

Transcript of Interview with Sandra Smith by Glenda

Interviewee: Sandra Smith

Interviewer: Glenda McGann

Date: 05/25/2020

Location (Interviewee): Milton, Florida

Location (Interviewer): Unknown

Transcriber: This transcript has been provided by Otter.AI with a 2nd pass for accuracy provided by Bryan Paintiff, HST580 intern, at ASU.

Abstract: In this interview Sandra Smith discusses how they initially learned about the virus and how their perception changed over the first few months of the pandemic, believing that the situation would get worse before it got better. Sandra talks about how the pandemic has hit the economy and that it is the small businesses in America that have suffered. Sandra also elaborates on how relationships with family and friends have changed, having to talk over the phone or use social media outlets in order to stay in touch with people. Moreover, they pointed out how staying in touch was important as the pandemic has caused people stress and mental health issues having to isolate. Lastly, Sandra discussed how they saw the interactions the president was having with scientists and believed this to be disrespectful as he was making everything about himself instead of taking care of the country.

Glenda McGann 00:02

Well, Sandy, thank you so much for participating in the COVID-19 Oral History Project and just for the recording, would you state the date of this oral history interview?

Sandra Smith 00:15

It is May 25 2020.

Glenda McGann 00:20

Okay, and the time

Sandra Smith 00:22

11:09am. Central,

Glenda McGann 00:26

and your name,

Sandra Smith 00:27

Sandra Smith.

Glenda McGann 00:29

And what are the primary things that you do on a day to day basis, like your job, your extracurricular activities?

Sandra Smith 00:38

Well, generally on a day to day basis for the last couple of months, I've been working from home, I am a para liaison with the Santa Rosa County School District. And basically, I've worked with the liaisons that handled our special needs children, and it's literally paid paperwork. It's almost like I'm a secretary for them. And so with our schools closed, I've been working from home. And so normally I work five days actually, because I found that working from home with all the paperwork sometimes takes a little longer than when I'm in the office because there's access to large printers and things like that at the office. In addition, on a daily basis, I'm usually working on something for some community volunteer work that I do.

Glenda McGann 01:45

Okay, and where do you live?

Sandra Smith 01:47

Milton, Florida, and it's actually, it's Santa Rosa County, and we are almost a bedroom community from Pensacola which is the larger city in Escambia County next door. It's a really interesting area that I live in. Santa Rosa County is bisected by a bay, and on the north side, which is where I live we have the Town of Milton, the community of Pace and on the south side of the bay. We have golf courses, and Navar which are along the Gulf of Mexico.

Glenda McGann 02:30

What is it like to live there?

Sandra Smith 02:33

It's very interesting. It is a beach community more or less, and it's very much a retirement community almost. There's not a lot of industry in Santa Rosa County. So this is an area that a lot of retirees live and because we have a Whiting field which is a Naval Air Base in Santa Rosa and then Pensacola Naval Air Station, we have quite a few retired military in our area. Young people tend to grow up here tend to go somewhere else when they get into their careers. But it's also very much a family oriented community, especially in Payson Navar and golf breeze and we attract quite a number of people from other states because our school system is an A school system. And so even people that work in Pensacola actually live over here, and because our taxes are lower here. So it's interesting. But the good thing is that it's reachable to quite a few cities New Orleans is three hours away. Mobile Alabama is just 50 miles. You can go east and go toward Tallahassee and Destin another a lot of resort and beach communities are within 30 miles of here all along the the we call it the Emerald Coast.

Glenda McGann 04:18

When you first learned about COVID-19 What were your thoughts about it?

Sandra Smith 04:25

When I first learned about it, it reminded me a little bit of when we had SARS and when they had the Ebola. I was you know just trying to figure out how it was transmitted. I didn't just think of it as something from China that was never in my head that it was something from China or somewhere because first of all, you know we're united

states is global. And so you know, whatever happens in in Europe or in Asia, nine times out of 10, at some point is going to be here. And so for me and thinking about it, it was basically just hoping that we were able to have the health resources and an education about it so that people could figure out about being safe. And I think the more I learned about it and and heard about it, then for me, especially being in the age group that I'm in, it was I really need to pay attention to this. And subsequently, since we've learned so much about it as an African American, even more so.

Glennnda McGann 05:47

How have your thoughts changed since then? Do you care to elaborate any more on that progression that you alluded to there at the end?

