



KIANNA ZNIKA/TM

Off Limits: The Cerritos College campus has been closed to the public to prevent the spreading of the COVID-19 virus. It is still unknown to us when the campus will reopen as of April 28, 2020

Disputes amongst faculty, students left to adapt, future semesters uncertain as a result of COVID-19.

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The decision to completely close the Cerritos College campus for the Spring 2020 semester and switch to an online-only learning format was announced in a press release on March 13, with classes then resuming on March 30 after an extended spring break.

Since then, many faculty members and students have expressed their concerns and continue to look for support and various solutions as they navi-

gate through this unprecedented time.

According to Dr. Jose Fierro, Cerritos College president, the school had already been working on a three-step emergency plan in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, the process had to be accelerated due to Governor Gavin Newsom's "Stay-at-Home" order on March 19.

"We had already made the decisions to shut down the campus," Fierro said. "But we were hoping to have the beginning of the following week to do it."

"We wanted to give people the

time and the tools to implement the changes that we were asking them to make," he added.

Bobb-Lee Smart, a current part-time faculty member of the Sociology Department, states she was on a call with Fierro when he received word that the LA community college district was closing.

"No one thought we'd be closed for the rest of the semester," she stated. "This is not easy for anybody."

"Many of our faculty and staff administrators are not used to working in this type of environment," Fierro said.

The quick switch to online proved to be challenging for many departments that relied on in-person teaching and labs such as the Cosmetology Department, which is said to be "a 75% lab-based program."

"Our concerns, not just for me but I know also a few of my classmates, is that now we aren't able to work hands-on and practice, so will we be really ready when we are out on our own?" Stephanie Mora, a cosmetology student, said.

Cerritos College offers various types of support for the students, **See CLOSURE on page 2**



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CLOSURE: Cerritos Colleges closes amid virus

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such as an emergency student fund and a “Cerritos Cares” webpage which provides the students with access to multiple resources.

Faculty concerns have been addressed in frequent faculty senate and board of trustees meetings.

Due to the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, items such as Spring 2020 evaluations were discussed to

be postponed to the fall.

Adelle Krayner, director of the Cerritos College Dental Hygiene Program, said it would be “unfair to evaluate people in a format that they are just learning to do.”

Smart emphasized the important of making sure faculty has the resources they need to work their best.

“The student experience is only as good as what the faculty can give them,” she said.

As of right now, the

campus has yet to confirm its official plan for the Fall 2020 semester.

Even if the campus does reopen, without a COVID-19 vaccine Fierro does expect students and faculty members to be concerned with going back into classrooms.

“I wouldn’t be surprised if the students and faculty will choose to stay online,” he said. “I will expect to see an increase on the demand for online programs.”

It’s already been decid-

ed that summer classes will be online-only.

Based on data collected by a student survey, the 2020 Commencement Ceremony will be moved online as well.

Out of about 1,400 potential graduates, 39% preferred postponing the ceremony to a later date, when/if public health guidelines allowed.

Due to these results, a postponed in-person ceremony “will continue to be explored for December 2020.”

Fierro explained the school is waiting for more data from the Department of Health before making an official decision for Fall 2020.

Smart expects the school to stay online but expresses concern about the future of higher education in general.

“Some students don’t learn well online,” she said. “Higher education, in general, needs to really have difficult conversations about how we’re dealing with this.”

Students may receive \$500 from emergency fund



KIANNA ZNIKA/TM

Students first: The Falcons Care Campaign has raised more than \$24,000 for a student emergency fund. PIH Health donated \$10,000, according to a Cerritos College press release on March 23, 2020.

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The college’s Falcons Care campaign commits to putting its students first.

In efforts to support students financially through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Cerritos College Foundation is actively raising support for the Student Emergency Fund to meet a goal of \$100,000.

According to the campus website’s emergency aid facts, each student that applies for financial assistance may receive up to \$500 to assist with whatever they may be lacking..

The emergency aid funds assists students in meeting fi-

nancial needs in an unexpected emergency, such as: housing, utilities, auto repairs, academic supplies, debts relating to Cerritos College, DACA renewal fees and medical expenses.

However, the fund is not intended for food insecurity. For now, students may refer to the Falcon Basic Needs website for food insecurity resources.

According to the emergency aid request web page, “the college is actively working on alternative means to help students meet their critical food needs.”

Due to the severity of the pandemic crisis, the need for funds is expected to exceed available funds.

