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Kiwanis Essay Contest

May 14, 2021

Experiencing the pandemic has made me realize just how much I value time spent with my family and friends and it has opened my eyes to the value life as a whole. During this time, I spent months inside my home without seeing my friends and missed out on a lot of memories and experiences I had been looking forward to. I also missed out on seeing my family. In the past year I have lost two family members, both of which I was supposed to go visit last June. Unfortunately, the pandemic prevented me from going to see them and that trip would have been my last experience with them. With these facts in mind, I have since realized the value and importance of spending time with others and making the most out of every moment spent with those you love. I think back on all the opportunities I have passed up and instead spent the time doing other things, it wasn't until the opportunities were no longer available that I realized how much I was missing. I have also watched from an outside perspective as families have been torn apart by this pandemic. Fathers, mothers, and children that have lost someone close from this virus and all I can do is I sit here and think how how lucky I am to have the people in my life that I do today. I understand that there are other's who have not been as fortunate and I wake up every morning understanding how precious life is. We waste so much of our lives doing selfish things and since this pandemic has begun I have become more aware of this than ever.

As we move into a stage of recovery I hope to see our understanding and knowledge about this virus increase. There are still thousands of Americans that continue to fight this disease and have been hospitalized for months and I can only hope that as we progress these

numbers will decrease. I also look forward to getting back to “normal life.” As my time as a high school student comes to an end I look forward to the opportunity to make final memories with my classmates and spend this time with my family. In the near future I plan to attend in person senior activities with my high school and even prepare to move into college later this fall.

Some ways that organizations such as the Kiwanis Club can help our community recover is by reaching out to families who are still struggling with the effects of the pandemic. Examples of this could be fundraisers for those who have a family member still suffering with the side effects of the virus who perhaps cannot afford the medical expenses. They could also reach out to local families who may have lost employment in the past year and organize food or clothing donations. Another project that could benefit the community in these hard times is an event planned for the younger members of the community. This could be some kind of outdoors event in which children are presented the opportunity to get out of their homes and interact with one another in a safe environment. Play and interaction is a huge part of adolescent development and many children have since been deprived of this. Deprivation of these experiences can often lead to increased depression and interpersonal struggles, a fact our national childhood depression averages are already reflecting. I believe one of the most important things we can do for these children is to provide them with the most opportunities to have these vital experiences. An event such as this could put our younger community members back on track for a childhood that is as normal and memorable as possible.

Memories and experiences are concepts that have never meant more to me than they do today. This pandemic has really put a halt on the lives of every person in every nation. It has since come time for us to fight back and retake our lives through recovery. Every day that passes we are one step closer to life as we knew it to be prior to the first case of COVID-19. I am

beyond thankful for every bit of research that comes out and moves us closer to this point. I look forward to doing my part in this as well as I enter the University of Pittsburgh this fall with a plan to become a nurse. All we can do now is make the most of our current situation and do everything we can to support community members in need.