

My COVID Experience

By Abigail Ross

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I was a youth leader on a mission trip this year through a local ministry. I had previous experience being on the team and was asked to step in as a youth leader with a couple other young adults that had gone before as well. We started team meetings between the leadership team in September, and the entire team (leaders and youth) began to meet in November, with the actual trip being the Spring Break in March. The ministry is a big proponent of meeting every week for about 15 weeks, to begin to build the team bonds, so when we are on the trip, we will work together even better.

The trip was going to Sonora, Mexico, with the majority of the trip actually being in Sinaloa state. Both of these states of Mexico are either Level 3 or Level 4, but we had been going to these states for years, even with these high levels of caution. So, this was nothing new, and we still expected to go.

At the beginning of March, when things really started to increase around the world and the States, around MSU campus and schools all around the country, and I had to start asking questions. At first, I knew that no one close to me was high-risk, so I felt comfortable going abroad and coming back to a self-quarantine. However, my boyfriend brought up the fact that his dad was immunocompromised, who we both saw frequently. This was a realization that the coronavirus is not just about me and my direct family, but it really was about a community of people.

After evaluating the pros and cons, the entire team went to Mexico for the mission, including myself. The trip was planned to be 10 days long, from departure to arrival, however it was cut short due to the State of Emergency that was declared during our trip. Since we were travelling with mostly minors, the board of the ministry had advised us to cut our trip as short as we could and get back across the border sooner than later. The last few days of the trip were a total whirlwind and you could see some of the fear or anxiety within the youth's eyes. We crossed the border and got back all fine. No one is sick, and we all self-quarantined for the 14 days.

This was truly the turning point for me. Leaving one Bozeman and coming back to a completely different one, in just 9 days. When I left, everything was open, toilet paper was stocked, you could freely travel across state lines. When I came back, the opposite of all this was prevalent.

I resigned from my campus job as a Resident Advisor because of the health risk of people close to me, I had no residents since they had all left campus as well, and half of my staff had resigned. I loved being a Resident Advisor, and this was not an easy decision to make, but it was a necessary one, for me.

I am lucky enough to live with my parents for the remainder of the school year and the summer, I am lucky enough not to worry about an income during all the closures, and I am lucky enough to not have gotten sick.

While my story might seem incomparable to others, all of our stories are valid. Thanks for listening.