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IT'S BEEN A YEAR, BUT LET'S LOOK FORWARD

By Julia Largent, *Assistant Professor of Communication, MacMedia Faculty Advisor*

Normally, The Spectator tries to keep “I” and “We” out of our stories. We try hard to keep the stories third person and unbiased. But this one will be different. This issue marks a year since COVID-19 was declared a pandemic. Many of us remember spring 2020 like it was yesterday. We remember what we were doing when certain bits of news broke. Where we were when we learned that McPherson College, or your high school, would be shifting online. We all remember the tears that were shed on that last day upon realizing that was it for the academic year—that we wouldn't see each other until fall or until they travel back to campus. We went online, thinking it would just be for a few months, that we'd be back to normal by this past fall. But, we weren't.



We have all experienced things this past year that we wish didn't happen. Fear as friends or family contracted COVID-19 and were hospitalized. Grief after those same individuals died. Frustration from inequality in both vaccination distribution as well as care for COVID-19 patients of color. It's been a tough year, and it's okay for us to recognize that. It's okay for us to grapple

with the sadness and frustration and still rejoice in the good. It's how we grow, both as a society and as individuals.

The point of this issue is not to immortalize the difficult parts, but to celebrate that we are here. I have never been happier to be part of the McPherson College community as I am right now. I've seen our students come together and support each other through this difficult time. My colleagues and I worked all summer to prepare for this year, knowing it wouldn't be the easiest year of our career. We helped each other figure out how to adapt different classes to an online setting or

how to handle classes when only seeing students one day a week instead of two or three. I've seen the maintenance staff do their best to mitigate any spread of disease. This campus came together. And that's something to be proud of.

As you read this issue and the reflections of your peers, faculty and staff, I encourage you to reflect on your own year. What were the difficult parts? How did you get through them or getting through them? What are the good parts?

I recently participated in a virtual Seder led by a good friend of mine. To close the night, he had each one of us say something that we were looking forward to in the next year. I encourage you to do the same, what are you looking forward to in the remainder of 2021? What do you wish to celebrate? I choose to celebrate us and I look forward to seeing how our campus rallies together through the remainder of this frustrating moment in our lives.



SACRIFICIAL WORKERS

Digital drawing by Cherie Bruce, Senior English major

THIS ISSUE FEATURES REFLECTIONS AND THOUGHTS BY THE MCPHERSON COLLEGE COMMUNITY. THEY WERE SLIGHTLY EDITED FOR CLARITY, BUT WERE NOT FACT-CHECKED.

VIEWPOINTS ON COVID-19



REFLECTIONS FROM THE CHOIR

As the director of our choirs, I have had the privilege of creating a space for singing and developing trusting relationships. I have been reflecting on a year with pandemic and how the choral program has grown and changed as a result. Much of our repertoire this year has focused on narratives of loss and pain, and as musical artists we had the opportunity to work those narratives. Our choirs take time at the end of the week to check in on social and emotional issues, too. Each student (who is willing) shares a joy, a concern, and then another joy. It's powerful to see that, in the midst of so much pain and uncertainty, choral music remains a central avenue for developing a support system. I thought it would be interesting to hear how students answer the question "How has participating in choir helped you get through the COVID-19 pandemic?" Here are the responses of many students in the choral program.

Dr. James Bowyer, *Associate Professor of Music and Director of Choirs*

Throughout both semesters, the concert choir and the gospel choir have been highlights of my days and even weeks, due to the open and safe environment for learning, creativity, and self-expression that I have not found anywhere else throughout COVID-19, both on and off campus. —*Dylan Dilks*

It helped me because it is my safe place where I can forget everything that is wrong with the outside world. Once I enter class, I just focus on the moment and on doing what I love to do. Sometimes I even feel like my stress is released from my body as I sing. It's an amazing feeling and I really thank the choir for it! —*Choucranie Kayembe*

Being able to sing in choir throughout the COVID-19 pandemic has been such a refuge. Our professor, James Bowyer, has made choir a safe space for us to focus on the beauty of making music together, rather than the fears of the pandemic. I know that when I walk through the room doors, I have an opportunity to forget about my stress/other responsibilities for an hour. James has also been very intentional in asking us how we're doing and to giving us breaks when it seems like we need them. I am so thankful that I have a choir as a respite during the pandemic. —*Courtney Weesner*

Music is a historic stress reliever. Throughout this, music has kept me grounded. —*KayLynn Kraybill*

Being in choir has helped me get through COVID-19 by acting as a stress reliever. Being able to come together with my friends and classmates as a group again and make music just takes away the stress of everything happening with COVID-19. —*Sierra Grow*

The pandemic has caused a lot of stress in my life and the lives of others. Choir has been a nice escape twice a week where I don't have to worry about anything else and just sing. —*Bailey Hollinger*

