we were very, very careful. Maybe a little germ phobic sometimes. So, that..., that was interesting as..., as well, just because, um..., you know, we literally had in one home people who were providing health care and emergency setting to, um..., patients from three different environments, you know, coming back to your home every day. I, personally, would get very, very frustrated. Um..., it got to a point where I needed to just stay away from social media, because there were so many people saying that COVID was political, that COVID wasn't real, that it, you know, getting the COVID vaccine would be dangerous. And..., I was seeing patients who had COVID-19 firsthand. And it was very real. When our local hospital had patients who were really, really ill, that had to go to a larger city, for..., you know, better care, more - I should say, higher level care - in the bigger city, our ambulance service was transporting those very, very ill patients from one hospital to another. So I had seen COVID firsthand, I saw it happen to people who were much younger than me. And it was very, very real in my eyes. So it felt disrespectful to me that people that I knew were saying, "Oh, it's..., it's just

the flu; it's not that big of a deal. Everyone's..., everyone's overreacting." That..., that was difficult to see people that I knew ignoring safety measures and going out to local places and refusing to wear a mask. So, I just had to distance myself from that, and continue to do my job. So I..., I..., I never really worked from home, like some of my friends that work in office jobs. So it seem - still to this day - it seems weird to me when people say, "Oh, yes, I've been working from home for an entire year," because, everyone in my home continued to work every day. And that didn't..., that didn't change for us. The other thing I wanted to mention is when we are at the technical college, and we were training people -

Kristopher 17:49

If I..., if I may interrupt - that's Blackhawk Technical College, right?

Tina 17:52

Yes.

Kristopher 17:53

For the interview purposes - okay - in Janesville, Wisconsin?

Tina 17:56

Yes.

Kristopher 17:56

Sorry about that.

Tina 17:58

So..., so when we were training people, all of our part time staff there work either in emergency rooms, or on ambulances. So I counted it up one day, and we literally, with our staff members..., our part time staff members that we had there... We had people from five different counties that would come there to work. And all of us were working in healthcare. And, you know, we were very, very careful as far as wearing protective equipment and hand washing and disinfecting, and not a single one of our part time employees, when we are running all those..., those simulations and training in those hands on skills, not a single one of our employees contracted COVID. Which I think mostly comes because we had a group of people who were very knowledgeable about infection control, and took it seriously.

Kristopher 19:17

How would you say, um..., so, COVID-19 has affected your, like, day-to-day activities and at home, outside of the workplace, you know, interacting with family or, you know, recreational activities?

Tina 19:33

Well, during..., during this..., this whole pandemic, my father became very, very ill and he was in the hospital for 19 days in November. So I knew that I had to help my parents out with different things. And, you know, everyone in my home would have to help the grandparents out with different things. So we took it very advantage of online shopping and, you know, delivery, and, you know, grocery..., online grocery shopping and pickup. But I was constantly like the other people in..., in my family, I was constantly worried that I was going to accidentally give

COVID to my parents. And at that point, I knew that if my dad caught COVID, that there would not be a good outcome. So, we had no Thanksgiving, no birthdays, no Christmas, and just this past weekend, everyone in my family, including my sister, and my parents, every single one of us have been fully vaccinated, and we were able to have our first family get together for Easter. And it was wonderful to see the joy that that brought my parents, that we could finally all be together again, and everyone was well.

Kristopher 21:20

So that, you know, so it really affected how you associated with people, um..., during that time. So, like, how about communication? You know, was it just..., did you talk on the phone, would you perhaps do Zoom meetings with family members to stay in touch, or how did you keep contact?

Tina 21:39

We did try to do some, um..., some face time, uh..., it was very interesting with my parents, because they would struggle a little bit with the technology. Um..., but they..., they got pretty good at it after a while, but, every once in a while it would get a little frustrating, we'd have to, like, get on the landline telephone and say, "No mom, click here." And we were able to, you know, wear a mask, go to their house, drop things off, or, um..., you know, do some errands for them, or, you know, stack some firewood for them, or something, and keep that social distancing. You know, so we did see them, um..., from a distance. And, you know, continue to..., to check on both sets of grandparents during, you know, during the whole long, the whole long year, but you know, it was, it was sad to see them be lonely. And, um..., you know, but we were able to get them set up where they were able to, you know, watch church online and some other things that they enjoy to do. But they..., they..., they too, were, you know, definitely isolated from..., from the things that they really love to do. And that was..., that was sad to see.

