The Montclarion March 3, 2022

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In February of 2020, meetings were a regular occurrence for Montclair State administrators. Students were planning to study abroad that summer, admissions staff were preparing for incoming freshman orientations and faculty were preparing fall 2020 curriculums. However, as the unfamiliar coronavirus (COVID-19) began to creep closer to home, the people running Montclair State had a lot of impactful decisions to make.

On March 17, 2020, those university leaders made their toughest call. Following Governor Murphy’s Executive Order No. 104 for all colleges to cease in-person instruction. A campus-wide email was sent out the following day requiring all students who did not have a legitimate reason to remain on campus to remove all of their belongings from the residence halls and flee back to their homes.

By 4 p.m. on March 23, 2020, Montclair State students had vacated the campus. Residence halls were empty and thus began the transformation to “Zoom University.” The “new normal” began.

Dr. Karen Pennington, former dean to the two-year commemoration of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the effect it has had on Montclair State University’s campus community #Since2020.

In this week’s special edition, The Montclarion is showcasing content related to the two-year commemoration of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and the effect it has had on Montclair State University’s campus community #Since2020.

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Red Hawk Rap Sheet

Monday, February 21
Schmitt Hall: Officers responded to Schmitt Hall in regards to a report of harassment. Officers met on the scene by a University employee, who reported receiving unwanted communication from a known individual. This incident is under investigation.

Monday, February 21
Harassment: A student came into Police Headquarters to report an incident of cyber harassment. This incident is under investigation.

Tuesday, February 22
Lot 61: Non-student Kirsten Epperly was arrested in Lot 61, following an incident of reckless driving, driving while intoxicated, aggravated assault and resisting arrest. The individual was placed into Police custody and later processed and released from Police Headquarters pending a follow-up court date.

Wednesday, February 23
Life Hall: Officers responded to Life Hall in regards to a report of a theft. This incident is under investigation.

Anyone who has information regarding these incidents is urged to call the police station at T-I-P-S (8477).
Former Montclair State President
Susan A. Cole Reflects on Pandemic

Chelsey Johnstone
Guest Writer

In her 23 years of leading Montclair State University, former president Susan A. Cole never imagined she would be faced with the enormity of the challenges brought on by the unprecedented nature of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Cole explains the big responsibility and the amount of work she encountered leading the university in a time of crisis.

“I can say categorically that I have never, at any time in my life, worked harder than I did throughout that time up to the day of my retirement on Aug. 1, 2021,” Cole said. “I was determined to do whatever was necessary to navigate the university successfully through the crisis for the sake of our students, present and future, and for the sake of the many people who, over the years, had committed their talents and energy to building this extraordinary university.”

For Montclair State and most of the world, COVID-19 arrived abruptly. It left us with no time to think. One day our lives were what we now call “normal” and the next — chaos.

Cole also said that everything occurred so quickly the university did not have enough time to prepare and transition to remote learning.

“Looking back on events, it is hard to believe how little time we had to prepare,” Cole said. “Spring term classes began on Jan. 21, 2020, in the world as we knew it and the university’s classrooms, campus spaces and residence halls were filled to capacity.

On March 16, Gov. (Phil) Murphy began to take a series of actions shutting down the state, including the public schools, and requiring that colleges and universities switch immediately to remote learning with only very limited exceptions.”

According to Cole, university presidents across the state went back and forth with the governor’s office regularly throughout the pandemic, especially when lockdown first began.

Although presidents like Cole agreed with the urgent measures needed to be enforced by higher education, Cole, amongst others, felt as though there was more to be considered.

“The governor’s office was, first and foremost, focused on the health risks to students posed by the virus,” Cole said. “I and other presidents, believed that part of the equation needed to be the very serious other risks to students — the dangers of giving up on their educational goals, the social and mental health dangers of isolation from their peers and the health risks associated with being pushed back into communities with very high rates of COVID-19 infection, while the university environment remained quite safe.”

One of Cole’s wishes was for computer centers, libraries and residence halls to remain open on campus. She worried for the students who did not have adequate housing, study spaces or other accommodations for the delivery of instruction, food services and other activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic forced Cole and Montclair State administrations to make quick, urgent decisions that had both positive and negative lasting impacts on the student and faculty population.

Looking back, Cole reflects on how the university’s decisions may serve as lessons learned.

“Living, if one stays awake for it, is learning,” Cole said. “So, while this university’s response to the pandemic was strong, successful and well-reasoned, having lived and learned through the experience, there were to be a next time, we would be able to make our decisions and plans with an even deeper understanding of all the issues and options and their consequences.”
### NEWS #SINCE2020

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Campus Reacts to Quarantine Length

Over winter break, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced vaccinated citizens were able to cut down their time in quarantine from 10 days to five after being exposed to the coronavirus (COVID-19). This gave students hope that it would be the same for Montclair State University.

Jessica Brater, the student affairs council chair of the university senate, announced the quarantine period for vaccinated students would be reduced to five days after a student is diagnosed with COVID-19. This gave students hope that it would be the same for Montclair State University.

The policies are set forth by the health services department and the dean of students office.

Brater thinks the 10 days is beneficial because there seems to be a time lag between when students get contacted by the health center and when they are diagnosed with COVID-19.

"From what I've gathered from the dean of students office, mentioned the university senate, announced the quarantine period for vaccinated students would be reduced to five days after a student is diagnosed with COVID-19. This gave students hope that it would be the same for Montclair State University.

Brater said by the time faculty receives notifications that a student in their class has COVID-19, they have already returned to class.

"This is no one's fault," Brater said. "The processing just takes a little bit of time to unfold."

At the Jan. 26 senate meeting, Margaree Coleman-Carter, the associate vice president and dean of students, mentioned the department was overwhelmed at the beginning of the semester when all the students came back from break and transmission rates went up.

Quarantine lengths have changed many times throughout COVID-19. Beginning Feb. 6, 2020, the university informed students returning to the United States from China that they must quarantine for up to 14 days. On March 6, 2020, the quarantine period was extended for students returning from break and transmission rates went up.

When cases began increasing during the semester, out-of-state students still had to quarantine for up to 14 days. On March 6, 2020, the university informed students returning from break and transmission rates went up.

When students began returning to campus for the fall 2020 semester, out-of-state students had to quarantine for 14 days. When cases began increasing during the semester, the university implemented a waiver system to gain permission to leave campus.

Mady Garthly, a junior educational foundations for elementary teachers major, approves of the 10-day quarantine policy.

"I don't see why we shouldn't follow the CDC and make the quarantine period for vaccinated students five days," Hamstra said. "It would help better our education as well as still keep people safe."

Sam Seiser, a junior educational foundations for elementary teachers major, believes it is up to the university to do what ever will keep us safest.

"I respect that they are trying to make us feel as safe as possible when it comes to getting [COVID-19]," Seiser said. "If I could change it though, I would make it five days for vaccinated people and take the advice of the CDC."

Like many other students on campus, Seiser said she has extreme COVID-19 fatigue and is ready for things on campus to go back to normal.

Mady Garthly, a junior educational foundations for elementary teachers major, approves of the 10-day quarantine policy.

"Although the CDC says five days is OK, it's better to be safe than sorry," Garthly said. "Being that we are a big school, we should not take risks. It does not affect just us, but also the people we surround ourselves with."
COVID-19 Brings Social Discomfort to Campus Life

Since the university’s reopening, Campos describes her return to campus as overwhelming and recalls it being a big shock after the strain of the lockdown. “I say it’s definitely harder to form connections,” Campos said. “Professors are always apologizing because they can’t memorize people’s names since they can’t see our faces, so I know it’s harder on both ends.”

Saundra Collins, a psychology professor, said professors had to learn different techniques to try and restore the human connections and physical proximity that is lost when having to teach over Zoom. “If you’re in a classroom, you can walk up to a student and make personal contact,” Collins said. “You can tell a joke and do something there that puts life into the learning experience that you can’t do when you’re dealing with technology.”