Choir has made my life more cheerful. I really enjoy being able to make music, and since I lift my violin at home this is the one place where I get to do it. —*Isaac Bora*

Singing has gotten me through COVID-19 because it allows me to express emotions that I keep deep down. It kept me from going crazy. —*Jailynn Hammel*

Choir has helped me get through COVID-19 because I still get to sing. Singing is my stress reliever...one of the places that is a stress free zone. Choir is just that place where I feel like nothing else matters but the words and music I get to make. It is, in other words, another home for me. —*Lauren Kunda*

Singing in choir has helped me get through COVID-19 by providing me with a safe place to mentally rejuvenate while still following the mask rules and socially distancing. —*Amanda Hill*

My name is Christian Davis. I am a freshman here at the college. One of the many things that has helped me get through COVID-19 is choir because I just love music. I feel like I am not myself if I don't sing, so I really feel like being able to do this still is amazing! —*Christian Davis*

Being a freshman, choir has given me some stability in my schedule. I know it and it's comfortable when maybe other things are foreign or up in the air. I can go through my week knowing I will at least have something familiar. —*Junior Silva*

COVID-19 has affected everyone on campus in different ways, but not all of it has been bad. One positive that has come to my life is gaining my confidence back to join the McPherson Choir. Even with the masks, choir gave me a new-found self esteem that allows me to sing in front of others. That is something I would never have dreamt of a year ago. —*Zaya Carson*

Once COVID-19 hit, everyone's life changed. Our daily lives were different. There are, however, positive things during this time. I was able to get into choir again, which I hadn't done since Junior High. Every day when I walk in I'm excited to sing and have fun! Everyone could use a little joy in their lives. —*Valick Sorter*

I thought that COVID-19 would affect all of the activities that I love to do, but thankfully I was still able to sing in choir. Making music with my fellow choir mates helps me forget about all the craziness going on in the world. —*Tya Jackson*



VIEWPOINTS ON COVID-19

C.O.V.I.D.

By Alex Parish, *Junior*

Change. The new normal. Everywhere you look advertisements are boasting about adjusting to our new normal. News broadcasters, politicians, and higher authorities preached about surviving through these unprecedented times. Words regurgitated throughout the media to the point where if I never heard them again, I would be forever thankful. As someone who struggles with change, this year has been tense and fraught with anxiety. Never before has my life been changed so completely in a matter of weeks. At the beginning we joked about having an extended spring break, only to find out we would not be returning to campus. I took for granted the simple luxuries of life. It is hard to appreciate going out to dinner with your friends, having family gatherings during the holidays, or shopping for a new shirt in the mall until these privileges are taken away. The pandemic showed me change can facilitate greatness along with hardship, but most importantly it taught me to appreciate the little things in life.

Online. As the pandemic exploded worldwide, everything was moved online. Students were forced to adapt to online school, employees had to manage their workload on the internet, and relationships were nurtured over the phone. My entire life transitioned to online platforms. My classes were conducted through Zoom meetings, and my friendships were grown through social media. At first, I felt terribly alone, until the world itself began to connect through the web. People came together in an astounding display of unity by interacting online. This massive shift to network interactions encouraged people to support each other through social platforms and random acts of kindness.



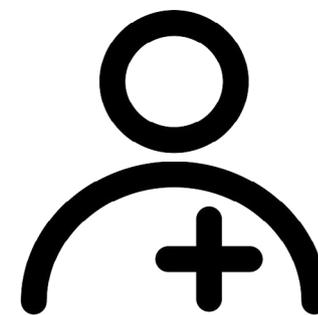
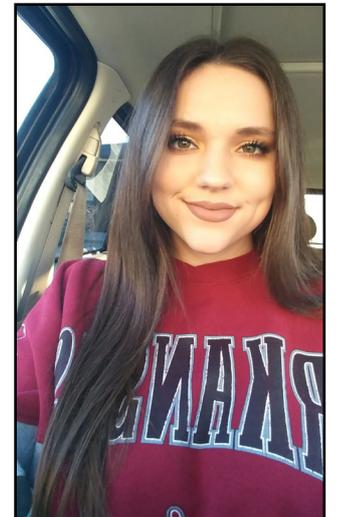
Vaccine. The search for a cure was tireless and long. Medical experts labored over finding a vaccine, so people could once again socialize in a safe environment free of coronavirus. Hope was born again with this new discovery. People who were trapped in a state of despair were given a taste of freedom from the never-ending spiral of isolation. Lives that were put on hold because of the virus, are once again able to resume solely due to the development of this vaccine. Immunization became a beacon of light breaking through the dark clouds of uncertainty and desperation brought on by the virus. With this groundbreaking medical invention, people can now hope for a future that does not contain the words socially distanced, masks required, or quarantine.