Kristopher 23:19

You mentioned, you know, loneliness. Um..., like..., like, what ways have you seen, or do you think, um..., that, you know, COVID-19 has..., has affected people's, like, mental health as well as, like, their physical health?

Tina 23:35

I think everyone that..., that I talked to, or so it..., it seems like most people I talked to complain that they gained weight during the COVID pandemic from the change in their..., their lifestyle. I., I feel in some ways, families were able to connect a little bit more, stay home with their kids instead of doing a lot of running everywhere to sporting events and..., and always being able to go and play board games, get to know each other a little bit more individually because we all had to slow down a little bit in different ways. So, around here, it was interesting because the last summer the..., you know, the gardening centers were sold out and everything because people who had never tried gardening before were trying gardening, and people were going to parks and buying kayaks and things they normally had not tried before. So in some of those ways it was good, but, I also know some high school students who were seniors who had their world turned upside down with their senior year, and graduation and events that would have been their..., their last band concert or their last season of softball. And to them, at that age, is super, super important. And I watched them struggle. And I think there..., there were a lot of tears for... , for certain groups over milestones that were missed.

Kristopher 25:41

You mentioned, like, people, maybe changing up their recreational habits or trying new..., maybe picking up hobbies, um..., had..., had..., did you try anything new, you know, recreationally? Or did it change how you spent your free time, you know, just living during this pandemic?

Tina 26:04

I really did not try anything new simply because I was working harder than ever, because of the ambulance and all of the changes that were going on in the..., at the technical college, and just trying to..., to keep up with those demands. I felt like I was away from home and busier than I had been previously, simply because of my profession.

Kristopher 26:38

If you want, let's talk a bit about, um..., the community as a whole in Juda, and around where you live. Um..., just how would you say, um..., you know, the, uh..., you know, the pandemic - COVID-19 - has affected the community, kind of as a whole, um...?

Tina 27:06

There were some people who made COVID very political. And there was..., there were some divisions caused, because of it. We had people locally who refused to wear a mask, which caused confrontation with other people in the community. That was..., that was very sad to see. It was hard because people couldn't get together and..., and do their..., their social events. However, some groups of people still got together and had their social events, mocking the social distancing and the mass precautions. So, that caused some hard feelings. I, you know, listen to the people in the the church community and some of the..., the organizations that do a lot of fundraising, they..., they struggled. And I think the group..., the group of people that I feel, um..., most sad for are the family members who lost loved ones during the pandemic and couldn't hold traditional funerals and visitations. I..., I definitely think that that affected their..., their grieving process. And even just watching whether, you know, it was someone who was hospitalized for a..., for a non-COVID reason to..., to not be able to have visitors or only be able to have one visitor was..., was difficult for families and for friends. People I know, people who had newborn babies and couldn't have visitors and that..., that probably affected people more than we think. It..., it's hard to say. And I'm interested in seeing five, ten years from now, what the total impact was on all of these..., these changes that occurred. And with learning, too, if you..., from people who are in Pre-K, all the way up through people working on master's degrees. Did..., you know, did the change in the learning format have a good impact or a bad impact or a neutral..., or was it, you know about the same as far as the progression of learning with the delivery changing?

Kristopher 30:26

You had mentioned, like, so..., some groups in your community, they..., they held events, that were like..., like, mocking the..., the distancing guidelines? Um..., like, has there been, like, since the beginning, have you seen, like, a change overall in the general attitudes or, like, day-to-day opinions of people in the community, or have things perhaps kind of stayed the way they've..., they were..., they've been for a while? And as more information has come through, and more and more people have slowly been contracting it...?

Tina 31:01

It..., it seems that as a whole people simmered down some after the election. And I'm not sure if it was because some people viewed the pandemic as being more of a political issue, or if people, um..., about that time got to a point where they were starting to accept things. And that also came at a point where we could see the light at the end of the tunnel, because the vaccines were rolling out. But even with the vaccine rolling out, there are still people that I encounter weekly, that have some really interesting views about the vaccine and the government, and they don't research the science behind the vaccine. So I wish people would educate themselves more, uh..., about pandemics and vaccines.

Kristopher 32:27

Could you go a little bit more into detail? Like, what are some of these..., these views that people have that, you know, you feel may be, you know, misguided, or, um..., that people should do more research into things?