Now that the campus has reopened and everyone is back to wearing masks, Collins explained how she makes her students smile despite not being able to read facial expressions. “I will start about five minutes before class is ending and I do what’s called a ‘hot seat’ for somebody who’s willing to answer a question for five points toward your next grade, and if you don’t know it, you can pass it to somebody else in the classroom,” Collins said. “I still do that. You got to keep something there that brings the humor so you can hear them laugh.”

Raquel Borges, a freshman psychology major, said she had trouble connecting with classmates through Zoom. “I feel like it’s kind of hard to talk to a classmate, it’s impersonal and a lot of people aren’t really paying attention during Zoom,” Borges said.

Willow DeFilippo, a sophomore psychology major, stressed the importance of in-person interactions and how difficult it was to develop connections with professors over virtual learning. “The lack of social interaction, especially for people aged 18 to 19, is not good for social development,” DeFilippo said. “My first two semesters when I was a freshman, I was totally virtual and I don’t think I can tell you a single one of my professor’s names from those classes.”

For Jordan Nosenchuk, a senior television and digital media major, the inability to meet people and the absence of others on campus prevented him from forming new in-person connections. Nosenchuk also feels his social skills worsened over Zoom, particularly in breakout rooms. “I didn’t know anyone, breakout rooms were supposed to help ‘break the ice,’ but that’s what I didn’t like [about them],” Nosenchuk said. “We would just sit there and not speak. Breakout rooms are definitely awkward. Nobody really knows each other and [they] are just thrust into a situation to have a conversation.”

To cope, Nosenchuk tried to find ways to get outside, even during his classes. “I did Zoom outside because we were stuck inside constantly. Any opportunity I would take it,” Nosenchuk said.

For mental health resources during these difficult times, visit the university’s website on Counseling and Psychological Services.
FEATURE #SINCE2020

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“When in Rome: Montclair State Students Thrive With Doctors in Italy Program”
March of 2020 is a time in our young adult lives we will never forget — empty shelves at stores, constant fear looking at the news and a two-week quarantine period that was supposed to end the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Two years later, we are still faced with those same challenges from the beginning but in a different way.

Juniors Bernice Ndegwa and Emma Caughlan, who were freshmen at the start of the pandemic, wrote about their experiences through the first two months of what we would now call, the “new normal.”

Ndegwa, a journalism and digital media major, wrote and captured photos of what it was like to live with two essential workers at the height of one of the scariest times of our lives. Caughlan, a journalism major, wrote about how her’s and her family’s day-to-day lives were affected due to COVID-19.

Ndegwa’s parents both work high-risk jobs as a nurse and a contractor. Her parents’ jobs, particularly her mom’s, affected the way she has looked at the pandemic.

“I feel like that made me more self-aware of what was going on,” Ndegwa said. “Seeing what [my mom] went through every day, it definitely makes me a little more nervous and more skeptical about COVID-19. I feel like having that connection to a person so closely related to patients, definitely makes you a lot more grateful to be safe and alive, to be healthy.”

Since writing her pandemic piece, Caughlan has only gotten closer with her family so coming back in person for school this year was a big change.

“I was always really close with my family. But especially now, we’re very, very close,” Caughlan said. “And it [has been] really weird within the last couple years of the pandemic.”

Quarantine Catch Up: How Our Writers’ Lives Have Changed Since Quarantine
months or so leaving. My sister left the house because she graduated high school [and] I left the house again. So, it was really odd at first being separated from each other."

The beginning of the pandemic made a lot of people feel stuck in life, unsure of where they were headed and how to get there, even unsure of who they were as a person. Caughlan felt similarly when she was sent home for good during her spring break of freshman year. "I felt like all through freshman [of college], I had one foot in high school, back home and then one foot in college. And then [COVID-19] just kicked both feet back [home]," Caughlan said. "I was hanging out with the same people I was [in high school]. So being pushed back there, that was hard."

Those two months of quarantine introduced many people to new things, hobbies and even new aspects about themselves. While it was a scary time, there were equally as memorable and fun times mixed in there as well. Caughlan’s family focused on movie marathons where the family would collaborate on which movie they would watch each night they were at home. Her top three most enjoyable films were, “Knives Out,” “The Half of It” and all of the film series she and her family went through: “Harry Potter,” “Lord of the Rings” and the Marvel cinematic universe.

To go along with the movie marathon, Caughlan had her sister dress up like the Joker and recreate the dance scene on the stairs from the 2019 film. "It was just something fun ... We spent a couple of hours doing it. I’ll never forget that," Caughlan said. "And I wish that we had done it more as well. It was nice to sort of use my creative skills to make something."

Now that Montclair State University has resumed in-person learning, our two quarantine writers finally feel like they have the “normal” college experience. While they might have preferred online learning due to convenience, nothing quite compares to being back here at Montclair State.

"Being in person, nothing tops that. I mean, [just] having this connection that we’re having right now," Ndegwa said. "Being able to be in person and seeing my friends again and living away from home [is great]."

Caughlan makes it clear that although remote learning gave her more free time, she enjoys being in a different atmosphere. "During virtual learning, I had a lot more time to myself. I would get my schoolwork done around [5 p.m.] no matter what," Caughlan said. "But it definitely needed to end at some point and I’m glad to be back in person and in a new environment."

Both Caughlan and Ndegwa are looking forward to life after the pandemic, or life being as normal as it can possibly get. They both have learned a lot about themselves and the world over these last two years.

"I feel like I became a lot more sure of myself and a lot more confident in myself. And I really appreciate that," Ndegwa said.

Caughlan shared an important lesson she learned. "Having those [real] relationships wasn’t something I think I appreciated as much until the pandemic," Caughlan said. “With my family, with my friends and knowing who my real friends are and who I can count on and just being with those people and how important that is.”
As with any label, people are quick to stereotype “introverts” and “extroverts.” So when the entire country went into lockdown due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and we were all put in the same situation, it was almost like a social experiment. How would people react to being cooped up and locked inside for weeks? Would introverts love it? Would extroverts go crazy?

Montclair State University students open up about their lockdown experiences: three “introvert” students, one “ambivert” and two “extroverts.”

For a long time, it has been stigmatized that extroverts are the better way to be. Does that change when we all have to hunker down in our homes for weeks? Introverts are known to love their personal space, but did they truly like being stuck in the same place during quarantine?

Lauren Peacock
Guest Writer

Karen Cuesta
Freshman
Psychology Major

Q: Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why?
“Introvert because college has really made me introverted because there’s not many people to meet here.”

Q: Did you like lockdown? Did you enjoy your time alone for so long since you consider yourself an introvert? Or were you dying to get out?
“I liked lockdown! I wish I could go back!”

Rahul Shah
Junior
Biology Major

Q: Did you like lockdown? Did you enjoy your time alone for so long since you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why?
“Ambivert — I’m in the middle.”

Q: Did you like lockdown? Or were you dying to get out?
“In lockdown, I wanted to socialize and I wanted to stay inside. So it goes both ways. If I’m free, I want to socialize but if I’m doing my homework or the weather isn’t good, I prefer my own space.”

Bianca Purkis
Freshman
Computer Science Major

Q: Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why?
“Introvert because college has really made me introverted because there’s not many people to meet here.”

Q: Did you like lockdown? Or were you dying to get out?
“I would say I did not like my lockdown but I had my best friend who helped me with the lockdown. Honestly, I hated it, it’s the worst but we gotta do what we gotta do to be safe. I felt like a puppy in a cage because I couldn’t go anywhere.”
Emily Cepin
Freshman
Earth & Environmental Science Major

Q: Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why?
"I'm introverted, I kind of like keeping things to myself and prefer keeping things to a close friend group."

Q: Did you like lockdown? Did you enjoy your time alone for so long since you consider yourself an introvert? Or were you dying to get out?
"I wasn't dying to get out, I kind of liked having that space and time to myself but after a while, I started to get a little stir crazy."

Maria Hofmann
Senior
Journalism Major

Q: Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why?
"I'm definitely an extrovert. I would say that I'm a pretty confident person. I'm very talkative and outgoing, and not afraid to put myself out there and be myself."

Q: Did you enjoy lockdown?
"I had to leave my house. I would drive, go to bodegas, target, etc. I didn't stay completely still, I can't stay in one place. I had to socialize in some aspect and that's what I did with my grandfather. He helped me a lot."