Sandra Smith 05:55

I think that we are not really, I don't think people in this country really believe the seriousness of it, I think that it is not going to, quote go away easily. I think it's going the potential of it being around for quite a while is very clear. For me, I have to listen to the scientists, I really, really do. And I don't think we clearly have a handle on it yet. Because I don't think they have tested enough people. The fact that a person could walk around and not have any symptoms, but can infect other people is something to think about. And so for me, I am expecting that we're gonna have another surge, just given the fact that so many people have not taken the safety precautions that our scientists have been recommending. So I will continue to wear a mask. I am not convinced that that, like I said, I think we're gonna have another surge. And so I'm going to continue to take safety precautions for me. Because like I said, in Florida last week, we had 1200 cases, new cases. And for several days last week, we had above 800 new cases. So that tells me that given what the CDC has said about level one, level two, level three guidelines, where a Florida as a state is not going down, we have not had 14 days of lower new cases. And so I just don't think people are believing it enough.

Glennnda McGann 07:53

Are there other issues that are concerning you other than the gating and so forth, that you just mentioned about the COVID 19 pandemic?

Sandra Smith 08:01

I think that this pandemic is going to have a tremendous effect on our economy, not the big companies. But I'm talking about the small businesses to proprietor single proprietorships, the people that own the barber shop or convenience store, that is going to be a shakeout, and there are going to be businesses that will never recover, that they will just have to close, because I don't think our economy is going to be the same. And there's not enough help for those people. It concerned me when the stimulus money for businesses was was dispersed by government, that large companies got money. And that was not right. I just didn't agree with that. I know that sometimes large companies, I think they have enough money to weather this. And if they don't, then maybe they need to rethink their structure. But the small businesses, the businesses owned by people of color in this country, have really struggled. And so I think that that the the way our economy looks and works after this is truly gonna be a little different.

Glennnda McGann 09:33

You mentioned things take longer in your job. Are there other ways that COVID-19 has affected your job?

Sandra Smith 09:42

We you know, of course, the in our department. We meet with parents, because we help parents plan for the academic needs of their children who have disabilities of various level anything From just a speech issue, to children who cannot walk at all, or that are nonverbal or have multiple disabilities, and so we have done, all of the meetings are being conducted by virtual meetings or by telephone conferences. The other thing that's different for the people that our department serves is many of them are receiving therapies, occupational, physical speech, therapies. And so the therapists have had to utilize virtual means in order to help work with the parents where the parents, the parent is applying the therapy, so that that's been very different. One of the things that I do in my job is I have to manage the files for all of these kids. So I have all these paper documents that have piled up. And one of the issues we have is how to get the signatures for the parents and for the various people that are part of that meeting that the state government requires. So I have been, I have sent information to my boss to say, I don't know how I'm going to be able to handle these hundreds of IEP forms that are going to have to be filed in these children's folders, and getting signatures on there are up to three pages in everyone that needs signatures of the teachers, the liaison, the parents, any therapists, any psychologist. And so one of the things I suggested is cap, have the school system spoken to the state to say, can we just as a result of the virus for the rest of this year, use some kind of single sheet with electronic signatures so that we can move forward on getting this done. I have not been back in the school building since March, the 16th. And our school buildings opened last week, the staff couldn't staff could go in three days last week and two days this week. But I am not going into the school building because I'm in the high risk group, I have an immune system issue with rheumatoid arthritis. And I'm over 65. So I will go in at some point during the summer. When I think everybody's pretty much finished because the teachers last day to go. Normally their work date is June 2. So I'm not planning to go into the building until after June 2, when I'll be able to go in by myself, you know, and I'm not engaging with people. My concern is the children going back to school, our kids are scheduled to go back around August 10, or 12, something like that. I'm not sure that the schools are prepared for the need for certain safety precautions. Because like I said, I don't think the the COVID-19 will be totally eradicated by the time the kids go back in August. And the ability to have children separated and everything in the school system I don't know. And a lot of parents, friends of mine that are parents that have children in school, and they're saying I really don't want my kids to go back. So that's something we I'm sure we will be talking about before school starts on, what do we do about the parents who do not want their children to go back? And will they be able to do virtual learning, which is what we have had

