

COVID anniversary marks 5 years

By Royce Richman

March 16 marked the fifth year anniversary of the COVID-19 shutdown at Durant High School, and looking back, we had no idea how much it would change our lives.

When I first heard about COVID-19, I was sitting in Spanish class in sixth grade when some other students were talking about a new disease called “Coronavirus.”

Soon, school administrators sent us home for an extended “spring break,” but we didn’t think it was a big deal because the symptoms were similar to a common cold and wouldn’t spread that easily.

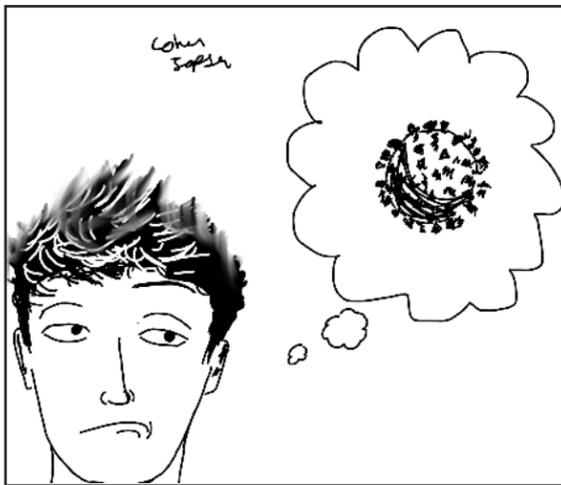
We hoped to return to school by mid-April, but school ended up being canceled for the rest of the school year.

I’m 16 now, but I remember the whole thing being very confusing for my 11-year-old self, especially from all of the new words that kept popping up like *vaccine*, *hospitalizations*, *quarantine*, *pandemic*, and *outbreak*.

Stuck at home during the shutdown, my main concern was to keep busy in between online Zoom classes with my teachers. I spent most of my time outdoors finding creative ways to have fun without playing on the playgrounds that were closed down. I explored the town on my bike, I found my love of cooking, which is a skill I’ve perfected over these past five years, and my mom even made me write in a notebook about my experience.

I pulled out the book recently as I was writing this editorial, and it reminded me of how lonely the whole experience was. I documented a little over a year of my life about dealing with the quarantine, so I could look back on it years later.

It taught me to appreciate the little things in life and to celebrate my small victories, like learning how to grill a steak for the



first time.

Sophomore Mason Schuett also remembers the isolation he felt during the shutdown.

“When the pandemic happened, I wasn’t able to go outside with friends anymore,” he said. “Video games were really where I went to go and play with friends and socialize, but that got me an addiction that continued after the quarantine. I still play a little bit today, not nearly as much.”

At the beginning of the quarantine, Schuett was happy to be missing school. But that soon turned to regret.

“At first I was happy because I didn’t like school,” he said. “And then after I realized that school was actually pretty important to my learning and to being socialized with friends and stuff, I felt more sad that school was canceled for the rest of the year.”

For Schuett, life has returned to normal for the most part five years later.

“I think it’ll always be different but just in minor ways, nothing really big,” he said.

When Durant finally returned to in-person school in the fall of 2020, everything felt strange. We hadn’t seen many of our friends in months, and now we had to

talk to them through masks and stay six feet apart.

Similar to me, sophomore Dylan Arp dreaded wearing the masks that were required for most of the year at Durant.

“The masks that we had to wear were also not very good, and at times hard to breathe through,” he said. “I think the worst part about the pandemic is that you couldn’t hang out with friends and that we still had to wear masks long after online school.”

Arp remembered the pandemic as a “very scary time because the news was treating it like it was the end of the world.”

At the very end of the 2020-2021 school year, when masks finally became optional, I had almost forgotten what my classmates actually looked like without their masks on.

For sophomore Izac Smysor, the pandemic is time he won’t ever be able to get back.

“For many including me, we lost a couple years of our lives,” he said. “The world was almost at a standstill when COVID hit because people stayed at home, businesses failed, people lost their jobs, and the economy suffered from that.”

According to a timeline put together by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website, the unemployment rate in the United States reached 14.7 percent in mid-2020, which was the highest it’s been since the Great Depression.

As the future editor of *The Wildcat Chronicles*, I looked back to see what articles we wrote during the pandemic because it happened during our first year of publication. In the first week of the shutdown, we released a special one-page issue with stories featuring students worried about their sports seasons and senior years getting cut short by the quarantine. Once school was closed for good, we released two more full issues.

The *Chronicles* have won countless awards since the 2019-2020 school year, including being named All-Iowa News Team of the Year twice in a row.