Erika Oliva
Freshman
Animation & Illustration Major

Q: Do you consider yourself an introvert or an extrovert? Why?
"Definitely introvert. It's hard for me to socialize and sometimes I just like my alone time."

Q: Did you like lockdown? Did you enjoy your time alone for so long since you consider yourself an introvert? Or were you dying to get out?
"No, I didn't like being stuck inside for that long. I would say that I wanted to go out. It had its pros and cons like creating hobbies, but I wanted to go out."
The Role of the Home During COVID-19

Students at Montclair State University were joyous about an extended spring break back in March 2020. The coronavirus (COVID-19) was just an unknown virus for the world. Little did students know, they would be moved out of their dorms sooner than expected to go under lockdown at home once spring break ended.

Vacant dorm rooms collected dust for the next year. Commuters found themselves without a commute. Everyone suddenly had to adjust to school and their home being in the same place for the first time — and for most, it lasted until the fall 2021 semester, a year and a half after they initially went online.

In isolation, students felt the traumas of having to avoid a mysterious virus on top of personal problems piling up as the pandemic raged on. They suddenly found their personal space melding together and becoming a shared classroom with their siblings, a daycare center for their children, their parents’ home office and their space to decompress.

The convenience of not having to wake up early to commute to campus was a pleasurable experience at first for Gianna Fazzini, a senior math major. When Montclair State moved to Zoom, she no longer had to wake up early to do her morning routine and was able to avoid the stress of finding parking. However, as time went on, she lost appreciation for the convenience.

“I was in the midst of my hardest math class, and it became so hard for me,” Fazzini said. “I can’t learn math through a computer screen. There was that convenience of not having to wake up early, but at the same time, I wished I was in the classroom.”

Now that school and home had combined, Fazzini struggled with the lack of interaction. She was confined to the walls of her home and was only able to go outside during her walks and while working as a tour guide. On top of that, she felt a sense of fear during the pandemic.

“I did feel the sense that this is never going to end,” Fazzini said. “I felt like the world was shut down in a matter of 24 hours and I did feel a sense of fear. Fear was accompanied with anxiety.”

The lack of things to do added to the dread of COVID-19. Fazzini coped with her newly found free time by baking brownies and watching TikTok.

“[I would] wake up about 10 minutes before class started and I would get my laptop ready,” Fazzini said. “As class was going, I would eat breakfast, and there were times where I would com…
Ana Carolina Populim-Boykin, 28, helps her son Apollo, 3, with his iPad.

The combination of school and home not only affected Populim-Boykin, but also her son. Before, Populim-Boykin was able to drop him off at daycare, go to school herself and pick him up afterward. Once the pandemic started, daycare and school were combined in their two-bedroom apartment in Kearny, New Jersey.

“It was just go, go, go, all the time,” Populim-Boykin said. “I was literally trapped at home doing school with my kid, feeling like I’m not being a good enough mom because my kid is on the iPad while I’m in school.”

A shared experience amongst commuters is the hardship of being involved on campus. Commuters typically leave after class, missing out on interactions in dorms or events that take place on campus. Besides feeling stuck in her kitchen, Populim-Boykin believes she missed out on a college experience.

“I definitely didn’t get the college experience because I’m a commuter, a mom and a lot older than the students,” Populim-Boykin said. “But, I just wanted to get that vibe of the campus experience.”

For Samantha Navarro, a senior math major, one of the hardships of the pandemic was physically being around her family all the time but never interacting with them out of fear of infection.

“In my family, whenever we see each other, we’d say, ‘Oh, hi,’ [and give each other a] kiss on the cheek. That’s just the way it was in Hispanic households,” Navarro said. “[But now, you] take off your shoes, you go to your room, you say ‘hi’ from a distance and you can’t do anything more than that because you don’t know what you could possibly bring over.”

Navarro also struggled with losing three people in her family in October 2020. One family member passed away from COVID-19 and the other two were from cancer. In October 2021, she lost another family member which brought her back to the prior year’s events.

“I remember [in] the fall of 2020, I sent an email out to all of my professors,” Navarro said. “Yes, I was home; yes, I was doing Zoom; but I just needed a break.”
Do you have any favorite memories from quarantine?
By John LaRosa, Photo Editor

“Spending time more with my mom. She doesn’t, like, really get a lot of days off so when quarantine hit, it was like the one time she got a vacation that wasn’t three days. Once I was off of online schooling, we would hang out, watch TV together, cook stuff, that kinda thing.”

Wanda Silva
Sophomore
Computer Science major

“Probably spending time with my dog, Junie.”

Maryann Hurley
Junior
Music Therapy major
“Honestly, just being able to spend time by myself. I feel like it was nice to be alone without there being pressure for me to see other people.”

Maggie Devaney
Freshman
Psychology major

“Experimenting with my facial hair.”

Samson Ansah
Sophomore
Undecided major

“I was able to get a lot of movies off my list, well over 50. My favorites were ‘Snow Piercer’ and ‘The Edge of Seventeen.’”

Terry Nickerson
Junior
Acting major
Help Wanted

PART-TIME DEVELOPMENTAL SPECIALIST

Start here, build a career! Want an environment where you can grow in your career while making a difference in the lives of others? Positive Development is looking for individuals with a passion for helping children with developmental differences to join their team. Multiple part-time entry-level positions available, up to $26/hour. Paid training provided.

Apply now at www.positivedevelopment.com/careers.

PART-TIME BABYSITTER

Seeking a part-time after-school sitter Mondays through Thursday in Wyckoff, NJ for one preteen. Hours are 2:30PM – 5:30/6PM. The child participates in swimming activities once a week. The perfect candidate is punctual, communicative and a strong leader. We are looking for someone fully vaccinated and with excellent references. Must have a valid driver's license and reliable transportation.

Please reply to 201-394-0873 if interested.

PART-TIME BABYSITTER

Seeking a loving, reliable babysitter for a sweet 10 year old on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays 6:30-8:30AM and/or Wednesday 2:30-6:30PM. Must be within walking distance of MSU and afternoon person must drive. Must be vaccinated.

Please text Holly at 917-340-1063 if interested.

BECOME A SPORTS WRITER

The Montclarion

Room 2035 School of Communication and Media in Upper Montclair, NJ 07043
Phone 973.655.5230
Fax 973.655.7804
E-mail Montclariansports@gmail.com
Across
3. The Premier Access feature of Disney+ allows subscribers who pay a premium to watch new cinematic releases from the comfort of their home due to the ongoing pandemic. Which film was the first “Premier Access” release?
4. This animated film, a sequel to a popular musical comedy from 2016, was the first to break their theatrical window due to the pandemic, both with a limited theatrical release and with video-on-demand services.
7. This music genre thrived in 2020 despite the ongoing pandemic, complete with online concerts and albums that sold for millions, most famously the musical group BTS.
8. The fifth installment of this popular game series was released within the same month that COVID-19 was declared a pandemic and had major commercial success. The community aspect of the game served as a refresher to those stuck at home.

Down
1. Because the lockdown made live, in-person theater impossible, the release of a filmed version of this award-winning musical to Disney+ broke records for the streaming service at the time, dominating viewership.
2. This game, requiring crewmates to complete tasks and seek out an imposter, originally released in 2018, but experienced a surge of popularity in mid-2020, amid the pandemic.
5. This song by Megan Thee Stallion was made into a TikTok dance - which became popular during lockdown - in March 2020 by Keara Wilson and quickly went viral, now having been performed by millions of people, including multiple celebrities.
6. Although launched in 2016 and having become popular since then, this social media app doubled its number of U.S. users from the previous year after the start of the pandemic.

Sudoku

Word Search

Streaming  Takeout  Virtual
Social Media  Hair Dye  Board Games
Drive-In Movies  Baking  Netflix
NBA Bubble  Puzzles  Screen time
Zooming  Tie Dye  Nintendo Switch
“Living through historic times” is another thing to add to a long list of concepts that theoretically sound kind of cool but are awful in real life, especially when the historic aspect is centered around a viral pandemic. The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic may have ebbed and flowed over the past two years, but it has changed our way of life as we know it, perhaps permanently.