With 77 donors, the cam-

paign has already raised \$24,280 toward meeting its goal.

A Cerritos College press release on March 23 publicly announced that the Student Emergency Fund received a \$10,000 gift from PIH Health.

“At PIH Health, we know that good health begins where we live, learn, work and play. That is why we focus on the most pressing health needs of our communities, responding with the very best in healthcare and innovative partnerships with valued community partners, such as Cerritos College, to help our communities meet their most basic needs,” said James R. West, President and Chief Executive Officer, PIH Health. “Together, we can make

a difference in the lives of many.”

“During this incredibly challenging time, emergency aid can make all the difference in the world to our students,” said Dr. Jose Fierro, president of Cerritos College. “We are incredibly grateful to PIH Health for stepping forward so quickly to support this urgent effort.”

An applicant for the emergency aid request services must meet all of the five eligibility requirements stated on the site, including having a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 or higher and being enrolled in at least 6 units at Cerritos College.

Within one week of applying, the student will receive a notification of their status and/or a re-

quest for additional information.

To apply, students can fill an emergency aid request form and provide supporting documentation.

The Falcons Care Campaign will provide ongoing support once normal campus operations have resumed.

To learn more or make a donation, visit the Falcons Care webpage or text “FalconsCare” to 44321.

As stated on the alumni site, “Your donation will help preserve the dreams of future nurses, first responders, business leaders, scientists, teachers and trade professionals that will give back to our community for years to come.

Donald Mueller, former LASD lieutenant, named as new Cerritos College PD captain

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Mueller holds a 30-year career in law enforcement, including work at the Community College Bureau.

Cerritos College has announced Donald Mueller as the new Cerritos College Police Department captain, effective April 21.

Mueller, a recently retired Los Angeles County Sheriff lieutenant, has 30 years of law enforcement experience including work at the Community College Bureau.

Mueller will take on the role of captain, which according to Cerritos College PD Chief Tom Gallivan, is the “second in command” to the chief and “responsible for the day to day activities” of the department as well as the duties of Patrol Watch Commander.

Mueller will also be a part of the school’s C.A.I.R. Team and will be “responsible for the staffing and planning for any special events on campus,” Gallivan says.

The captain also plays the role of Chief when they are unavailable.

Mr. Mueller’s experience as Operations Lieutenant at the Community College Bureau saw him “overseeing the day to day operations of 175 at nine community colleges.”

This community college policing experience also means Mueller has an understanding of the Clery Act, the federal law requiring college’s receiving federal funds to report crime statistics in and around campus, as well as Title IX, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination at federally funded schools.



ORIEL MUELLER

New captain: Donald Mueller, newly appointed CCPD captain. Captain Mueller will take on multiple responsibilities, including standard patrols around campus.

The now-captain also has experience as a Peace Officer Standards and Training instructor in Cultural Awareness and Sexual Harassment.

Mueller is also, according to Chief Gallivan, a “nationally recognized instructor in Cultural Diversity.” Mueller is also a Hate Crimes Investigator instructor.

The Human Resources department carried out the search for candidates for the captain position.

They sought proper experience and a “background [that]

includes emergency management and working with students.”

All applicants are interviewed by a hiring committee made up of representatives from all sectors of Cerritos College.

The emphasis on emergency management is timely, considering the recent bomb threat at Cerritos College.

Chief Gallivan laid out Mr. Mueller’s experience in emergency management and “disaster preparedness,” including his “5 years served as the Operations Chief at LA County’s Emergency

Operations Center.”

Chief Gallivan says Cerritos College PD is “always looking for ways in which we can improve our communication and enhance our service to the campus community” and they are “excited to see what new ideas Captain Mueller brings to the table.”

Gallivan highlighted Mueller’s experience at the Community College Bureau, stating it “will be a major benefit to Cerritos College.”

Cerritos College President Jose Fierro appreciates the ex-

perience Mueller is bringing to the Cerritos campus, saying “Mr. Muller was the best-qualified candidate for the position of captain of Police” and that “his experience with community college students, equity, diversity, and inclusion made him the ideal candidate for the job.”

With the COVID pandemic forcing students and staff to work off-campus for the foreseeable future, the new captain will have plenty of time to learn the ins and outs of his position before students return to campus.

Cerritos moves to online-only format for summer 2020

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Cerritos College President Jose Fierro announces that all summer 2020 classes will be online only.

