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Impact

It was Thursday morning. I was in biology lab looking at the phases of mitosis through a microscope when we all received the email. I was surprised the university sent out the email at the beginning of the day rather than in the evening. I wish they would have done the latter. Online classes were to be put into effect immediately after spring break. Honestly, I wasn't too upset or shocked about it. Yet, there was a couple classes I was going to miss like my biology lab and my English riding class.

I figured I would be okay. I worked at the MSU Fitness Center and at a vet hospital in Belgrade. I lived off campus, and I would be able to get more hours at the hospital now that my classes were online. I was going to get a head start on making my summer income!

But then I went to work that Saturday.

I was cleaning the equine hospital when my manager walked in. She wasn't working that day, so I asked her, "Oh no, did I forget to do something?" She laughed and said, "No." Then her smile disappeared, "but it is bad."

She explained due to the lack of boarders coming into the hospital, we didn't have any work to do here until people started bringing their animals again. I still had my job; I just had no work to be scheduled for. I had to file for unemployment that day, and I left work early. I was pretty bummed out for obvious reasons, but it was also ironic because that morning I had written down "I am still employed" in my gratitude journal.

This all happened the weekend before spring break. I had a full week to do absolutely nothing before I had to start online classes for the rest of the semester. I called my mom and told her what had happened. My family lives about four hours from Bozeman in the Bitterroot Valley. I decided I was going to come home to visit for the week then come back to Bozeman to find work to do.

My parents were super supportive. Due to the pandemic, my sister and her fiancé decided to move up their wedding date from May to that weekend. Originally they were planning on getting married in a religious venue in Idaho in May. Knowing that everything would most likely be shut down at that point, they decided to change to a similar venue in Billings. The venue was a temple for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. In these temples special and sacred ceremonies are held including marriages for members of the church. Thinking that all the temples would close soon, they planned to get married in the Billings temple that weekend, March 28th. Unfortunately, the church announced that all temples were closed that Wednesday night, throwing yet another wrench in their plans, and mine as well. Plan C was born that night.

It was decided that we would have a civil wedding in the living room of my sister's fiancé's family's house that Friday. It would be our family, their family, and two family friends. Our family friends were a couple that my Dad knew from church and work. The husband, Brian Hawkes was able to marry my sister and her fiancé, and him and his wife also doubled as our

photographers. My brother and his wife drove up from Colorado. They almost didn't come due to the pandemic and the long drive, but I reminded him that his wedding (which took place in October, 5 months ago) was in the middle of mid-terms. We had driven from Montana in the middle of the semester to come to his wedding. I made sure to tell him, "I don't care if the world is ending or not or if it's not convenient for you – you are coming!"

There was a total of fourteen people. We took pictures outside in their yard, they were married in the living room, and we ate food at tables decorated with toilet paper center pieces. It was short, simple, safe, and way more fun than a big, elaborate wedding.

Since we didn't end up driving to Billings, I told my mom I was thinking of driving back to Bozeman since spring break was over. She did not think that was a good idea. She reminded me that Gallatin County is the epicenter in Montana for the virus. However, I had only packed clothes for a week, which was not a lot since I had few clothes at my parents' house anyway. I had packed the bare minimum of clothes and schoolwork needed. On top of that, my horse is in Bozeman. My mom agreed I could drive to Bozeman, grab some clothes and schoolwork, see my horse, and come "RIGHT HOME". So that's what I did, and I dragged my younger sister along with me just for fun.

Since then I've been home all of April. I do my online classes, I annoy my younger sister, I visit the hangar my dad works at, and I try not to lose my sanity. But that's not all that's happened since I've been home. Like many others, I am temporarily unemployed, living and relying on my parents, and resisting the temptation to download Tik Tok. What most people miss is meeting new people and going on dates. Meanwhile, it took a whole pandemic for me just to come home and visit. Now, I am dating a guy I used to go to high school with, and it's going really well.

I realize that this pandemic has affected the entire world, and there are a lot more serious problems that do not affect me, but nonetheless are there. However, for me personally, I am happy this pandemic forced me to come home. It gave me time to spend with my family, who I love and am grateful for. It provided the opportunity to sleep in the room my parents made for me at home, surrounded by all my middle school achievements making me feel like I am in a shrine of myself while my bed is a coffin. It connected me with the people around me and gave me an opportunity to improve those relationships.

Soon I will be back in Bozeman. While my family lives in the Bitterroot, Bozeman is my home. My jobs are starting to schedule me again, and the semester is about to end. Last summer, I drove an hour to and from Big Sky to do a job that absolutely drained the joy out of me. This year, nothing is going to stop me from enjoying summer in Bozeman.