The Montclarion has always been student-centric, but it’s not often we get to hear students speak directly on their innermost struggles. Each of us more or less spent two years alone, mentally if not physically, and that kind of isolation does not have a passive effect. It leaves you with something or changes you somehow, for better or worse.

It’s easy to get wrapped up in your own thoughts and feelings. Every single person you pass on the street, on campus or in your car, is going through something completely unique, moment by moment. That can be astounding to even consider, but our experiences inform our short and long-term reactions to things and shape everything we do.

COVID-19, with all the grief and heaviness it brought us, also emphasized this reality, as proven by the snippets of other lives we saw, read, watched and discovered. Everyone had to cope differently, finding ways to pass the time or hang on for one more day.

Now that we’re all seeing each other face-to-face, quarantine feels even more distant, and most of us probably prefer it that way. But pushing our memories of quarantine away can make us forget that everyone else has those memories, too, and if there’s anything we need now more than ever, it’s empathy. Collectively, we have all been through so much; individually, whatever we each carry with us from that time is only compounded by that weight.

We hope reading some of these student experiences can provide perspective and help serve as a reminder to always be kind and treat other people well. You never know what someone else has been through.

Campus Voices:

Where were you on March 13, 2020, the day lockdown was announced?

By Peter McLaughlin

“I was just kinda home with my best friend. We were just talking when we found out that everything kind of went downhill. We just kind of had the moment of realization of what was actually going on. It was more like us just kind of chilling at my house and really realizing what the world is like turning into and us kind of realizing like, ‘Oh [expletive] this is how our future is going to be.’”

- Manny Reyes
Music Education
Freshman

“I was in Union County College and I was in history class. The professor said, ‘We’re not sure what’s gonna happen and just look out for your email. But, if this is our last day in class, I hope you guys do good in the future and we could transfer easily online and continue class there.’ It was really weird because no one knew what was gonna happen and it was strange.”

- Ashley Saporito
Film and Television
Senior

“March 13, 2020, I was actually with my best friend at her house. It seemed like things were slowing down. It was just like each weird feeling. We were hanging out. She had a hot tub so we were chilling there. And that’s when people started calling me saying, ‘They’re gonna shut down gas stations, go out and get food, they might shut down the food stores.’ So we took a trip to the liquor store and headed back home and I think we ordered food and just sort of chilled. It was a scary time. Definitely felt like the end of the world.”

- Jack Nagle
Communication and Media Studies
Senior
Let’s Not Forget the Lives Lost

Alexis Giunta
Guest Writer

It is difficult to conceptualize the amount of death the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has caused. The whole world experienced tremendous loss in some way or another.

Montclair State University lost two of its own. Jose Fernandez was a graduate student pursuing his master’s in business administration when he passed away. He was 49 years old. Lunisol Guzman spent 11 years working for Montclair State as a shuttle bus driver. She passed away just two weeks after her husband at 50 years old.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “more than 140,000 children in the United States have lost parents and caregivers to COVID-19.” The past two years have been traumatic for families all around the world. I cannot imagine the devastation that comes along with losing a parent to COVID-19.

It did not take long before there was controversy surrounding the pandemic. Where did it come from? Is it fake? Are masks and mandates a way for the government to control us?

Former President Donald Trump kept a dismissive attitude towards the severity of COVID-19, which in turn led some states to underestimate the real threat of increased cases, hospitalizations and deaths. Once again, the country was divided on yet another topic. The coronavirus pandemic became political.

People have lost a sense of community, too consumed with the inconvenience of something as simple as a mask to consider the individuals who did not survive this virus. Debates over whether getting COVID-19 was “that bad” erupted, invalidating those who experienced the loss of a loved one.

Despite the development of the vaccine, the CDC reports there were almost 1 million deaths in the United States alone since the pandemic first started. This is much bigger than political parties and policies.

COVID-19 targeted our country’s most vulnerable citizens, like individuals with autoimmune conditions and older people. The impact of the pandemic has also been proven to be especially damaging to lower-income and minority communities who suffered from the lack of resources and support needed to combat COVID-19. According to a 2021 study done by AP NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, “about 1 in 5 Americans know someone who has passed away from the coronavirus.”

With all of this information being politicized, we lost focus on what really matters: the health and wellbeing of our neighbors. Instead, people bickered whether the lockdown was necessary, or whether New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy was doing a good enough job.

The truth is that this situation was a surprise to us all. The coronavirus has threatened everyone’s health and future. Ultimately, it took the lives of people we love and miss. The world will never be the same after a loss so great.

Regrettably, we are left to pick up the pieces and move on with our lives after so much tragedy has changed everything. So many families will not be able to continue as they were before the pandemic. As we move toward a new normal, we must not forget the individuals who cannot be with us today.

Blogger Jamie Anderson put it best in a 2014 blogpost.

“Grief, I’ve learned, is really just love. It’s all the love you want to give, but cannot,” Anderson wrote. “All that unspent love gathers up in the corners of your eyes, the lump in your throat, and in that hollow part of your chest. Grief is just love with no place to go.”
Yesennia Fernandez  
Guest Writer  

I love someone asked me how my life has been since the coronavirus (COVID-19) took over our lives, I would tell them it's been terrible. I lost the three most important people in my life — my dad and two great-uncles — all in the span of one year.

When the pandemic started, I was ready to take on all the precautions on how to stay safe throughout, but I wasn't mentally prepared to attend three funerals.

On April 28, 2020, I lost my great-uncle, Wilson Fernandez, a month after we all went into quarantine. A stroke caused his passing. It was unexpected, as everyone in the family thought he was well and healthy, including himself.

The saddest part was I never got the chance to say goodbye to him. I went into quarantine a week before his death because I had tested positive for COVID-19. I never knew the last time I saw him, outside his front porch, was going to be my last memory of him.

In self-quarantine, grieving all alone over the death of my great-uncle, Wilson, my mental health started to go south. I was slowly turning into a different person, someone who started to see darkness ahead and would never look forward to the next day. My great-uncle's funeral took place a week after his passing. It was my first time attending a funeral since COVID-19 started.

The funeral home had a limited capacity for his viewing; only 30 people were allowed to go inside at a time and not everyone was allowed to go inside the cemetery for his burial. Only his wife and brother were allowed, while everyone else had to stand at a distance.

I thought this was going to be the last and only funeral I would have to attend for a while.

But then came Feb. 16, 2021, the day I lost my father, Carlos Fernandez. The day I lost him was the day my life as I knew it ended. It was one of the most emotional years not only for me but for my family as we had to say goodbye to our three loved ones, who made family reunions memorable and always brought jokes to the table. My family and I wouldn't have made it if it wasn't for everyone who kept us in their prayers and thoughts.

I know from this moment forward I will dedicate all my accomplishments to my three handsome guardian angels who are looking after me. I promise I won't lose myself along the way.

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How The Montclarion Persevered Through The COVID-19 Pandemic

Corey Annan
Sports Editor

I still remember our last production day of the 2019-20 school year like it was yesterday.

For reference, our production day for The Montclarion is when section editors and their assistants come together to create our print paper for that week.

March 5, 2020 seemed like any other ordinary day in the newsroom, with music blasting from the speakers, editors laughing, cracking jokes with one another and the iconic game show “Jeopardy!” playing in the background on the TV.

Unfortunately, it was the last time I’d see a production day in over 500 days.

On March 17, 2020, Montclair State University announced that nearly all campus operations would be moved to a virtual format due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and The Montclarion followed suit.

This meant no more production days, “Jeopardy!” nights, Christmas parties or end-of-the-year banquets. The in-person and joyful experience of being a part of The Montclarion that all of our members got to enjoy was taken away from us.

The next school year came and while we were allowed to be in the office, a thrilling production day remained a thing of the past. Our weekly editions were replaced by “Best Of The Month” digital copies. While they were successful, there was something about missing the feeling of holding a physical newspaper that never allowed me to fully accept the fact that we were a fully digital paper.

Being able to read a print newspaper you helped create is a magical feeling because it can be kept as memorabilia to cherish forever. I still have print editions from 2018 that I’ll never relinquish.