Cerritos College President Dr. Jose Fierro announced via a video on various social media platforms that Cerritos College “will be offering a robust summer schedule to ensure you [students] continue your academic progress.”

Both summer 2020 sessions will be offered online and priority registration for the summer session began on April 6.

During a live video broadcast on April 7, Fierro addressed some questions from students in regard to the summer and fall 2020 sessions.

He said, “We are trying to run as many of our [summer] classes using a synchronized format so you can take multiple classes at the same time. We will put an identifier so you can find out which classes will conflict [with each other] and which will not.”

The first session starts from May 26 to July 3 and the second one is from July 6 to August 14.

“Working and studying from home makes it harder for all of us to be successful and I want you to reach out to us because you are not alone. We are here to help

you and we are here to support you through this difficult crisis,” Fierro stated more than once in the broadcast.

Another key point in Fierro’s live video is that flexibility is key.

He assured students that the administration is trying to do everything possible to accommodate student’s needs during this pandemic.

In a campus message from the academic affairs team, students were told, “We understand that taking online classes can create inconvenience and hardships for many of you. However, we have a number of online campus resources, as well as staff and faculty who are ready to help you to be successful during this time.”

The team urges students to be vigilant and check the website for more updates from the college as they continue to deal with the impacts of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Each student’s registration date can be located on their My-Cerritos account.

Classes that are not going to be able to be taught in an online format, for example, culinary arts, will be removed from the summer schedule.

“There may be variations on Fall classes depending on how our public health situation continues to evolve but we will keep you informed,” Fierro said.

In regard to lab courses that cannot be taught through an on-

line format, Cerritos College is still working with the Chancellor’s office to find a way to help students find a way to take them to receive credit.

In a president’s update sent on March 31, Fierro stated, “If we receive word from the county or state indicating that we can expand offerings in lab formats, we will do our best to make the necessary adjustments to accommodate your needs and the needs of our students.”

The college is planning on adding extra courses during Fall 2020 or Spring 2021 if needed for students who will get EW’s (excused withdrawals) because of the stay at home order and the change to an online-only format.

COVID-19 testing site opens in Bellflower

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Los Angeles County has begun operation of a new drive-up COVID-19 testing site in the city of Bellflower.

The site, which began operations on April 15, is located at 16600 Civic Center Drive, Bellflower, CA 90706, will be providing free tests to any resident of Los Angeles County.

If residents are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, they can schedule an appointment through the county website.

Factors such as immigration status, insurance status, age, and underlying health issues will not affect eligibility for a COVID-19 test.

In a statement from the county's COVID-19 Newsroom, LA County Supervisor Janice Hahn stated, "This new drive-up site in Bellflower will improve access to testing for residents in southeast LA County and give us a better understanding of the spread of this virus in these communities." The Bellflower site will be open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily and will be able to test up to 250 people per day. When residents book their appointment, they will receive a



Tech. Sgt. Adam Vance /Flickr
Free Testing: Airmen with the 186th Air Refueling Wing administer COVID-19 tests at the Bonita Lakes mobile COVID-19 testing facility on April 1, 2020.

confirmation with the date, time and location of their appointment.

They will also be directed to a video which shows what to expect at the testing site. Residents will be required to bring some form of personal identification, such as a drivers license, in order to ensure test results are matched to the right person.

Identities and test results are protected by federal law and will not be shared with any other agencies for purposes of law enforcement or immigration.

The tests will be administered via mouth and nose swabs and can be scheduled as quickly as same-day appointments. Results can take up to 4 days, with positive results being notified via phone while negative

results will be notified via email. "It's crucial that our region and Bellflower get a clear picture of how many people are COVID-19 positive, and peace of mind for those that are not," Bellflower Mayor Juan Garza said in a written statement.

For LA County residents who wish to find a testing site closer to them, NBC 4 has compiled a map of COVID-19 testing sites.

LA county has also provided a list of frequently asked questions, to allow residents to better understand the symptoms and testing procedures. The site was developed through a joint partnership effort between the Los Angeles County Fire Department, the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services, and the City of Bellflower.

California students urge 'consistency across systems'

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The California Students HEART Coalition are working to address urgent student needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Student advocates across California joined together to release a common set of urgent needs and recommendations for colleges and universities to consider in regard to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The letter, sent out on April 22, addressed six main topics of concern: financial aid, basic needs, learning, admissions/graduation, student workers and undocumented students.