Tina 32:42

I have heard everything from computer chip tracking devices, to, um..., the vaccine is going to cause infertility and birth defects and that it was released before it was studied thoroughly. I've heard that it contains chemicals that are poisonous and cancer causing. And, when you start to have conversation with these people about the science, they don't understand how the vaccine is designed. And usually I find that it's like talking politics or religion with people, you just have to let that go, because they are already pretty set in their ways and they don't want to learn more about it. And everyone has a choice. Everyone has a choice, whether they..., they want to receive the vaccine or not. And that is their choice. But I don't feel it's right for them to push their opinion on to someone else, or, that they are in a situation where they may endanger my family with their beliefs.

Kristopher 34:13

You'd mentioned, like, the election, and maybe we can talk a bit about, like, just, like, leadership, um..., you know, like, like how you..., you know, your local leaders in the community, um..., and officials; how have they responded to the outbreak? Like, how do you think they did or, um..., maybe how has their response changed, um..., within your community?

Tina 34:39

I had mentioned that at first it was really difficult to obtain the proper personal protective equipment; people really rallied. We had groups that were sewing disposable or washable gowns and hair covers; we had many, many masks, um..., homemade masks that were donated; there were also groups that, maybe, were in remodeling or construction that had the N95 masks available, that shared them with the health care workers; people who had things donated to our EMS, the emergency room staff that was..., that was awesome. So, there was a lot of support that way. It seemed like the policies of how to..., to handle everything pandemic-related was constantly changing on a weekly basis. Our county health department, um..., they -

Kristopher 35:50

And that's Green County, correct?

Tina 35:51

Yes.

Kristopher 35:51
In Wisconsin?

Tina 35:53
Yep.

Kristopher 35:53
Okay.

Tina 35:54
They did a good job of, you know, communicating with everyone. So things, you know, trickle down from there to the ambulance services and the first responders. As far as statewide, we went, you know..., as you know, we went back and forth a couple of times with, you know, "Okay, it's mandated; everyone has to wear a mask," or locally, "This is going to happen with rules and restrictions on restaurants." And then a couple days later, there'd be a whole legal battle, and someone would overturn it. And I would just think, for crying out loud, people just, you know, do..., do the right thing. Um..., in..., in my mind, wearing a mask, and social distancing was..., was very simple. But then you would go to the store, and there'd be someone standing in the store arguing with an employee, because they refuse to wear a mask. And..., and it was unnecessary conflict, in..., in my opinion. But now we're back to, you know, keep people..., people have the right to do what they feel is best. But, you have to wear a mask and choose when you go into the store, too, so I..., you know, people who own their own businesses also have the right to say, "This is how I want people to be cautious when they enter my business." And, you know, there again, too, there..., there was unnecessary conflict that occurred in those situations.

Kristopher 37:44
Um..., do you have any thoughts more on like how, like, statewide or even national level, like, how there's just been differing responses? Do you think, like, the responses over time, like, just based as..., literally the world is learning about this? Like, do you think things have gotten better? Or is there still a lot that..., more that maybe you think needs to be done, or that can be handled a lot better? In regards to, like, policies and guidelines?

Tina 38:18
Yeah, in the beginning, it was interesting to me how the need for the PPE and the rollout was so different in different parts of the country. Even the vaccine rollout seems to be different in different parts of the country. I..., you know, if you look at things globally, now we are in a place where we are immunizing young adults that probably are not high risk. Where in other parts of the world, we still have older population that is a higher risk that haven't received their vaccine. I don't know the right answers or how to make all of that happen. It..., there's a lot of..., a lot of moving parts that..., that need to be involved. So, I don't really have suggestions on how to make it better. But there are some things that seem to be a little... Just, disorganized yet.

Kristopher 39:45
You mentioned a bit ago, um..., just, like, local businesses, you know, or how, you know, like, a business owner, especially, you know, have their own business. They have a right to set certain policies and so there's a chance, like, how have you seen within your community, how has the pandemic just affected businesses as a whole, um..., you know, during this time because things were really thrown, you know, like, lockdown orders and all that had a big effect on a lot of businesses. So I'm wondering, um..., what your experience with that was, or is?