Inside. Across the globe, people were told to stay indoors and manage life from the safety of their homes. Jobs were lost, relationships were tested, and families were strained. It is difficult to preserve the same quality of life when people are confined to the four outer walls of their house. My home used to be my sanctuary, a place to escape the stress of everyday life, but what happens when your hideaway morphs into your prison? This is the question that haunted many people throughout the course of this pandemic. How can you turn a place that feels like a cage back into a safe haven, once you are released from its imprisonment?



Doctors. They did not receive enough appreciation for their long nights and endless shifts. Heroes in scrubs dutifully worked day in and day out to save those affected by the virus and keep their patients alive. A thankless job with heavy workloads and not enough pots of coffee or caffeine to maintain the energy required for medics to continue their rounds. These professionals risked their health every day coming to the hospital without a second thought. Without their dedication and selflessness, the world would have stopped spinning altogether.



VIEWPOINTS ON COVID-19



TAKE NOTES

By Kerry Dobbins, *Associate Professor of History*

Do you remember who sat next to you during your last on campus class in March 2020? You may



now but in the years to come, you will wish you had written it down. There is still time! Even a year later your memory of last March is probably clear in your mind. Write everything down. Write down the names of the people who live on your hall. Write down the classes you took. You'll want to remember these things years from now, but it will have faded from your memory. Write down names, dates, locations. These are the details you will want to remember later, so write it for yourself. You will remember how you feel.

You should write down what you feel.

Write this for someone else who doesn't exist yet. "I wonder what it felt like?" "What did they think?" When we imagine the people in the past, these are the questions we ask. We don't ask them for some lofty academic reason. We ask them because we recognize the humanity in the people of the past. We wonder what kept them up at night. What scared them? What did they look forward to? What did they hope for?

In the future these are the questions that people will ask about us. Tell them.

A LOOK BACK

By Tricia Hartshorn, *College Registrar*

Yes, it's been a year.

The last 12 months have noticeably been different in so many ways for our world. The observations that I'm writing about for this article are both personal and professional, which have clumped together. I know that I'm not alone when I say that I have really struggled and while I would never wish mental health challenges on anyone, it helps to know that I'm not alone.

It has always been a goal of mine to look at the positive in every situation. It does not always happen right away, but usually after reflection, I have a takeaway which will hopefully make me a better person on this earth. I love learning and I love takeaways.

Life is a journey. I don't necessarily view the journey as one with ups and downs. For the last 10 to 12 years, I've tried to view it as a series of touchpoints instead. While the journey has been difficult each experience, whether I was joyful or grief-stricken, allowed me to learn more about myself. I'm quite

certain that I did not start learning about who I am until I was in my forties. I learn more about myself each day. It isn't always pretty but it is typically pretty important.

Now that I am on the threshold of turning sixty, I'm much more aware of the journey. College-aged students have so much more on their plate than I did at that age. I pray for our students each and every day. It also seems to me that COVID-19 has required all to learn more about themselves and how they will adapt to changes. I'm able to survive the social distancing and such, in

part, because of my experiences from 10 years ago that I chose to use as touchpoints and to learn from them. My journey is not the same as anyone else's journey and that is okay. I'm done comparing myself to others and berating myself for not being good

enough. I can now say that I like me and even though we can all improve, I know that I am enough.

I have always wanted everyone to win (except for my four years of playing college tennis). Now I mainly want everyone to figure out how to keep showing up in life. It is a different recipe for each person and it can continually be tweaked and refined. I will always be thankful to God for putting the necessary ingredients in my life so many years ago to ensure that I now want to keep showing up. I want that for you too!

A FRESHMAN'S THOUGHTS

By Spencer Ice, *Freshman*

Well, what a year, am I right? We thought all of this coronavirus stuff would only last a couple of months at the longest. Wow, we were sure wrong about that. After a few quarantines and some fun mask-wearing, we are now at the one-year anniversary of COVID-19 moving in with us. Many things that we know and love have been drastically changed

during COVID-19. Things such as car shows, concerts, and expos.

We have had to change our way of life to adapt to the COVID-19 virus, but we have survived this pandemic, and there may just be light at the end of the tunnel. We have seen a steady decline in new cases over the past few months. And with a vaccine out we may just be able to finally end this pandemic and get back to our normal lives.

I will be happy to end social distancing and wearing masks, I am sure that I won't be the only one either. We will finally be able to attend school with some regularity and with better social interactions. And for all of the car people, we will be able to have the school car show this year. So if we all buckle down for this final stretch of the pandemic we may be able to finally beat it once and for all.