The California Students Higher Education Advocacy Round Table (HEART) addressed the letter to the University of California, California State University and California community colleges.

HEART held a webinar on the same day to explain the details within the letter and allow attendees to hear from key representatives in a Q&A session.

Sasha Perez, student engagement manager of the Campaign for College Opportunity, helped facilitate the webinar.

She summarized that the main concern was lack of consistency between the University of

California, California State University and community colleges.

HEART "asks for coordination across systems."

For concerns regarding learning, HEART recommended that the "credit/no credit" deadline be extended and that schools provide additional support for students with disabilities transitioning to online learning.

Valerie Johnson, transfer student affairs officer from the UC Student Association, emphasized the importance of schools prioritizing support for students.

"There's no crash course that prepares you" for the sudden transition to online-only learning, she said.

Johnson also explained it is "unrealistic to hold students" to the same academic standards held before the COVID-19 pandemic.

As for financial aid and basic needs, HEART recommended investing in emergency grant aid and allowing students to stay in their dorms until at least June.

Carolyn Tinoco, Cal Fresh food coordinator from Cal State Dominguez Hills, explained that many students have reported basic needs insecurities and that "usually foster/international students" depend on student housing.

HEART further recommends schools to "ensure students are



#CAHEART

KIANNA ZNIKA/TM

Student needs: The #CAHEART webinar included a Q&A session for all. The next meeting will be held on May 8, 2020.

aware of and continue to access benefits available through Cal Fresh and Cal Works."

As for student workers, HEART recommends providing students paid leave and assisting students in filing for unemployment.

The schools are also recommended to "provide undocumented students with detailed updates regarding their eligibility for state aid, campus aid and provide regularly updated lists of resources."

Emelia Martinez, director of

Partnerships and Special Projects Rise, wants every student to get support.

"Some students may not get as much support as others," Martinez said, emphasizing the importance of grassroots organizing.

As for admissions/graduation concerns, HEART recommends that the schools include Class of 2020 students in their decision-making in regard to commencement and consider relaxing transfer and graduation requirements.

Other recommendations stated in the letter were ensuring students can still receive on-campus health benefits off campus and refunding fees to students "when appropriate and available."

The California Students HEART Coalition stated they will be hosting monthly meetings to "continually assess student needs and our advocacy strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic."

The next meeting will be held on Friday, May 8 at 3 p.m. via Zoom.

COVID-19

Coronavirus Disease 2020

U.S. Air Force Graphic by Rosario "Charo" Gutierrez

Community Updates : Local City Councils have issued updates in regards to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Updates which range from food banks to street sweeping citation were last updated on April 20, 2020.

Local community updates for the week of April 20

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With the COVID-19 pandemic in full swing, and each city implementing different policies and closures, it may be tough to know what's closed or what's still going on.

From street sweeping to public facilities, here's what has changed in Bellflower, Lakewood, Cerritos, Norwalk, Paramount and Downey.

Please note that all cities are following the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health "Safer at Home" order for the control of COVID-19.

The order directs all residents to stay at home until May 15, 2020 and to limit activity to only essential activities, such as medical care and grocery shopping, and to essential businesses and infrastructure work as listed in the order.

Everyone is required to wear a face mask when entering essential businesses throughout the state of California.

All cities have temporarily stopped issuing citations during street sweeping, and have begun switching to appointment-only meetings for permits. Water services and trash collection will continue as normal, and many cities have launched virtual recreation centers.

The following list will cover what has changed in regards to specific city policies:

Bellflower

All city facilities will be closed until further notice; however, physical appointments for services will still be considered on a case-by-case basis and in a way that maintains social distancing standards.

The Bellflower Sheriff Substation will remain closed to the public until further notice.

Various LA County Sheriff's Department personnel have been shifted from current positions to patrol functions in order to be more available for visible street level service.

Less serious crime reports, such as those involving property, will be written via phone conversations rather than deploying a deputy out into private party residences.

Individuals can still conduct business at the substation in-person on a limited basis by appointment only

Street Sweeping enforcement is linked to environmental regulations from the state, so this enforcement will resume April 13.

Bellflower's fixed route and Dial-A-Ride transportation services are operating as scheduled for now.

Mayor Juan Garza has issued, "reminder to stay calm, be kind to one another, wash your hands, practice social distancing and stay home whenever possible. Now is the time to do everything we can to prevent the situation from getting much worse. Together we will get through this."