Sandra Smith 13:57

Someone I can't remember, excuse me. I was looking at one program recently and someone that had been involved in education said, you know, truly, parents have not been able to do the work. They have not been able to for the last two months, be able to give their kids what they needed. Well, actually almost two and a half months. And so someone suggested, you know, maybe it would be better if all of the kids just repeated their current grade. So they could get caught back up and not go into the school year with a deficit. I know that parents people would scream about that, I'm sure. Especially those students that are juniors going into being a senior and especially I'm thinking middle and for middle and elementary level. The high school kid As we're all getting there is virtually but parents here were sent sent home packets of work for the elementary and some of the middle school. And I have seen emails from parents saying, I don't know how you expect for me to do this. I have to work, especially if they were an essential, essential employee. And this is what this woman said, I've got a two year old at home. I'm an essential employee, how do you expect me to do this schoolwork? Someone from the school gonna come here and, and do it. So I think that the children are going to have a loss. And I'm not sure how we make it up. And I'm not sure the level of parents comfort, the level of comfort, they'll have come August.

Glenda McGann 15:55

How has the COVID-19? Or has it changed your employment status?

Sandra Smith 15:59

It hasn't at all. I mean, it's it's fine. I'm in school system. And none of us, it hasn't affected us at all, because like I said, we've all continued to work at homes, and are expected to go back as normal.

Glenda McGann 16:20

How has the COVID 19 pandemic affected the employment of people you know?

Sandra Smith 16:25

It is it's affected people who work in like the small businesses around here and the restaurants, there was, you know, we opened the restaurants, especially in those that those industries have beauty shops, barber shops, restaurant, those those kinds of places. They opened them first at 25%. And outdoor seating, you could be outside, or you can have 25% inside. And so we had employees, some people who work who said, it's not worth me going back when the restaurant is only operating at 25%. And they're not going to make enough money to pay me. And then if I go back, I have to deal with childcare. And it's easier for me to just continue to get my unemployment. And there was some feeling that if you choose to do that, technically, you're committing fraud, because you were asked to come back. And I don't I don't know any, if anything has happened about that. Because first of all, so many people in Florida, only about 25% of the people who filed for unemployment have gotten it yet. And that's been a real issue, the state has replaced the person heading up that department back in maybe the end of April, but we still have so many people who haven't gotten their first check. And that's been the real issue here. The same thing for people who work at businesses around the beach, because those businesses, they're not able to open the open yet. And so their employees are without funds. And like I said, people, I know a few people that have small restaurants, food truck, kind of things and and there's no money. And then again, qualifying for some of the stimulus money, you've got to have the right kind of banking relationship. And I was on a, I was on a townhall conference call with the Congressional Black Caucus, talking about the stimulus money and small businesses and businesses of color. And they were saying that most business of color are they are their own employee or they may have one employee. They don't have the relationships with the larger banks. That's where the money is coming through. And the banks are not taking the time to reach out to them. And so there were people on it from the Small Business Administration has said the best way for a lot of those people, they should be working through credit unions and community banks, because a lot of large banks don't have branches in African American communities anymore. And so it's hard for them to get through the paperwork to get the money because their access is very limited. So it has affected those people a lot. And of course with people not going out and you know, people are cooking at home more. So if people decide to order something, they're probably going to call someplace like Chili's or Chipotle or some of those larger companies. They're not going to call Mr. Jones over here that does Caribbean food out of his food truck.

Sandra Smith 17:16

How has COVID-19 affected you and or your family's day to day activities?

Sandra Smith 20:15

lack of social engagement. You know, I live in a community that since moving here, I've built really good relations with friends here. And even in the area that I live in. My cousin has catty corner across the street, and then I have neighbors across the street and up the street. And so we usually get together for a lot of things. And just to share and engage. And so we have just recently, I would say, two weeks ago, for the first time decided to all be the five of us who all live right here in the same room together. And that was just two weeks ago on a Friday. And, and so we I just wanted to do some fish one Friday. And so then they said, well, let's just all you know, what we've been doing is if someone cooks something, they want us they come to the door with a carry out container and put it in the door. So that was the first time we were all in the room together. And the only reason we were comfortable with them being in the room because we have all been not going out we've been wearing our mask, you know, we stand at the end of our driveways and and talk across the street. So I felt okay for those people, the other four people to come in my house. So that has really limited it, it just being able to go out at all to the movie or things like that. Eating out is not been a big issue for me because I cook at home a lot anyway, for my extended family, it affected it affected them. My grandson in Ohio, had planned to come down and stay with me for about a month because he was Trent his department was abolished at his job and you know, he he was going through outsourcing and he was okay financially. So he had said, well, I might come down for about a month and stay with you. And I can help you with your campaign stuff and stuff, voter stuff that you do. But of course now he cannot come. And normally, family come down in the summer, we always try to find a couple holidays where we get together. And so what we did was we zoomed. We did a Zoom meeting on Mother's Day. And so that was good, because my daughter and I'm in Texas, and Indiana and Ohio. And so we all got on Zoom. And of course, you know, they were saying we won't be we weren't aren't going to come down this year. That was that that was different for us. And I'd normally go up to Ohio at least once during the summer and I had plans to come to Indiana for my youngest grandson's First Communion, which was changed and cancel. So that changed a lot of those kinds of things for me with my family. And we so now I'm sitting here with two airplane credits, because I was supposed to go to something else. So I have two airplane credits for flights. And I don't know when, when that will happen, because the concern of being on an airplane right now is very high for me. So I don't see me even flying to visit anyone. Maybe by December maybe it just depends on what happens in that when all this opens up over the summer and into the fall and what its gonna look like. So yeah, our family togetherness is not there. So we've just decided we'll do a zoom meeting maybe once a month or every six weeks just to talk to one another that way. I mean, we're always in contact but this way we can see each other's faces.

