

https://www.grandrapidsmn.com/opinion/columnists/everybody-matters-to-someone/article_a3665a1c-704b-11ea-bab0-7f197afce97c.html

Everybody matters to someone

Emily Carlson Herald Review
Mar 27, 2020



“But in the midst of all the confusion, doubt and fear comes the hopeful glimmer of peace.”

These are the words I wrote nearly one year ago when I wrote my very first column for the Grand Rapids Herald Review. Published on April 13, I described my background, my feelings about moving to a new town and my hope for the future.

We moved the last of our belongings to Cohasset on March 18 last year—which also happens to be my birthday. For my birthday this year, I spent my day working from home in our newly built house while the world around me was dealing with a global pandemic. While I was disappointed to be moving on my birthday last year, this year's circumstances certainly have given me some time to reflect on how I am reacting to what is going on around me.

It is difficult to avoid self-centered thoughts at this time. What I consider to be constant in my life has suddenly had to change. I no longer take my time browsing through Target after work or go to YMCA for a workout. I can't sit in Brewed Awakenings with a cup of coffee or sit down at Applebees for some late night half-price appetizers. More importantly, I can't drive to see my family or friends as we all practice social distancing in the hopes that our small actions will contribute to the larger worldwide effort to reduce the impact of this virus.

However, as I sit in my warm house, I am forced to face a reality check. A check on my pride, my ego and my wants. The ways in which my life has been altered pale in comparison to what many are experiencing. I am still able to go do my job each day to write about the news in the community. I have a bed to sleep in and plenty of food in the fridge. I have cleaning supplies and the ability to be as safe as possible. But there are many who are going through much larger changes than me.

My heart goes out to the students who have had their worlds filled upside down in the blink of an eye. From the elementary students who will be missing their teachers and classmates to the high school seniors who are thinking of all of their "lasts" that will be missed, I am thinking of you. To the college students who have created a world for themselves only to be told to go back home, I cannot imagine how difficult this is to process. I hope you all take the time to feel sad, upset, angry and all of the emotions that may come up because those feelings are valid.

My heart goes out to the residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities who are missing the social interactions of everyday life. As visitors are restricted and social activities within facilities are limited, I am sure feelings of loneliness will begin to emerge. I hope you are able to connect with loved ones through phone calls, video chats and whatever other means of communication.

My heart goes out to the business owners who have had to shut their doors and the employees who have had to be sent home for the safety of the community. To those deemed, “non-essential,” I believe we are all realizing just how much we rely on you for our day-to-day lives. We rely on you for a sense of comfort, for a place to gather and to enjoy the towns and cities we live in. I cannot wait until we are able to embrace what you offer to our community.

My heart is heavy for those who have already lost loved ones. You are who I think of the most as I experience changes to my own life. I hope we can all take a step back and realize that behind all of the statistics out there are real people. Real people with families and friends who are grieving. Real people whose lives were cut short. Real people.

As we transition into Spring and begin to see more patches of grass emerge, my hope is that those of us who are able to take these changes in stride remember those who may be struggling. I believe this is the time for us to reflect on what is really important in life. In the end, it is our family and loved ones who matter the most and who we can all think of as we make the adjustments to our lives. Remember, everyone is somebody's family member or a friend to someone. We make these changes not just for ourselves but for everyone.