While the world was sent into chaos due to COVID-19, The Montclarion needed to stand tall as the liaison between the university and the student body. Not only did we step up to the plate — we knocked it out of the ballpark.

Our news team worked day in and day out to provide live updates and breaking news on pandemic-related issues on campus. Our feature and opinion sections highlighted the university’s implementation of COVID-19 related policies, from the good, bad and ugly.

That was just the tip of the iceberg. All of our sections produced inspiring content for our readers and essential content for our readers who relied on us to do so.

Without those three individuals and the other members that served on our executive board at the time, The Montclarion may not have survived the pandemic like so many other college newspapers struggled to do.

As someone who was an assistant editor for two and a half years before becoming the sports editor in January 2021, I’ve seen the way the organization has grown before and during the pandemic.

With The Montclarion back to in-person operations, new traditions have been created in the office during production days.

From creating Instagram reels, ordering pizza from Anthony Franco’s, Taylor Swift karaoke and countless parties or end-of-the-year banquets.

Some of those traditions were replaced by new ones, such as ordering pizza from Anthony Franco’s, Taylor Swift karaoke and countless others that I have probably forgotten already. I finally have my Montclarion experience back. It was something I missed for over 500 days and I’ll never take it for granted again.

The Montclarion staff celebrates their nine NJPF awards. Michael Banovic | The Montclarion

The 2018-2019 Montclarion team takes a photo outside of the School of Communication & Media. Haley Wells | The Montclarion

(Left to right): Former sports editors Samantha Impaglia and Anthony Gabbianelli and current sports editor Corey Annan at The Montclarion’s 2019 banquet. Ben Caplan | The Montclarion
When COVID Meets Cancer

I was 18 when the pandemic started. In fact, it was March 13, 2020, when my high school finally decided to close its doors. If you would have told me by Oct. 23 of that same year I’d be diagnosed with cancer, I wouldn’t have believed it. But I had to believe it. A year of my life gone, with few strides made for cancer-free weeks. Yet of course, because nothing is watertight, the exact news I feared the most came from my inner circle.

My mom thought she had a sinus infection, which was a pretty normal thing for her. However, for good measure, since I was in the house and going to appointments very frequently, she got tested. Within two hours of her test, she received a phone call from the clinic telling her she had contracted COVID-19.

I stood across from her in the hallway upstairs as she hung up the phone, like two cowboys facing off. Tears streamed down her face, and I, rather frustratedly, screamed at her. I still feel awful for crying and discussing things like anxiety, grief or depression is dangerous and childish.

No one taught me how to screen for testicular cancer, not even health class. But when I knew something was wrong with my body, that was the first thing I looked up how to do. If it wasn’t for me finding the strength to then go forward and see a doctor that very next day, I could have been one of those 400 men.

My life for that extenuating period would be a rollercoaster of sadness, grief and confusion. I was already going through unspeakable dissonance with the fact that I had cancer and there were no COVID-19 vaccines yet. There was no safety net, so every person I was in contact with from the point of diagnosis to my bilateral orchiectomy was a safety concern.

Tensions were high. We had caught the cancer early and it had spread laterally, but not vertically. If everything remained on schedule, I could get out of the woods without going through chemotherapy and be cancer-free within weeks. Yet of course, because nothing is watertight, the exact news I feared the most came from my inner circle.

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When the dust settled, I grabbed my things and prepared to possibly live out of my car for the next two weeks, assuming I didn’t come back positive. Somehow, I tested negative. So did the rest of my family — dad, sister, probably dog, too, which was a miracle. Fortunately, I grew up with family across the street, so they took me in while my house remained a hot zone.

COVID-19 took so much from so many people. Despite cancer and the incredibly tense moments that followed, my family all came out on the other side alive. I got my surgery, none of the cancer spread and my tumor markers decreased down to undetectable margins post-operation. I became cancer-free.

I am fully aware of how lucky I got, and even more aware of how unlucky others have been. In regard to cancer, I will probably forever live with a sense of sadness and guilt about what occurred.

As for COVID-19, we have been in this mess for two years now. We have made plenty of strides, but most importantly we have vaccines now. If I can leave this piece with any lasting words, it’s to go get vaccinated. It is not about personal choices or “freedom,” it’s about protecting others and being an ally of those whose immune systems have failed them.

It is vital that you do your duty as a decent human being to protect others around you. This virus may not kill you, but your inaction could kill others.

Alex Pavljuk
Guest Writer

No one taught me how to screen for testicular cancer, not even health class or sex ed. But when I knew something was wrong with my body, that was the first thing I looked up how to do. If it wasn’t for me finding the strength to then go forward and see a doctor that very next day, I could have been one of those 400 men.

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March 13, 2020
“E3 2020 Canceled Due to New Coronavirus Crisis”

March 21, 2020
“Coronavirus Postpones Remainder of Montclair State Peak Performances”

April 14, 2020
Celebrities Are Instagram Live-ing Up Quarantine

May 3, 2020
“Jersey 4 Jersey: Bringing the State Together For Entertainment, Fundraising and Coronavirus Awareness”

March 22, 2020
“Film Releases Delayed in Response to the New Coronavirus”

March 13, 2020
“Coachella Deferred Six Months Due to COVID-19”

September 9, 2020
“Red Hawk Deck Is The New Alexander Kasser Theater For Music Students at Montclair State University”

October 31, 2020
“Montclair Film Screens Drive-In Movies For 2020 Festival”

December 5, 2020
“Resilience and Technology Work Together to Help Montclair State Theatre and Dance Students”

November 14, 2020
“How Montclair State Jazz Musicians Are Learning During the Pandemic”

October 1, 2020
“Join WMSC, Bret Michaels and More For World College Radio Day”
October 18, 2021
“Simone Dinnerstein’s ‘The Eye is the First Circle’ Is a Welcoming Piece for the Return to Live Performances”

October 26, 2021
“The Return of ‘The Rocky Horror Picture Show’ to Montclair State”

October 31, 2021
“As You Like It’ Launches Montclair State’s ‘Unmasked!’ Series”

December 9, 2021
“Montclair State’s 2021 Choral Concert ‘Rejoice!’ Is a Triumphant Return to the Stage”

September 29, 2021
“WMSC Makes an In-Person Return for College Radio Day”

April 5, 2021
“Montclair State Department of Theatre and Dance Hosts Virtual Festival of Fall 2020 Performances”

March 3, 2022
Where Are They Now: Myles Fabrizio Yambao of The Neverends

Megan Lim
Entertainment Editor

After being interviewed in 2020, the same year he graduated, Montclair State University's "Unsung Guitar Hero," Myles Fabrizio Yambao, has returned to sing the ballad of how two years in a pandemic has shaped him and his rock band, The Neverends. Yambao graduated from Montclair State with a BFA in theatre/acting concentration, a program that helped him to where he is now as a substitute teacher in the New Milford Public School District.

In his senior year of college, Yambao credited the program for affecting his music career by teaching him to let loose and not be afraid of what others think of him while onstage. Yambao said it taught him to give his all and simply keep on going, even if that means a string breaking or going out of tune.

"I really like the [expression], "The band plays on," Yambao said. "[Even if] everything's going down [and] the world's ending, the band's just like, "OK — Might as well just play till the end of it!""

That is exactly what The Neverends did as the world fell into lockdown just one week after Yambao's original interview. They continued to find ways to share their original, indie-rock music sprinkled with touches of jazz, metal, reggae, '80s fun and shoegaze. One of the largest hurdles the band faced as COVID-19 began was struggling to see each other. Yambao said it was hard to get all four members together in a room at the same time.

"Some of our parents have underly been focused on getting back into the groove of regularly writing, rehearsing and finding shows to perform at, which have been picking up once again. They continue to play at the same venues in New Jersey prior to when the pandemic first began, including Debonair Music Hall in Teaneck, Redhouse in Boonton and The Meatlocker in Montclair. They have upcoming performances in March and April. Details can be found in their Instagram @theneverends.

Yambao is grateful to have these opportunities back after experiencing the absence of gigs at the start of the pandemic.

