

## COVID-19: There's Good in Everything

By Giovanni M. Needham '21

**B**efore I begin, I want to say that COVID-19 has made everyone's life harder and stranger, but I hate seeing different news outlets constantly using COVID as a way to incite fear or drill the negatives of this pandemic into all of our heads. It's been terrible. The "normal" way of life we have been used to is gone, and that's been frustrating. There have been hundreds of thousands of people that have had to say goodbye to loved ones through a FaceTime call, as their loved one began to pass. Millions of people have lost jobs, collected unemployment checks, and stayed unemployed since their kids weren't allowed to go back to public schools. To say the least, COVID-19 has been rough for us. But, we're powering through it. With each day that passes, we are a step closer to normalcy, and when that magical day comes when closures are gone, an effective vaccine has not only been tried and tested but also distributed to all Americans without future side effects, when social distancing becomes a thing of the past, and when we can all finally get off of Zoom, we're going to appreciate our old days so much more. In the meantime, we've got to keep chugging along. While we continue in these weird times, I want to shine a light on some of the positive things that we have seen and encountered in 2020 in the midst of COVID-19.

First, many of us have been able to spend more time with family than ever before, which may have been a bad thing at times, but was ultimately a pleasant surprise. When we all got sent home after Spring Break, I honestly thought I would be back in my Blake, taking classes in person within two or three weeks. I was wrong. Instead, I spent the rest of our Spring Semester at home, and then, I was home all summer, interning online. I have never spent that much time with just my family. At first, I was really dreading it. Don't get me wrong; I love my family, but I thought I was going to want to leave home so quickly. Once again, I was wrong. I got to bond with my family in a way that I never did before. I was doing all kinds of wood-working, house projects, and outdoor yard projects like building a fence for the backyard. I didn't think I was going to have so much fun with my hands, building all sorts of things out of wood, and doing it with my family only made it better. Sitting around a table and enjoying a good, home cooked meal has never been so rewarding. Just getting to know each one of my family members on a closer level was such an awesome time, and I really wasn't expecting it. So, I've got to imagine that there are bunch of guys here at Sydney who had similar experiences. I have missed The Hill, but My Home was a great place to be, and I'm looking forward to seeing my family soon.

Family was great, but I also had a ton of time to do some self-reflection, which can be kind of hard for us Sydney guys since many of us are social creatures, finding themselves at the latest social event. But, this summer, I was pretty limited to who I saw. Like I said, I spent a lot of time with my family, but I spent the most time by myself than I ever have before. For me, that's something pretty rare. If you know me, you know that I usually surround myself by a few people all the time, talking my life away. I don't know anyone that can shut me up. So, being alone pushed me in a way where I was free

of a lot of distractions. I got to thinking, and I really found who I am. I started doing things that I always wanted to do, but I never had the guts to actually get going. I can actually play a few songs on guitar now, and I got that guitar for Christmas five years ago. I found the excitement in setting daily goals, achieving them, and enjoying the rewards. I started to work on myself, made myself stronger mentally, and I really see the benefits now. I know so many of my friends that really used this opportunity to reflect and focus on what's important to them. I know guys who got into investing, and they saw huge gains, pushing them further into early financial success. I know people that decided that sitting around wasn't enough, so they chose this time to make a diet, work out, and now they are in the best shape of their life. I know people that used this time to just relax after busting their behinds day after day, finding new hobbies and happiness within themselves. I know I'm not the only one that benefitted from some alone time, finding new ways to push myself, and I'm honestly ecstatic that people were able to turn a crappy situation into a happy lifestyle.

Lastly, one of the best things that we can look at in the midst of one of the worst moments of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is how much we have come together, not only as a country, but also as a School. We all miss The Circle, Tailgates, The Macon Game, but when move in day came, we didn't say that we didn't want to come back just because we weren't going to get those things this year. We came back, and we came back to see each other, even if our faces are hidden by cloth, and our bodies are separated by at least two-yard sticks. We came back to give back to this place. Without us, there is no Hampden-Sydney College. There is no tradition. There are no Good Men. There is no Good citizen. Even with the first pandemic in over 100 years, we still came back, and I am so happy I am back. I am a senior now, and while I've seen the change in this school from my first day of freshman year, to where I stand now, I am grateful to still be here today. To the freshman that don't know what this school is like when a literal pandemic is rolling through, I'm elated that y'all continued to take the chance on an all-male school in Farmville, Virginia, as it finds its way through COVID.

COVID-19 has turned everything upside down. We continue to see its effects every day, and Venable has never been so confused. In a time when negativity grabs headlines and carries conversation, I want us to remember the good things that came from this. We've all faced our own adversity, and now, we can add a pandemic to the list. Just know that when our normal semesters comes back, we're going show these freshmen what this school is all about. In the meantime, thank your friends and family that stayed close to you during the spring, summer, and fall. Be happy if you were able to learn a thing or two about yourself, and know that this place will stand through a pandemic or a Civil War.