Glenda McGann 24:39

How are you managing your day to day activities in your household?

Sandra Smith 24:42

Well, I do go out I've been going out shopping maybe once a week. And I go during the senior citizen hours, which is normally from eight to 10 or seven to nine in the morning, depending on what store you're going to. So when I go, I try to do everything at once. Going into the store, of course I have masks, I have my gloves on. And I, and we have one way aisles up and down in our grocery stores here now. So that helps, so no one's coming toward you. So going out once a week for groceries is that what I am doing day to day is doing little things in the house like I redid my closet because I had extra time and I'm trying to look at more. I'm looking at more TV. I've been reading a lot. Thank God for online books from our local library. So that's been helping, but normally I would be out and about a little bit more and we can't go to the gym. That's an issue. Because of the weight gain. I am cooking more comfort food, what I call comfort food I want I even decided to bake bread. But there you, the stores here cannot keep any yeast, everyone's baking and the flour to go in the store to buy flour. It's half empty,

you're allowed one bag and that. So I find myself cooking more of things that I just would really like to have that are not good for me nutritionally, like macaroni and cheese and things like that or baking, I want to bake, I make blueberry coffee cake. I'm the only one eating it and that's bad, or things like that. So I'm doing more cooking in the house, because it just helps fill up the time. And I don't know just you keep trying to get through the day.

Sandra Smith 27:23

Now what is going to be different for me is after this week, I will not have schoolwork to do. So you know, up until till this point, I considered myself going to work every day at my dining room table. So now I after this week, I won't I won't be doing schoolwork at home. So I will have a lot more free time I am walking now we finally decided to walk so a neighbor and another friend we're doing three days a week where we have a circular Street in our community. So we just do several rounds of that. We're going to do enough rounds till we do three miles, three days a week. And another neighbor up the street had posted on Facebook that she was doing tai chi. And so that sounded very interesting to me. And I might think about going over where she is at a community center because it's outside and you don't have you can social distance. And so that's that's important. So I'm trying to think of things health wise because I've gained weight and I'm gonna gotta get get with it and quit playin around about that and quit cooking things. So that that for my day to day is has changed and so I look around the house and think of things to do that I normally would probably wait till summer or when I'm home all day to do so I've done a few things like that. We had a storm recently that came through here so a lot of my time has been thinking about I had all my trees in the backyard cut down and I don't have any shade back there and so I was sowing grass seed, but now I'm trying to make plans on how can I have a decent yard now with no trees in it. And so those kinds of things. I'm researching Italian gardens. I just want an Italian themed backyard. So that's gonna keep me busy because I've got to research a lot of stuff on trees and paths and things like that. So that's gonna be my project over the summer.

Glenda McGann 30:06

Oh, what have been your biggest challenges during this pandemic?

Sandra Smith 30:11

Weight game, lack of exercise, those are the two biggest challenges for me. The other thing, and I don't, I don't consider it a challenge. But I'm a member of three organizations. And we all switched over to zoom meetings instead of live meetings. And so I am spending a lot more time at my computer other than schoolwork, but for the volunteer organizations that are in the political organizations that I'm a part of. And so I have to make sure that I'm not spending too much time so much time that, you know, it's, you can get hit. Yesterday, I spent at least eight hours on the computer, designing a newsletter. But I need to not try to do all this stuff myself, you know. So I would say though, the biggest challenges for me have been weight gain and lack of exercise, because I'm not out and about like I normally am. And I'm not at school, but the refrigerator is right there.