"Not to be dramatic, but I think I need a gig at least once a month," Yambao said. "It's the best high I have ever gotten and I get incredibly depressed whenever it's, like, two or three weeks in between gigs. There is absolutely nothing like experiencing the joy and magic of music live with other people. It is such a rush and I love every second of it!"

Similar to Lano, however, Yambao feels the pandemic gave the band the chance to advance his singing, guitar and songwriting skills.

They also had to replace their drummer at the time, Tyler Jon Becker, who was moving away to earn his master's degree. Yambao, Gerassimos Giannoulis, the bassist of the band, and Stephen Palé, the guitarist, welcomed Salvatore "Sal" Lano, who they met at a show right before lockdown, as the new drummer.

Lano says it was an odd time for them all, but it did come with some positive aspects.

"While not being able to play shows for the first couple of months was a bummer, it did allow me to really get a feel of what the band's sound was about," Lano said. "And I feel it really allowed us as a group to mold and write material."

The group's dynamic remains strong as they take on different endeavors, according to Giannoulis.

"Working with [Yambao] has always been great," Giannoulis said. "He is the heart of The Neverends' sound and spirit. In our songwriting process, [he] is the one who comes up with the main structure, the chord progression and the core melodies. Our guitarist, [Palé], has an amazing ear and sense for songwriting as well. It is great to watch them bounce ideas off each other and hash out a song. It makes it easy for me to write my part that complements their ideas while also allowing me to add my own flair."

Since Lano joined, The Neverends have been focused on getting back into the groove of regularly writing, rehearsing and finding shows to perform. This is evident as the band works on their second album, which will be released in spring or summer. Its lyrics pose questions about life, family, relationships and love, whereas the lyrics of their previous album, "Party Boi," were less central.

"I think I'm less afraid to talk about more serious topics in my lyrics now," Yambao said. "Our music has definitely evolved. We're experimenting more and branching out from that garage-rock sound that 'Party Boi' is littered with. This next album definitely is a bit more complex in all the layers each track has to it."

Yambao ultimately hopes their music can resonate with others.

"I want our music to be an escape for people," Yambao said. "I hope people feel something when they listen to us. If our tune gets stuck in their head, that's cool too."

While waiting for their new album, you can listen to what The Neverends have already has out on Spotify and Apple Music. @theneverends and YouTube @TheNeverendsOfficial.
Two years ago, the world felt like the never-ending television series, “The Walking Dead.” But instead of zombies invading our homes and terrorizing our lives with the fear of being bitten, we faced the fear of being infected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) even when we were stuck inside. As the pandemic went on, it took one click to a new TV show for Montclair State University students to find comfort.

Now, they reminisce about what shows kept them company while stuck in their bedrooms.

For Jaime DiDomenico, a fifth-year family science and human development major, she turned to comedy during the lockdown. She binge-watched the animated Fox television sitcom “Bob’s Burgers,” which follows the lives of restaurant owner Bob Belcher and his dysfunctional family consisting of his wife, Linda, and their three children, Tina, Gene and Louise as they run a hamburger restaurant and run into every day misadventures.

“I’m a huge fan of comedy, especially ‘Bob’s Burgers,’” DiDomenico said. “It’s not only the situations the characters get into, but it’s the characters themselves that you love so much with great traits [who] just feel like real people. You can watch the same episodes a million times, and you’ll still laugh.”

DiDomenico said “Bob’s Burgers” put a smile on her face, which was hard to do during such a rough time. “I was very depressed during the pandemic, and I always found humor to be the best medicine for me, especially this show,” DiDomenico said.

While many people watch television shows to connect with the characters or find comfort in a plot, Ben Strong, a senior musical theatre major, watched all of the movies and “The Mandalorian.”

“‘Star Wars’ or any of the movies,” Wolf said. “I’m a big ‘Star Wars’ nerd so we binged, television played not only a bigger one in helping people cope with such a difficult time.

Mario Díaz, a senior television and digital media major, enjoyed “Cobra Kai.”

Like Wolf, many people found comfort in the “Star Wars” franchise and warped themselves into another reality during the pandemic to find relief.

“‘Star Wars’ or any of the movies,” Wolf said. “I’m a big ‘Star Wars’ nerd so we watched all of the movies and ‘The Mandalorian.’

Díaz watched this show as a distraction from being in lockdown and working his part-time job, reality reared its ugly head and reminded him of what he missed most: playing sports.

“Cobra Kai’ is about karate, which is a sport,” Díaz said. “I do sports. I love going outside to play volleyball, basketball or baseball, so since I couldn’t do that, it took a major hit for me.”

No matter what shows students binged, television played not only a big role in the pandemic but an even bigger one in helping people cope with such a difficult time.
Trends That Kept Us From Being Bored During Quarantine

Sekhena Sembenu
Assistant Entertainment Editor

In March of 2020, an asteroid, or what felt like an asteroid, hit Earth. One minute we were outside conversing with each other. Next, we were in isolation surrounded by four walls. But we can all thank the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic for blessing us with the rise in popularity of a gem that is known as TikTok: a social media platform where anyone can film, share short videos to express themselves and potentially go viral at any moment. It was a form of entertainment and a way for the world to connect during a chaotic time. It’s definitely safe to say it became a worldwide sensation with the creation of new trends every week. From singing and dancing to comedy, cooking and ASMR, TikTok has it all.

Here are some viral trends from 2020:

4. “Blinding Lights” Dance Challenge

Based on a song by The Weeknd, the “Blinding Lights” challenge had all of us sweating off those quarantine pounds. This upbeat challenge was done with three people or by yourself imitating a specific dance routine. Whether it was doctors and nurses on the frontline or people isolated at home, this trend had everyone on their feet. In essence, I think everyone said, “Forget a home workout. This is my workout.”

3. Pancake Cereal

Just like the whipped coffee, we had to spice up our cereal. So pancake cereal was created and yes, it's exactly what it sounds like. This recipe involved the same steps as making regular pancakes, except you created miniature pancakes similar to the size of Cheerios, using a piping bag or a squeeze bottle. You could eat it with milk or make it fancy by adding different toppings like honey, Nutella, fruit and syrup. It was easy peasy lemon squeezy.

2. “Bored In The House” Challenge

From watching every Netflix show or movie to online shopping and doing puzzles, we did everything. But by the third week of isolation, many of us were left with nothing to do. Bored is an understatement, and clearly, Curtis Roach felt the same way. Roach created the “Bored In The House” challenge where creators could lip-sync to his lyrics and show off their shenanigans, typically comical activities that kept them occupied. This challenge once again brought the world together, and in many ways, it felt like a celebration of boredom. Weird, I know.

1. Whipped Coffee

For all my Starbucks lovers, including myself, we couldn’t leave the house; the pain was real. So we had to become inventive, which landed us on whipped coffee. What better way to consume our daily coffee than by whipping it up right in the comfort of our homes? Whipped coffee essentially became our new cold brew with cold foam. We mixed equal parts of instant coffee, sugar (brown or white) and hot water in a bowl until it became a creamy caramel texture. Then, we filled a glass with ice, milk and topped it off with our magical mixture. It tasted as good as it looked, and honestly, it saved us from spending $5 every day.

5. “I’m Just A Kid” Challenge

Comical and sweet, the “I’m Just A Kid” challenge was a trip down memory lane: something we all needed considering the times we were in. With Simple Plan’s song, “I’m Just A Kid” playing in the background, we recreated a childhood photo with our parents or siblings and made sure we wore clothes similar to those in the original photo. The pictures ranged from adults cradled around their parents’ hips to family holiday cards.
‘Modern Love’ Season Two, Episode Three Reminds Us How Wild the Early Pandemic Days Were

The best parts of the episode are the satirical spins on the clichés that came out of the pandemic.

Sam Nungesser
Editor-in-Chief

“Two weeks isn’t too long.”

Or so we and the characters of “Modern Love” season two, episode three all thought on March 13, 2020. How naive were we?

Each episode of Amazon Prime’s “Modern Love” brings to life a different story published in the popular “Modern Love” column in the New York Times. Last summer, the streamer released its second season of the show. Episode three, in particular, caught my eye.

