**COVID-19**

It was Monday, March 16, 2020. I was a senior in high school getting ready for prom when my school announced that prom was cancelled, and we would be closed for a week due to a virus that was spreading in different states. We didn't think much of it; in fact, we were relieved that it happened because senioritis was beginning to set in. I couldn't believe prom had been canceled. I had dreamed of prom since I was a kid, and as the day approached, my heart soared, only to be shattered, but that didn't deter me because I was excited that I had a fifth sibling on the way, and I was still able to graduate. Then came Friday, March 20, 2020, when we were formally virtual for the remainder of 2020, and I began to feel anxious. I realized that this virus was dangerous. My family and I had already begun to take precautions when my mother's due date was approaching, and we knew we didn't want to contract this virus, so we remained at home at all times. My mother gave birth to our little brother on March 27, 2020. We were unable to see them at the hospital because they did not want so many people in the hospital due to the growing number of Covid-19 cases. On April 1, 2020, I awoke with a 104-degree fever, a migraine, and a body ache. My mind immediately went to "Do I have Covid-19?" and I began to worry. I quickly looked up Covid-19 symptoms and found very little detail, so we didn't think much about it until the next morning, when my sister and father had the same symptoms as me and our mother was returning from the hospital with a baby. We were so worried that the baby would catch what we had that my mother got tested because the Covid-19 test could only be taken by one person per household at the time. We were still so frustrated until the results came out positive. I remember crying on my bed in my darkened room, pleading with God to give us the strength to get through this alive and to protect our little baby brother from the virus. My prayer was answered by God. It took us about a month to completely recover from the shortness of breath, tasteless mouth buds, and the return to our sense of smell. We couldn't shower for three weeks because our fevers were so high, but my baby brother was never sick, and my other younger siblings were all well, which is all I could ask for. After that, we went ahead with our lives until June, when I had a drive-through graduation. Then I started getting ready to go to college, but campus was closed, so we had to do virtual for the year.  I never imagined I'd spend my freshmen year in a pandemic and transitioning from a high school student to a college freshman was incredibly difficult. It was very difficult to determine whether I was registering for the correct courses. Freshman registration is no laughing matter because classes fill up so quickly. With the guidance of my advisor, I eventually made it through. Then classes began, and it was initially difficult to adjust my schoolwork during the week. Keep in mind that I still live with my five other siblings and balancing my college life with being the oldest was very difficult. My entire family relies on me to look after the younger children while cleaning the house and achieving academic success. My stress had gotten to the point that I ended up in the emergency room, where I was diagnosed with shingles on the left side of my head, which can be very dangerous. My immune system was so fragile after Covid that it couldn't take the trauma and I relapsed. I'm back to being concerned about my health. I was on bed rest for three weeks, trying to convince my professors that I couldn't complete my schoolwork due to physical limitations. I eventually got over it, but till this day my head continues to hurt and could remain so indefinitely. This past year has taught me that no matter what anybody says, I am the toughest person alive. The world teaches one to get over it and carry on, but I like to take a step back and reflect on how I overcame these challenges in my life; not everyone is capable of doing so. I also remind myself that success is a lousy teacher, and that failure teaches you better than you realize. I wouldn't change anything because it has molded me into a strong, optimistic, and committed person that I am today.