Glenda McGann 31:29

What have you and your family? And you mentioned a little bit about just starting to walk with your neighbors. But are there other things that you've done for recreation? Like shows or games? Have you mentioned the library, but anything else you wanted to add there?

Sandra Smith 31:46

Recreation wise, no, I'm a big reader. And that's been my saving grace is to be able to get a good book and kind of escape into it. I really don't have a good hobby, I've worked on my plants that I have been doing gardening with my plants, mostly in part because of the storm, it damaged a lot of my plants and things. So I've been resurrecting those and putting in some new new things. So I have them working on that. And in fact, I was thinking today about going to pick up some more plants. But I'm gonna wait because I want to do more herbs in the garden. So that's been something to be doing recreationally and watching a lot of films with subtitles. I love films with subtitles. And so I've been able to find between things like Netflix and Amazon Prime, I've been able to find some really good movies that are not just traditional movies, but but have some different themes and things like that. Also have been writing postcards. As you know, we're in the middle of an election. And so as part of our democratic group, we can't go and canvass voters, we can't go out and knock on doors. So we've been doing a lot of mailing postcards, addressing them to voters with messages. And so I've been doing a lot of that, too. Yeah, we've sent out I think I've done about 150. And I just got a new packet this morning delivered to me, for me to address and mail to voters to work on voting by mail, we're really working to get people to see that it's, especially with the pandemic, it's an option that at least if you sign up for the vote by mail ballot, then you don't have to use it. You can still go in person if you choose to. But if we have a surge, then you have something else that you're insured, you can still do your civic duty. So that's something I've been working a lot on as well.

Glenda McGann 34:27

How has the COVID 19 outbreak affected your community and you can be part of many communities, schools, clubs, churches, you're speaking about any of those you you would choose to?

Sandra Smith 34:41

Well, a couple of things that I've been involved in the group that I'm in, we have a young man that is a doctor at the ER at our medical center in our county. And so we you know, we we talked to him and so we did decided to bring food to the medical workers because we felt like we needed to be able to do something. And so my cousin and I, we went over and took them, breakfast pastries and stuff. And then we know that there's a lack of food. There are a lot of people that don't have enough food to eat. And so we, our organization, the Executive Committee, and the Black Caucus, we did a fundraiser, we each put up money, and then we were able to get it matched. And so we were able to raise \$3,500, to go to feeding the Gulf Coast, so that they could provide food to people in the community. So that those things were really important to us, because we know so many people did not have enough to eat. They just hadn't saved. And so the other thing that I worked on, as I'm a hospice volunteer, and so a lot of the hospice patients, they're getting essential visitors, but other things that they normally would do for them. And those of us that are over 65, we were not able to go and do things. So I've been writing cards to hospice patients, that's another thing I've worked on, to just say, I'm thinking about you, and I hope you're okay. And I hope that you know, you're having a good day. So that's what they've asked volunteers to do. So I did that bought cards and sent those off to hospice patients things. So that's been, you know, it's just a lot of little things like that. That from the community standpoint, and that church that you met, you're making me think of all these things that I didn't consider really overly important. But the church that I've been attending, we had gotten, because I'm involved with this political politics in the community, the mayor of Milton was, as I was looking for some things to do. And we have, there's a motel that's in in, not far from my house, but over in town. And that's where homeless people live. They have homeless families there. Because they're like those, they have those efficiency, little hotel rooms with the stove and stuff. And so the mayor was wanting to do some more things. So I asked the pastor of our church, I gave her the mayor's number and sent the mayor let her know that she was going to contact her. So it ended up that the mayor helped with providing food boxes for the people in there. And then

they did hotdogs and stuff for the kids. And then craft bags. So the kids had crafts that they could take with, you know, have with them and everything. So that ended up being a really good event that came out of just bringing people together who had the desire to do something. So yeah, we've you know, there's just all kinds of little things that we've been doing, but you don't think of it as like major is just what you do.

Glenda McGann 38:35

How have the opinions, activities, and relationships of people around you changed in response to this pandemic?