Titled “Strangers on a Train,” the episode shows college girl Paula (Lucy Boynton) and tech guy Michael (Kit Harrington) as they meet on a train heading back to their childhood homes heading back to their childhood homes as a result of a two-week lockdown. Having decided to meet right back at the train station two weeks later without exchanging phone numbers, the two end up stuck at home for much longer than they anticipated, baring their plans for a happily ever after.

Although the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic isn’t specifically mentioned, the timing, as well as the all-too-familiar landscape of the episode, implies exactly what it’s about.

Living in the beginning of the pandemic in real-time was hectic, and sometimes it takes a bit of reflection to realize just how insane everything was. Watching this episode did just that.

For instance, when Paula mentions her seminars starting back up two weeks later, it reminds me of when I went home for spring break with the anticipation of coming back to school the following week, only for it to be extended a second week. Which I’ll admit, at the time, was a relief. Though in that first week of March I never thought it would be over a year before I saw in person classes again.

Seeing the pair at the train station with people frantically running around in masks and Paula relating it to a “black and white horror film” looks similar to the days of arriving at Costco before it opened just to stand in line that wrapped around the entire building because so many people were afraid they’d shut down food stores, or worse, run out of toilet paper.

Though this story takes place in Ireland, it is funny to see how similar of an experience the entire world had. Reading book after book, watching movie after movie and getting some fresh air from the comfort of a beach chair in the middle of the yard is something not only the characters in the show experienced, but something the entire world experienced.

Perhaps the best parts of the episode are the satirical spins on the clichés that came out of the pandemic. Just as Paula and Michael part ways, they dramatically touch elbows rather than hug one another. Later on, Michael tries to convince a cop to let him past a checkpoint by singing John Lennon’s “Imagine.” Or there’s my personal favorite saying from the episode, “Two weeks isn’t too long.”

Watching this episode did just that. Sometimes it takes a bit of reflection to remind us of similar support groups, has the same problem we do.

For instance, when Paula mentions her seminars starting back up two weeks later, it reminds me of when I went home for spring break with the anticipation of coming back to school the following week, only for it to be extended a second week. Which I’ll admit, at the time, was a relief. Though in that first week of March I never thought it would be over a year before I saw in person classes again.

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“Strangers on a Train” is a detailed reminder of those first few weeks of March 2020 compiled into 34 minutes of runtime. It combines the uncertainty of the beginning of the pandemic with humor and romance. And if nothing else, it left me with one lesson: if you hit it off with someone on a train, give them your number because you never know when a worldwide pandemic may hinder your plans to find each other again.

Photo courtesy of Prime Video

Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

Photo courtesy of Tuber

Photo courtesy of Prime Video

Photo courtesy of Prime Video

Photo courtesy of 20th Century Fox

“Fight Club” follows the life of a depressed nameless narrator (Edward Norton) who attends weekly support groups for his chronic insomnia. Except these support groups are dedicated to those who have diseases like cancer and tuberculosis.

Marla (Helena Bonham Carter), an attendent of similar support groups, has the same idea. One day on the way back from a business trip, our narrator fatefully encounters Tyler Durden (Brad Pitt), a strange soap manufacturer who in many ways is everything that he’s not. He somehow finds himself living with Tyler after returning to a burnt down apartment. Not once did it cross his mind that a soap manufacturer was about to change his life.

Tyler ropes our narrator into forming a secret underground club where men living lonely, mundane lives can obtain pleasure through the pain of bare knuckle brawls. The two become totally inseparable as their fight club spirals out of control and makes waves throughout the country. But Miss Marla creeps her way in, gaining Tyler’s attention, which creates a competition of love and power.

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How The Recreation Center Has Evolved During The Pandemic

The campus recreation center is finally starting to look how it once did.

For the last few years, they have been aiming to keep that same experience alive for their students, while also keeping their students safe from the virus. Many believed it was a fun and exciting community, including Romayne Eaker-Kelly, the director of campus recreation. “I keep in touch with a lot of alumni and student leaders that [have] worked for us, and they describe their experience here at campus recreation as a home away from home,” Eaker-Kelly said. “[It’s] a place where they develop significant friendships and relationships and where they can come and hang out and just experience life.”

Ever since its reopening, anyone who wishes to enter the building must wear a mask at all times and provide proof of their completed Hawk Check, which is a quick health assessment on the university’s website.

For much of the last year and a half, using the recreation center was often a struggle for students. Much of the fitness equipment was off-limits due to social distancing guidelines, along with the basketball courts, which were frequently closed for regular use. Group events weren’t in effect and the overall experience of the recreation center was just not the same, according to Jack O’Dell, a sophomore product design major.

“The was a limit to how many people could be on each floor, there was only one bench and one squat rack and it was very difficult,” O’Dell said. “I wasn’t really motivated to go to the gym [anymore] because there would be a line and I would need to camp out in front of the gym for, like, 20 minutes just so I can get a spot.”

During the fall of 2020, traveling restrictions made it extremely difficult for club teams to play, resulting in most clubs being practice-only. To help keep players as active as possible, intrasquad games and scrimmages were played amongst them. Although most seasons weren’t played at all, intrasquad games and scrimmages were played amongst them. Although most seasons weren’t played at all, club sports remained mostly intact despite many protocols.

Because club sports are student-run, Kyle Bianchi, the coordinator of Intramural and Club Sports, serves more as a guide and advisor to these teams. “We followed the same planning schedule that we would have in a normal non-COVID-19 year,” Bianchi said. “Since students run and operate these clubs, we did our typical transition process at the end of the spring semester, our summer planning meetings [and] our budgeting.”

On the bright side, as we approach the spring of 2022, the recreation center is starting to come alive again. The gym is completely open and is fully operating, along with the courts for basketball and volleyball, and with the return of club and intramural sports, students and staff are extremely excited.

“Our students are resilient,” Bianchi said. “If the students are enjoying their time and our programs are running well, I’m happy.”

O’Dell is one of the many students who is happy about the return to a new “normal” for the recreation center. “Now that everything is opened up, I think there’s, like, three benches [now] and I’m actually able to go,” O’Dell said. “I’m more motivated to go. It’s better. I feel more comfortable going and it’s more of an easy task for me.”

As the recreation center is still trying to get back to what it once was, that is not stopping their plans for the future. These include building an esports arena which will be at the Montclair State University Ice Arena, and an outdoor multi-use court facility for basketball, tennis and volleyball, which would be placed over the existing courts that are near Dioguardi Field.
How COVID-19 Presented These Athletes With One More Opportunity For Glory

Both players hope to take home a championship in their fifth and final season

Andrew Ollwerther and Wilson Smith are fifth-year players. Photo courtesy of David Venezia & Wilson Smith

Matt Orth
Assistant Sports Editor

The electric crowds heard at Panzer Athletic Center during the New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) tournament, the outpouring of support for the football team during homecoming last semester and the cheers from the Red Hawk Deck and MSU Soccer Park when the men’s soccer team made the NCAA Division III Tournament – back in 2020, these images could only be imagined and reminisced.

When the NJAC canceled all sports during the fall 2020 semester due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, not only did the fields and courts around campus fall silent, but players were also stripped of their shot at playing sports for a while.

In October 2020, all three division levels within the NCAA granted players an extra year of eligibility within their respective sport, regardless of whether they compete or not. But for Division III specifically, the division that Montclair State is a part of, they gave all 2020-2021 spring sports athletes the opportunity to take an extra year as well. Division I and Division II did not make this decision.

Two of these spring sport athletes just started their seasons not too long ago, each with a completely different start. For men’s lacrosse, long stick midfielder Wilson Smith is now technically a graduate student and was named into the First Team All-CSAC in his senior year. Smith spoke about day-to-day life in his fifth year compared to last year.

“It’s been a little bit different. All my classes are at night now and I am technically the oldest player on the team now,” Smith said. “Actually, everyone on the team has given me the nickname ‘Uncle Willy’ which is funny. Being older and experiencing Montclair State University [like this] means I can give the younger [players] advice on their classes and other stuff off the field, and especially on the field.”

Holding this mentorship position will be especially crucial for Smith, who went through a heartbreaking loss to Kean University in the first playoff game for the Colonial States Athletic Conference (CSAC) last season, losing 16-7 to the Cougars. Smith expressed his gratitude in regard to getting another shot with his team.