Whether some of us lost jobs, family members, or friends to sickness; picked up new hobbies, good or bad; learned something new about ourselves; or emerged for better or for worse, I think we can all agree that the COVID-19 pandemic was a huge part of our lives and one thing that we will never forget.

Cohen Jepsen Asteroid news prompts author to reflect on life

Around Christmas, the Asteroid Terrestrial-Impact Last Alert System (ATLAS) discovered a dubious object in the sea of stars: an asteroid 40 to 90 meters wide headed in our direction.

That’s about the size of a football field, but don’t expect any little green men to be running a Hail Mary on the rocky surface.

The weeks following the discovery of YR4, as it was dubbed, showed a steady increase in the probability of a collision between it and our verdant home.

One day it was 1 percent, the next it was 2 percent—and finally 3 percent. Anything beyond a 1 percent chance

for collision is enough to warrant concern for planetary defense organizations globally.

However, as we started to imagine an uncertain future, the fear subsided a week later. NASA confirmed after further calculations that the asteroid would pose no risk after all.

Even if the asteroid were to enter our atmosphere, it would ignite into thousands of pieces and cause minimal damage—broken windows or peppered buildings at most.

Despite that news, the asteroid still leaves us with a sense of foreboding. The fact that an asteroid could have a real-life probability of destroying the human race is something that people often forget. When you think of the apocalypse, what appears in your mind?

Does it have to do with zombies? That seems highly unlikely. Perhaps an alien invasion?

Eh, that’s probably never going to happen. Or maybe the apocalypse is more domestic, caused by our own ignorant actions.

What every apocalypse has in common, however, is that it is always out of our hands. It is always an unstoppable fire that eats everything in its path with zero discrimination.

When the small chances increased that YR4 might hit us, I had a bit of a humbling realization. I thought that the day might come where the percentage would be much more intimidating.

The approach of the asteroid reminded me of the 2020 film *Greenland*, where a family must survive the chaotic days before an apocalyptic comet hits Earth.

Even though YR4 is not nearly as threatening as the comet in *Greenland*, the movie still gave me a view into what could potentially happen.

The few days reading reports about YR4 made me realize that our problems are so insignificant compared to the universe out there. At any moment, our whole species could be wiped out by a roving space rock.

I think the best thing we can do now is try to evolve as much as we can in the time we have, so we may potentially evade our own destruction and improve our legacy.

The only legacy the dinosaurs left behind were their bones. So let’s consider our fragility as a species compared to the cosmos and prevent having our bones be studied by the runners-up.



Green Acres employee of the month



2051 Highway 927
Wilton, IA 52778

Reed Clark, a senior, has been working at Green Acres since July of last summer. Clark takes care of animals and does handy work around the farm. His favorite part of the job is seeing the animals.



Clark



1001 6th St.
Durant, IA
563-785-6152

The Wildcat Chronicles

Durant High School
408 7th Street
Durant, Iowa 52747
(563) 785-4431

wildcat.chronicles@durant.k12.ia.us

Editor: Garrett Pearlman

News editor: Royce Richman

Features editor: Katelynn Toft

Sports editor: Lauren Callison

Business Manager: Josh Peel

Reporters: Gavin Broussard, Colby Gast, Kylee Hahn, Paige Happ, Cohen Jepsen, Allison Toft, and Kila Wink

Website Manager: Kylee Hahn

Photographers: Kylee Hahn, Garrett Pearlman, and Royce Richman

The Wildcat Chronicles staff believes a school newspaper is uniquely qualified to inform, entertain, and represent our peers. We strive to present accurate stories and thought-provoking commentary, and we are responsible for the content of each issue.



502 9th Ave.
Durant, IA 52747
(563) 785-4541

Today's Dentistry coach of the month

Coach Austin Williams is Durant’s soccer coach. He has coached for 10 years and has been playing in a rec league for seven years. His goal this year for the team is to maintain or improve from last year. He also wants to grow an appreciation for soccer in our communities and have more students join the team. His favorite part of coaching is seeing all the athletes improve, and he wants his players to always work hard.



Williams



PAPER'S LUMBER & SUPPLY

901 5th St., Durant, IA 52747
563-785-4482

Liberty Trust & Savings Bank's club member of the month



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Freshman Laylah Boutelle has been a participant in theater for three years. She has appeared in *Frozen* and *The Little Mermaid*, and she’s going to play Dorothy in the upcoming production of *The Wizard of Oz*. Boutelle says the hardest part is memorizing all of the lines.



Boutelle