Sandra Smith 38:47

I think people are more aware of the number of people in our community that just don't have the resources that they need. I also think that it's made people more health conscious of, you know, just not not maybe not washing your hands enough things like that. Also masks making I know two people who were sewing masks, and that normally did not do that kind of thing. And they just jumped in and got out their old sewing machine and started my neighbor across the street and another person I know have been making masks to distribute through the medical center and through the social service agencies to people. So I think it's made people think, again about the community we live in and the needs and and again, what is going to be different after the pandemic I think as politically, politically it is just people don't feel like our country was prepared enough for this. And so people with toilet paper, I mean, honestly, well, I'll tell you. Normally, every so often we go to Sam's Club, my cousin's, and you know, we stock up. And probably, it was the end of February, maybe she had went to Sam's Club, and I had her buy me the big pack with 48 rolls of toilet paper, and the big paper towel packet. And, and already had some, you know, the normal amount you would have, but then I do that, and I don't have to buy it for almost a year. And it turned out my daughter in Dallas was just having a hard time finding toilet paper, because it's a much bigger city, or they had people price gouging. And so I ended up sending her a box of toilet paper out of because I had this big packet, and paper towels, and I just mailed it to her. So things like that, you know, makes you aware of, you know, we if we truly went through this, that our supply chain is not what it needs to be, you know, that you could be cut up. And then limitations in the grocery store, you know, you can only buy one of this, or one of that I don't know if it's everywhere. But definitely in our area. You can only buy one packet of meat, or one packet of chicken, or one packet of hamburger, things like that. I think it's made people more aware of supply and demand. And also health care issues and the health care system overall. And also, the fact that not everyone has access to the same things like testing. Finally, I guess about three weeks ago, they started doing tests here for anyone who wanted a test. So and that's when we started seeing more cases, because it was just anyone who felt like they wanted a test or they had Yes, you know, want to make sure they hadn't been exposed and they didn't know it. And we started seeing more cases. So like I said, Milton, the city of Milton has a population of just over 10,000. But it has 200 cases, that's high per capita of population for a small city of only just over 10,000. But that only, they only really figured it out after they started testing more people. So I know that this weekend, I think I'm going to be more cautious, even more cautious because I see the hundreds of people on the beach. And they're not social distancing, and they're not wearing masks. So for me that means in the next two weeks, I need to be even more cautious because these people are not doing what they need to do.

Glenda McGann 43:58

So speaking of which self isolation, flatten the curve have been two key ideas emerging during this pandemic. So how do you see the response to those ideas of self isolation, flattening the curve in your family and then in the broader community?

Sandra Smith 44:19

You know, as far as people whether that the self isolation was not a problem for any of my family, or any of my friends, either. It was something we needed to do to protect ourselves. And I and I think that was that was the feeling of people that wasn't, I didn't see it as a major problem. I know that maybe for some of the younger people in the family or in community as a whole. Because, you know, as a retiree, you know, you're going to get your retirement checks and you can be at home But when you've got younger people and some of whom have the kind of jobs that I, like I said, are precarious, we don't know what's going to happen with their jobs. And then self isolation for people with children, I have a friend in Ohio, and she has her grandson and great granddaughter have been staying with her. Well, self isolation with a four year old in your house, at our age is different. I mean, you know, she's like, Oh, my God, because you've got to keep this kid occupied. And the energy is different than if you were just home by yourself. I think for people who are not used to being on their own or living alone, the self isolation, I think it really caused people to have to get real creative. For me, I'm used to living alone. And you know, I'm the only one in the house 99% of the time. So it didn't bother me to be isolated at all. But I think for people with families, it was a totally new experience. And you didn't have all these outside things like, you know, going to the restaurant or going to the playground or going to the park or things to occupy your children. And you had to learn how to keep them busy and stay in the house.

Glenda McGann 46:33

What has been your direct experience, you or anyone, you know, with the COVID-19 sickness?

Sandra Smith 46:43

I don't know anyone personally with COVID-19, my neighbor across the street, her daughter up in Atlanta, had COVID. And so but she got okay. But you know, I don't know anyone personally that actually had it. And I'm thankful for that. You know, I really am. But I feel for the people who have gone through it, because it sounds like a terrible, terrible experience.

Glenda McGann 47:19

In what ways do you think COVID-19 is affecting people's mental and or physical health? You've touched on the exercise issue for people that are sheltering in place.