Lakewood

Lakewood has activated its emergency radio station (1620-AM) on news and special services available to Lakewood residents during the coronavirus crisis.

Lakewood's Recreation and Community Services staff have created a virtual recreation center where residents of all ages can access free exercise videos, fun educational sites like games and museum tours, and other ideas at www.lakewoodcity.org/VirtualRec.

Street sweeping will continue throughout Lakewood but no citations will be issued at least through April 20. The city is considering extending this timeframe, with more information

soon to come.

All Lakewood playgrounds are closed and gathering in the park is prohibited.

Lakewood property owners who are unable to pay their property taxes by the April 10 deadline due to the direct effect of the public health crisis may submit an online request for penalty cancellation beginning April 11.

Cerritos

The city has issued a local emergency for the foreseeable future. More information can be found here.

Mayor Naresh Solanki has reached out to County of Los Angeles Supervisor Janice Hahn to express his strong interest in a COVID-19 testing site in the city of Cerritos.

The Cerritos Sheriff's station is currently still open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The city's overnight parking restrictions will not be enforced until at least April 19 and until further notice. In addition, citations will not be issued for vehicles parked on the street on street sweeping days.

The Cerritos on Wheels (C.O.W) fixed route service will operate Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., and will arrive at each bus stop every 60 minutes.

Due dates for borrowed library materials due now will be automatically extended through June 1, 2020 and customers can return materials in the drop boxes located at the Cerritos Civic Center.

City Hall and the Cerritos Senior Center are closed and all events and classes are cancelled.

All events at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts have been cancelled and the ticket office will be contacting ticket buyers.

Norwalk

In response to COVID-19, all city-sponsored events and programming have been suspended through April 30.

The Norwalk Senior Center is providing frozen meals for adults over the age of 60. To request the food program, contact the Senior Center at 562-929-5580.

The city has temporarily suspended parking citations for street sweeping through April 30.

The Norwalk Senior Center is providing frozen meals for adults over the age of 60. To request the food program, contact the Senior Center at 562-929-5580.

Norwalk Transit will not be charging fares through April 19.

Mayor Margarita L. Rios has issued a statement, saying that

"The City Council recognizes that, now more than ever, we must work together to take care of one another, our families and most vulnerable. I am extremely proud of our community, my colleagues on the Council and City staff, who are doing an exemplary job at meeting the needs of our community."

A hotline is available to take information or to take general questions, weekdays from 8a.m. to 8p.m. at 562-929-5760.

Paramount

Paramount will be distributing free masks at Paramount Park for drive-up collection only; no walk-ups allowed.

This will take place Monday, April 13, Tuesday, April 14, and Wednesday, April 15 from 1-3 p.m. or until all masks are gone. There will be four drive-through lanes for faster service.

Masks will be distributed on a first come, first served basis to Paramount residents only with one distribution of no more than four masks per address. Only one member of each household needs to be present.

Paramount has also launched a dedicated hotline for residents to call with questions about COVID-19. The number is 562-220-2242 and it is available from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days a week, in both English and Spanish.

The Public Safety Department will no longer be issuing warnings or citations for vehicles parked during posted sweeping hours until further notice.

The City of Paramount, as of March 17, 2020, is only issuing building permits that are of an urgent nature.

Online fitness classes, visual and performing arts sites, games and crafts, educational resources are all available at paramountcity.com/virtualrecreation

Downey

For city-sponsored events and classes, refunds will be given accordingly and city staff will work with the various partner agencies to reschedule events for future dates.

The Downey Farmers Market will remain open as it is considered to be "essential facilities" (such as grocery stores) and many of the community members rely on the Market to purchase their food.

The Downey Police Department will remain open for business as per usual hours.

Dial-a-Ride transportation services will continue without interruption.

Staff will begin a Senior Wellness Check program for Downey senior residents. Patrons can register to participate by contacting 562-904-7238.

The Downey Farmers Market will remain open as it is considered to be "essential facilities" (such as grocery stores) and many of the community members rely on the Market to purchase their food.

Challenges arise in Cosmetology Department with online-only format

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Both students and faculty have expressed some concerns about the cosmetology program's transition to an online-only format.

"Our concerns, not just for me but I know also a few of my classmates, is that now we aren't able to work hands-on and practice, so will we be really ready when we are out on our own?" said Stephanie Mora, a cosmetology student at Cerritos College.

One of her biggest challenges is not being able to perform a skin analysis and not being able to practice in-person to analyze properly.