VIEWPOINTS ON COVID-19

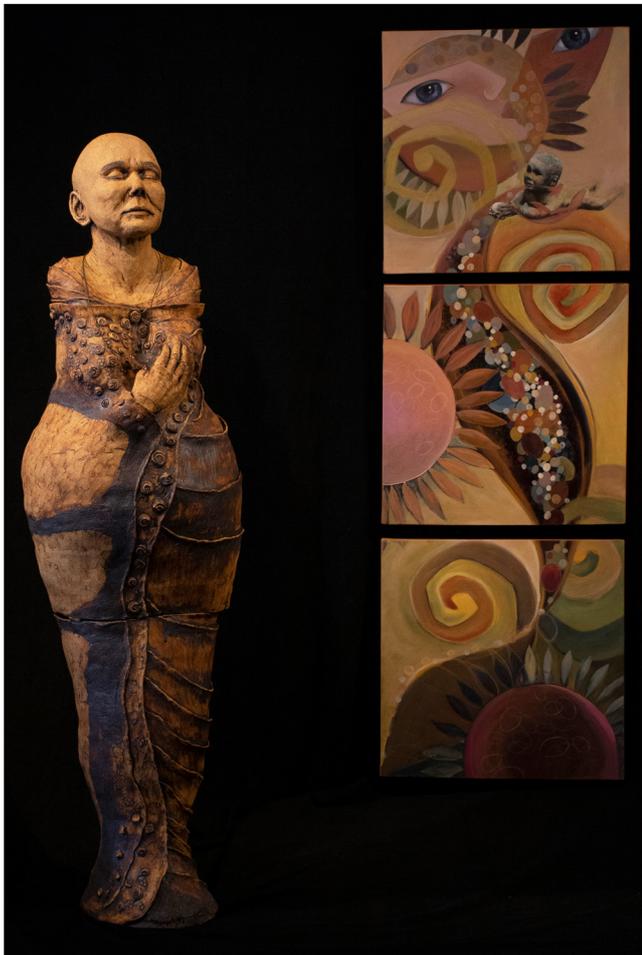
INCUBATION HOME

By Michaela Groeblacher,
Associate Professor of Art

This is an installation, consisting of a life-size ceramic figure, a piece of jewelry and a painting. Amongst other things, the painting shows a baby as an image transfer of a piece I sculpted in the past, and a hand reaching up from below, holding up

the baby like a safety net. The sculpted woman is holding on to a butterfly.

Over the course of my life, I have learned to see situations in a positive way. Therefore, I am seeing the current time as an incubation time, expecting great ideas to sprout from it for myself and for the world.



By Jackie Gullion, *Junior*

It's Friday the 13th. COVID-19 is taking control. What a time to be alive. Going through these hoops you never thought you'd go through. Not taking things seriously until it's right in front of your door.

Things may happen, can happen, and will happen.

People are in fright because of being locked away from the outside world.

Scared of human contact being stolen from them. Something we all need.

Events are shutting down; graduation, concerts, celebrations

Ones that we hold dear to our hearts. Everyone is in a panic.

This is a time to remember: You are your own home. No matter where life has taken you. You take you wherever

you go. You control your mind, letting it go through what it needs to go through.

Yes, the outside world may be in a panic. But you know how to keep yourself safe. You know what is best for yourself.

Don't let the 55lbs weight drag you down. Take control of your mind and work. Work until you can pick up the weight. Work until you have ignited the beast inside of you.

You are your own home. You are the master of your temple. You are going to make life happen. You are going to get through this obstacle. Work with the limitations that have been put in place.

You are your own home. Be the task master. Because the pain is temporary.

You are your own home and love every minute of it.

COVID-19 BENEFITS IN MY LIFE

By Jason Okoro, *Junior*

We have experienced such a crazy year with this whole pandemic. Having to move completely online for classes while being at home was extremely weird to me. I felt like I was homeschooled and I struggled to actually learn anything in my classes because it felt like my professors were unavailable. My whole life felt like it had been put on pause due to the pandemic. Returning home to not having a job anymore because everywhere was shutdown

to try stopping the virus. All the gyms were closed so I was unable to play basketball and lift in a gym with air conditioning so I had to come up with new ideas. I began hooping and lifting outside on the football field and basketball



court of my middle school. Having to change where I worked out at helped me a lot because the Texas heat forced me to really break a sweat. I started to see results so I decided to start a training business.

I began training kids from middle school all the way to college students whether it was basketball or just getting in shape. The whole pandemic forced me to get off my butt and it helped me start doing something that I actually truly love. I had clients show up four times a week which led to making

good money. I was able to help people stay in shape which was really important to me because seeing the results of my clients helped me realize I was actually making a difference in their lives.

I know COVID-19 had a lot of bad things that came with it, but thankfully it helped me start something that I always wanted to do: be a trainer for people. Coming home early was a bummer, but having everyone return home opened up my client list for a bigger variety of people.