Sandra Smith 47:30

Yeah, I think that's a big, big issue for people. I think it's a bigger issue for people who live in cities where they walk a lot like the New York's and places like that. Here, you know, we live in a car society. So we could still get in our car and drive. As long as we're not bothered, you can just get in your car and go for a long drive. Look at the sun last year music up if you need to. But I think for other people, the stress of it is is much more and and they need the stress relief. And I think that's the mental health issue is gonna be a problem. Also, I think the I know the number of calls around concerns around domestic abuse and child abuse. We've had a few more cases in our area, but not as many as probably in some other areas. Yeah.

Glenda McGann 48:38

What have been your primary sources of news during the pandemic?

Sandra Smith 48:43

I listen to my local news. I do not watch talking head programs. I will look at CNN occasionally. But I look at my local news. I listened to the press releases by the governor and, and both governors Alabama and Florida because we share TV stations. And then Dr. Fauci, I need to hear from Dr. Fauci, Dr. Burks. Those are the two people that I listen to. I don't want to hear all these other theories. I don't want to hear the political spin on it. I want to hear from the scientists. So that's been my source of news. As far as the pandemic I listened to our local news, because they give the case count and update every day when the four o'clock news comes on the health department's report. And then like I said, you know, the press release, the governor was normally doing a daily press meeting, and I would hear him but I also adopt or Fauci or Dr. Burks, were on talking about the pandemic, I listened. I wanted to hear what they had to say. Because I think there's a lot of opinion out there. And if you're not a doctor, I'm not interested in hearing what you have to say. Go ahead.

Glenda McGann 50:18

Oh, I was just gonna say, have your news sources changed during the panel a

Sandra Smith 50:22

lot? Not really. I mean, because I want to I have a problem with a lot of the news where they have four or five people up there talking about stuff all the time, because it's only just their opinion. I think the one other national news source that I do look at is NPR. NPR, I will listen to their news, because it's not a lot of frantic, you know, it's feels more factual. So I look at NPR News Hour, on a national basis. And I look at our local news, and then the 5:30 national news, but that's it. And then NPR but I don't look at the MSNBC is in the CNNs and hear all these people opinion? I'm not interested in hearing all of that. And then I can read the newspaper. Usually the New York Times Online.

Glenda McGann 51:25

Are there important issues, do you think that the media may or may not be covered?

Sandra Smith 51:35

I think they can only cover so much. You know, um, you know, I I'm not thinking I've mostly I feel like they're talking about all the things that are important. Maybe they don't talk a lot about. I think they're trying to give you good information, but also an opportunity to hear some good things hear about people being creative. People helping other people during that. No, I feel like, you know, our local news and the National 5:30 Or six o'clock, you know, with Norah O'Donnell and those, I think they're trying to give us facts, but and also give us hope.

Glenda McGann 52:23

How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak? You mentioned your mayor and the homeless folks that were in the motel.

Sandra Smith 52:34

Yeah. And I think they tried to make things available. We have a really good emergency management system here. And the health department. So I think they've responded as best they can. I think that from the state level down, I think there should have been a little more emphasis on mask wearing and making it mandatory and no one has. But you know, the social distancing and things like that, but they've done the best they can, given what we're working with, you know, they're not pandemic people, they're not medical people, the best they can do is try to see that people in our community have food. And if they don't, have access to it, other than going to the store

spending their money, making sure that the medical center is ready to to take care of people. And so, yeah, I think that's been okay. You know, as far as going to the doctor and things like that, you can have a, you can have a telepath meeting with your doctor, you don't have to go to the office, and they've been pretty accommodating about that. When you go into any of the hospitals or things like that immediately at the door, your temperature is taken. You know, a mask is given to you. I had to do a doctor's appointment, and that's immediate. So yeah, I think they've done okay, locally. I think they I think that they have to take some of their shoes from federal, but I think, you know, on a local level, I think they've done okay.

Glenda McGann 54:32

Do you have any other thoughts about the differences in the response among the local state and federal levels to the crisis?

Sandra Smith 54:40

You know, I think federally the shutting down, quote unquote, shutting down the country. I think it was the right thing to do. I know there were people like the protesters who felt like their rights were being and taken because they had to stay home or they couldn't go to work. And I think there comes a point when the the concept of more people dying versus your freedom to come and go, the health of the nation supersedes it. I absolutely believe that because of you don't have a nation that's healthy, your economy is not going to work anyway, because you want to have anybody to work. And you're going to have a whole lot of high medical bills that people can't pay, which I know the hospitals have been seeking federal support. I didn't like to see the back and forth between the scientists and the president, I think you you were clear, you could clearly see the tension. Which, you know, Americans should not have to see that. And I think it became political, to political, this is about taking care of the country, not about, you know, wanting to feather your nest. So you get reelected in November. And I felt like that, even though the President was talking about COVID stuff, it was always about him, and what he's doing and what he's done. And I don't think he showed the kind of respect for the scientists that he should have. So for me, he was just, you know, he just wasn't it for me. I think he could have done a better job. And showing respect for those people who know what knows what's going on in people's bodies, and what needs to happen with the country. And I felt like this, you know, disrespect that he showed for the scientists was not not appropriate.