Tina 40:18

It seems the hardest hit were the bars and restaurants, that..., that type of business. The people that I know really went out of their way to support carry out, to support the local businesses, to..., to the local own...- the local shop owners, the small business owners, to try to, you know, shop local, get carry out. I know some of the businesses still struggle just because the..., the cost of providing carry out meals was very expensive compared to eat-in. I know, employment-wise, any people who worked in those environments are still not back to work at their regular hours pre..., pre pandemic.

Kristopher 41:26

How has, like, so during this whole crisis it seems like a lot, like, there's a lot of it has to do with information. What information is getting out? Or to whom, or, you know, what information are people listening to, and maybe others that they're ignoring, so, like, if we could talk a bit about that, like, what have been your primary sources of news during the pandemic? Um..., and has that changed at all?

Tina 41:52

First of all, the people who have probably the most unscientific information are the people who are getting all of their news off of social media. And, that..., that is a..., a whole problem on its own. I try to be very, very factual. I try to read the science on everything. And, you know, read the updates that were coming from the CDC, the information that was coming from the state and local health departments, and stay off of social media. And, you know, I even tried a couple times, um..., you know, I was really busy. So I guess, it wasn't really a challenge. But I tried to stay away from watching national news in the morning or in the evening, because it..., it seemed to suck the life out of me. So if I just stuck to the numbers and the facts, then, you know, the..., the COVID numbers that were presented each day - read the science - I felt like I was much better informed than listening to the parts that the media wanted me to focus on.

Kristopher 43:23

Like, so do you think that then that there were important issues that the media was not covering?

Tina 43:31

I think the media covers what attracts viewers, and not necessarily the..., the good and the bad equally.

Kristopher 43:53

We can move a bit, and maybe talk about, I guess, looking forward. Um..., like, do you think your experiences, like, have they transformed how you think about your friends or your family, um..., or your community?

Tina 44:15

I think those of us who work in healthcare, because of the stress and the worry that, in the extra work that the pandemic caused, it probably brought those people closer together as co-workers. I..., you know, I think there is such a division between the healthcare workers, frontline workers, essential workers and the other group, that it was hard for the two different groups to understand each other. I..., you know, my..., my circle or my bubble during the..., the entire pandemic for the entire last year was my healthcare worker friends, and my..., my EMS instructors at the technical college, and I really didn't get to..., to see anyone else, or socially interact with anyone

else. So, that became my bubble. And, you know, there...- there's friends I haven't seen for a very, very long time because of the pandemic. And I think it..., it changed my..., for me it changed my circle of friends a little bit.

Kristopher 45:46

Do you think, um..., that circle will remain the same as it is now? Or perhaps it'll, kind of, move back to what it was pre pandemic? Or, how do you see that..., that turning out?

Tina 45:58

I think, you know, when you start having hobbies and interests, and people start going out and about again, that it..., it will..., it will shift again.

Kristopher 46:12

How does this pandemic, like, compare to other big events that have happened in your lifetime? Like, just in terms of, like, how it's just impacted your..., your..., your life or how you see the world?

Tina 46:33

I think I would like to see the world take better care of each other, country-wise. Not every country for itself. I think we could be more united and get things done, and this is a very good experience. I think we should have, could have, looked at the way other countries were handling the pandemic, when they were in the thick of it. Before we were, here in the United States.

Kristopher 47:09

I..., I for my..., myself being older found it interesting when I would look at my..., my students at the technical college who were in their 20s. This is, like, the first major thing that they ever had happen. So some of them were, like, the sky is falling, and needed a lot of reassurance, you know, they were too young to remember 9/11, they were too young to remember Desert Storm or, you know, any of the conflicts that have happened military-wise. So they seem to need a lot of reassurance because they have never lived anything negative before. And I thought that was a very, very interesting perspective from the older generation to the younger generation. And now I'm making myself sound really old. But,, they handled it a little bit differently. And with more panic than the people who are a little bit more mature.

Tina 48:29

So you're saying, like, were you able then to, sort of, look back at previous major events and somehow pull, just having lived through those, like, you could pull certain lessons to apply to this just to, like, like you said, the sky isn't falling.