“It means a lot,” Smith said. “Last season we went [0 and 3] against Kean, twice in the regular season and in the semifinals. So, getting another chance to play them in the regular season and then a chance to play in the playoffs means a lot, especially if we can get a revenge win.”

The men’s lacrosse team may have lost their season opener to Vassar College on Feb. 22, but with Smith’s leadership for the rest of the season, they are sure to bounce back.

One spring team with no need to bounce back in Montclair State’s base- ball team, led by fifth-year senior Andrew Ollwerther. Ollwerther was an honorable mention for the All-NJAC last season and notched 39 hits, along with 27 RBIs in the midst of almost every sport playing at the same time.

Ollwerther was one of the players who took the extra year of eligibility to his advantage and with a 4-1 start to the season (as of Feb. 27), his veteran presence has been key for the Red Hawks and will continue to remain important. Though Ollwerther had initially debated the idea of staying for another year, one of the programs offered at the university – which would allow him to obtain a bachelor’s and a master’s degree within five years – seemed too appealing to pass up.

“After being told about that opportunity, [I decided to] to sit down with my parents and talk to them about the possibility of it,” Ollwerther said, “Originally, my plan was not to go for a master’s degree, but then I realized [Montclair State] has a four plus one MBA program and that ended up being a home run [for me].”

All puns aside, Ollwerther seized the opportunity. But in spite of his classes being more sporadic now and having more time in his schedule, Ollwerther’s main goal remains the same: getting back to the NJAC Championship.

And, with 11 new freshmen on the team, Ollwerther’s advice has become more important than ever.

“One thing I have said is to avoid the emotional rollercoaster,” Ollwerther said. “Don’t get too high and don’t get too low. And of course: the other thing is to stay ahead in your academics. You definitely want to take care of that because if you can’t, you can’t be on the field.”

Ollwerther will be looking to keep the momentum up alongside the other baseball team members here at Montclair State, like Smith, and the other fifth-year athletes on campus, like men’s basketball guard/forward Irving Callender IV, who recently finished another great season and earned Second Team All-NJAC honors.

Although opportunities in life may be difficult to pursue under certain circumstances, these Red Hawks have shown that even the darkest clouds will always have a silver lining. The pandemic certainly altered some of the player’s paths, but in the end, it also gave them one more opportunity for glory.

Wilson Smith is also looking for revenge this season against Kean University. Photo courtesy of Wilson Smith
STATS THAT DEFINE THE 2021-2022 MEN’S BASKETBALL TEAM

45.8% AVERAGE OPPONENT FIELD GOAL PERCENTAGE PER GAME ALLOWED BY THE RED HAWKS THIS SEASON, WHICH WAS THE SECOND WORST MARK IN THE CONFERENCE.

42 AMOUNT OF POINTS MIKE JACKSON SCORED AGAINST ROWAN ON FEB. 16, TIED FOR THE 3RD HIGHEST SCORING PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL HISTORY.

10 THE AMOUNT OF THREES MIKE JACKSON HIT IN THAT SAME GAME. IT TIED THE MONTCLAIR STATE RECORD FOR MOST 3’S IN A GAME.

7 THE AMOUNT OF STEALS IRVING CALLENDER IV HAD AGAINST RAMAPO COLLEGE ON JAN. 26., IT WAS THE MOST BY A RED HAWK IN OVER A DECADE.

115 THE MOST AMOUNT OF POINTS SCORED BY MONTCLAIR STATE THIS SEASON AGAINST VALLEY FORGE IN A 42 POINT WIN.

8.2 THE AVERAGE REBOUNDS IRVING CALLENDER IV GRABBED PER GAME, WHICH LED THE NJAC THIS SEASON.

88% THE FREE THROW PERCENTAGE STEVE BREEMAN GAINED THIS SEASON FOR THE RED HAWKS, WHICH ALSO LEADS THE NJAC.

16.3 THE AMOUNT OF TURNOVERS MONTCLAIR STATE HAD THIS SEASON, DOWN FROM 22.2 LAST SEASON.
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Madelyn Santorelli Remembers Her Freshman Year During The Height Of COVID-19

In the last two years, the world has been presented with challenges that would have been unthinkable in 2019. The most impactful event of this recent time period was the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. From shutting down venues to being locked at home for several months, the pandemic had the world shifting in a direction no one was expecting.

Freshman athletes of last year were the pinnacle of student struggle as they were tasked to handle work on their own while entering a new chapter in their lives. One student athlete, now a sophomore, who had obstacles to overcome in the 2021 spring semester was Montclair State University women’s lacrosse player Madelyn Santorelli.

“The social aspect was a huge deal for me last season,” Santorelli said. “The team’s chemistry had felt delayed and it could definitely push all of us to go our hardest.”

Unfortunately, the dominance reached its end at the 2021 New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Championship game. In what could have been a perfect season, the Red Hawks had dominated all season long, which could have opened up key minutes to evaluate their upcoming talent.

Although Santorelli had not played in games last year, there was still pride in supporting her teammates.

“Although Santorelli had not played in games last year, there was still pride in supporting her teammates. On the contrary, she was left cheering on her own most of the time in away games. She remembered the rival game at Rowan University in which the school’s athletic department was not allowing visitor fans into the bleachers because of COVID-19. “It would’ve made the games more exciting if fans were in attendance back then, especially if there were Red Hawks supporters at Rowan,” Santorelli said. “Our recent game against Haverford College at Sprague Field had the bleachers filled with fans and it could definitely push all of us to go our hardest.”

Mental struggles were getting the best of Santorelli in 2021, with her heart-breaking injury that held her to no in-game appearances and limited practice.

In the nine games played for the Red Hawks, the women’s lacrosse team finished the season with an overall record of 8-1 while finishing with a perfect 5-0 conference record. The Red Hawks had dominated all season long, which could have opened up key minutes to evaluate their upcoming talent.

As the world begins to see brighter days in 2022, the attacker for the Red Hawks sees better days ahead for herself and her teammates. Though she, unfortunately, suffered another ACL injury this past December, Santorelli has high hopes in practice being more accessible, team meetings being conducted and, of course, supporters attending all games.

“The social aspect was a huge deal for me last season,” Santorelli said. “The team’s chemistry had felt delayed and it could definitely push all of us to go our hardest.”

Mental struggles were getting the best of Santorelli in 2021, with her heart-breaking injury that held her to no in-game appearances and limited practice.

Although Santorelli had not played in games last year, there was still pride in supporting her teammates. On the contrary, she was left cheering on her own most of the time in away games. She remembered the rival game at Rowan University in which the school’s athletic department was not allowing visitor fans into the bleachers because of COVID-19. “It would’ve made the games more exciting if fans were in attendance back then, especially if there were Red Hawks supporters at Rowan,” Santorelli said. “Our recent game against Haverford College at Sprague Field had the bleachers filled with fans and it could definitely push all of us to go our hardest.”

Although it’s the same challenge of not being able to perform out there with her teammates for a second straight season, Santorelli believes her play and recovery have been making tremendous strides towards delivering a great campaign next season.

“When I went to one of our first practices for this season, I could tell things were going back to normal,” Santorelli said. “The [team was running] great. Although everything isn’t normal yet, I would say the world as we once knew it is going back to how we want it.”

Joshua Tapia
Guest Writer

Montclair State University women’s lacrosse player Madelyn Santorelli.

“We had obstacles to overcome in the 2021 spring semester,” Santorelli said. “The team’s chemistry had felt delayed and it could definitely push all of us to go our hardest.”

Unfortunately, the dominance reached its end at the 2021 New Jersey Athletic Conference (NJAC) Championship game. In what could have been a perfect season, the Red Hawks had dominated all season long, which could have opened up key minutes to evaluate their upcoming talent.

As the world begins to see brighter days in 2022, the attacker for the Red Hawks sees better days ahead for herself and her teammates. Though she, unfortunately, suffered another ACL injury this past December, Santorelli has high hopes in practice being more accessible, team meetings being conducted and, of course, supporters attending all games.

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