Glenda McGann 56:58

Well, Sandy, just three more questions.

Sandra Smith 57:01

Okay.

Glenda McGann 57:03

How has your experience transformed how you think about your family, your friends and your community?

Sandra Smith 57:11

Oh, you know, I just think we need, you know, for me, I'm appreciative of my family, I'm appreciative no one got ill. Number one, that was one thing. Of course, my community and friends, you know, I'm just happy that we were here to support one another, I think, you know, this was a time of sport, even if its just on a telephone, you know, an email, Facebook post, I think that that was important, you know, that we continue to have that kind of support for one another, and checking on one another. What did happen as a side from this is friends that I

normally don't spend much time, you know, we, they live in other parts of the country, they're not the closest circle of friends. But I heard from people I had not heard from, you know, for maybe a year or even more, and now, and we will talk, talk and catch up. And so I've talked to several people that I normally don't talk to that often, you know, we're friends, but everybody's living their life, you know, but that has been a positive for me, because we've reached out to one another, and taught that you know, that we just get busy and we don't have time to talk. Whereas the friends right here are right here immediate, but other people in distant places, that's been a very positive thing for me to have conversations with people are one of my friends in Ohio and she said, I'm just calling you because I'm getting bored now. And so let's talk or, you know, stuff like that. And that was really great. Because and Are you okay, and how's it going for you? So to know, there were still people who cared and we, we reconnected in a in and that, you know, was a positive out of the pandemic for me. Yeah.

Glenda McGann 59:23

Knowing what you've known now, what do you think that individuals, communities or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

Sandra Smith 59:31

I think one of the things we need to keep in mind is that we are not invincible. I think that we need to understand that we can be vulnerable to a lot of things and that we need to be a little more prepared. Personally, you know, like, you know, we need an emergency fund. Maybe people will think more about having an emergency fund when when this is an unexpected thing. And I know for a lot of people, and I thank God that not me personally. But for a lot of people, they've depleted their resources and so that that's gonna be tough to come and I think people will curb that we need to I, we had a session at the end of one of my meetings and one of the things that I said was, I have a lot more money in my pocket, because I'm not out and about walking around in the store, just you know, and I'm doing frivolous shopping. You know, I'm buying things just because Oh, I really liked that. But do I really need it and I think this this situation is going to change some of that. I think people are going to pay more attention to their resources and the conservation of their resources. So that in the future when something like this would happen that you're a little more prepared financially. And I think mentally I think has helped people understand that we can get through things like this and be okay because even with the SARS it this was country wide, really country wide and and affected everybody but, even though you may not have had the COVID are, but the because of the COVID You got to change your whole lifestyle. And I think it's gonna cause us to change things on a permanent basis certain things on a permanent basis. I know for me, I won't, I won't be shopping frivolously my bank account looks better because of COVID. And I haven't missed a beat. You know, I still have the things I like. But I just know now that I need, I can live a little smarter with my resources and then to I need to pay attention to my health again and not do a slide like this.

Glenda McGann 1:02:15

Are there any other thoughts you would like to add Sandy?

Sandra Smith 1:02:23

I don't think so. Did a great interview. Glenda I like the fact that they're doing this to hear from people, real people in this I think it's great, I think have covered it all. I'm just thankful that You know, so far so good, but man, the people that I know, and I hope it continues. And I just wanna I just have to wait and see.

Glenda McGann 1:02:54

Well, thank you, Sandy. We're very grateful that you participated.

Sandra Smith 1:02:59

Thank you Glenda for thinking of me,

Glenda McGann 1:03:01

of course.

Sandra Smith 1:03:01

I really appreciate it. Great.

Glenda McGann 1:03:04

Talk to you soon.

Sandra Smith 1:03:06

Okay. All right.

Glenda McGann 1:03:08

Bye.

Sandra Smith 1:03:08

Bye bye.