Tina 48:48

But in..., in those situations, you just have to take things day-by-day, week-by-week, just encounter what is directly in front of you. And in time, all things, all things will pass. And for my, you know, my students that were in their 20s last spring, one day they had normal traditional learning, the next week they had, "Oh, COVID is coming, there's no school this week." The next week was, "Okay, we're gonna meet online," and next week it was, "Okay, now you've lost all of your clinical sites for your experience." And, you know, in their world it was about, "Oh my gosh, am I going to graduate on time; am I going to be able to finish this class? I don't understand." Some of you know, this delivery. When we went to an online lecture, they had to learn to be more self motivated, self

directed than coming and sitting in a classroom and someone telling them every move to make. So it became more and more in..., in some of..., for some of them, it became more about, "What..., what's going to happen to me?" Where I think the older generation thinks about, you know, "What's..., what's going to happen to all of us?"

Kristopher 50:27

Like, how about, like, your parents? How, like, generally speaking, like, how they handled it overall, I mean, they've....

Tina 50:36

I think they, you know, in addition to feeling isolated, I think they felt worried. I think they, you know, spent a lot of time worrying about all of their kids and grandkids that were..., were working in healthcare. And there again, too, they may have watched the news too much. And, you know, caused a little additional worry, because, you know, there's..., there's not enough social activity going on to balance your world out. I think they, you know, they've ended up taking up a lot more crafts, and..., quilt making, and woodworking, and things because, um..., they referred to it as, "I grounded them there." I grounded my parents, and they weren't allowed to leave the home. The other thing, um..., I wanted to mention, in our rural community, with us being so rural and everything going to, um..., a huge content of online delivery for education, we have very unpredictable, slow internet, and rural..., in our rural areas. Um..., there were many, many students - college level and grade school level, high school level - who did not have computers, or their family had one computer and a parent needed it for working from home. Or, um..., you know, they didn't, you know, some of the..., the more, you know, there's families here that definitely live at a poverty level, who did not have a computer or did not have internet. So it was it was sad to see that situation because how do we, you know, how do we accommodate their learning needs? Blackhawk Technical College, um..., started giving out, you know, for students to borrow Chromebooks and laptops. They did a hot spot in the..., in the parking lot, and a lot of the same things happened here at the local school districts. But you still can't have multiple people working from home on an internet that doesn't have a lot of data exchange going on that, that was definitely problematic and needed..., a lot of people needed to gain a lot of patience to get through..., through that challenge. We had a lot of school employees - public school employees, not the technical college school - but public school employees that still went in to school every day and put together sack lunches to send home or, you know, deliver for families who..., when the..., for the kids that definitely needed that lunch provided everyday by the school.

Kristopher 53:58

When you mentioned, like, being in a rural area, do you feel that there are ways that the pandemic has just affected rural communities differently or specifically as opposed to, like, the country as a whole or to more, um..., urban or suburban, more densely populated areas?

Tina 54:20

Well, because..., because we are so rural and we have less people, we had less exposures, we per capita had less COVID. So in..., in that aspect, it's probably better than living in a city where there's more people and in an area.... I never..., I never left the rural area the whole time, so it's hard to compare.

Kristopher 54:54

I understand. I guess, like, let's..., we can end on, you know, you've been through this, we've all been through this, about a year of this pandemic, this lockdown or whatever, um....How do you imagine your life..., what do you imagine it looking like a year from now? Um..., what do you imagine life being like a year from now?

Tina 55:22

I imagine that we will go back to large, you know, gatherings of large, I should say, larger gatherings of people a year from now. But I think in the healthcare industry, the..., the masks are here to stay. I think we're probably going to be wearing masks as healthcare workers for a very, very long time. I think that's just going to be our norm. A lot of things that we've done during the pandemic may stay because they worked out better. Rather than traveling halfway across the state for meetings, you know, why didn't we do Zoom two years ago, you know, why did we need a pandemic, in order to start having Zoom meetings, to start having curbside delivery, or grocery pickup? I think a lot of those things, um..., if people like them, are going to be here to stay. It will be interesting to see online learning versus face-to-face learning, um..., what people's preference will be a year from now or two years from now. Um..., because I think we found out that online learning is not for everyone. It may be more convenient in some situations, but that may not be how, you know, some people best learn. So that..., that will be interesting to see how those choices evolve. You know, we still..., we still have the worry that the..., the COVID will mutate a little bit, and there'll be different strains, and how protected are we? You know, will we, you know, will it be like the seasonal flu, and there'll be different variations of it? We're just going to have to be patient, and be careful and..., and wait and see what's going to happen.