"The more practice, the better, although this whole COVID-19 has taken a bit of my motivation I do still log on to my class and perform my classwork," Mora said.

Janet Ramirez-Han, department chair and cosmetology instructor, said, "Luckily for us, we didn't really have new students coming into the program, they already knew some hands-on stuff."

"That way they can kind of perfect those things they were taught the first nine weeks," she added.



Hands-on experience: Stephanie Mora, a cosmetology student at Cerritos, practicing hands-on before Cerritos College closed due to COVID-19 on March 13, 2020.

Han said she wasn't sure at first if the department would be able to change into an online-only teaching format because they are used to the hands-on environment it has been "quite an adjustment."

Han had to get the okay from the state board to ensure students will still get credit for their online classes.

The cosmetology students didn't need to be taught any new hands-on services and are working on perfecting their skills at home which has been a big plus in this situation.

"We decided at the beginning we weren't going to use certain tools. For example, the shears, the curling irons," Hann said, "Anything that can cause some kind of

safety issues."

Students have voiced their concerns to Hann and other instructors, stating they want to continue doing haircuts. Safety issues are the biggest concern of the department, Han explained.

Safety decisions were made in the beginning based on feedback from other schools but the department is "thinking of some

kind of liability waiver."

"We're listening to their concerns and we're going to come up with something," Han said.

Judith Long, another cosmetology instructor at Cerritos, said, "The department had to change what we would normally accept for a procedure set up due to problems with getting disinfection supplies and hand sanitizer."

Not all students were able to gather all their supplies before the school announced their closure, and with the little notice instructors weren't able to give their students supplies.

Long's class had expressed concern to her about online learning.

"They did mention they get a procedure signed off more quickly than in class," Long said.

The cosmetology department is "a 75% lab-based program" and not being able to have that face-to-face, one-on-one demonstration is challenging for both students and the instructors.

"I can verbally explain how to tie your shoelaces, but you are more likely to be able to tie your own if I show you at the same time and/or I catch a movement going in the wrong direction," Long said.

Read more at [Talonmarks.com](https://www.talonmarks.com)

GORDITA EATERIES: BLACKBIRD PIZZA SHOP



Welcome Gordita Eateries, the one and only food column dedicated to great food. It's time to get out of the constant food cycle and venture into a world of delectable dishes that is to your liking.



PHOTOS BY REBECCA AGUILA

Cheesy Pizza Pie: (Right) A pizza that was made from the pizza gods! definitely a come back if you're into meatballs, thick tomato sauce, and gooey delicious cheesiness! (Left) Savory and spicy wings that are served with blue cheese and celery sticks to tame the heat from the wings.



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Just a quick update for all your hungry readers: I recently moved to the Hollywood Hills area and I'll be doing some featured food spots in the local area, and still some in Downey since the majority of my family lives there.

With that being said, I won't leave out the best food spots in Downey!

I won't leave all your rellenitas y gorditos hanging! A slice of pizza can usually put a smile on anyone's face especially knowing that the pizza was made with love and the best ingredients money can buy.

Blackbird Pizza is no ordinary pizza shop like the ones you usually see on Hollywood Blvd.

This small pizza shop off of Melrose in Los Angeles is definitely making headlines with their delicious deep dish pizzas that are simply to die for.

These are the types of pies that you see on cartoons where the character takes away a slice from

the pizza pie and out comes a long, gooey string of cheesy goodness that seems to go on forever.

And that's exactly what happened to me when I pulled away at my first slice of the scrumptious "Balls Deep" pizza.

Blackbird's signature meatballs are found throughout the pie which makes it kind of a meatball extravaganza on a thick slice of saucy pizza.

The crust is one of the best crusts I've ever had which literally made the entire pizza a lot more enjoyable and worth the money.

I couldn't believe that such beauty existed in a town where sushi and fried chicken sandwiches dominated the food scene in Los Angeles so I'm very happy that I was able to experience Blackbird.

I'm ordering one of these pies as one of my last meals.

Another great recommendation is their spicy wings, which are legitimate pieces of wings and not some tiny-looking wings you'll find at typical commercial pizza chains throughout Los Angeles County.

Blackbird sells the delicious wings by a full pound with celery sticks to enjoy after the spicy dish.

I've also come to the realization that the blue cheese is the next best thing on my wing dipping sauce and these wings definitely go perfectly together with some thick blue cheese dipping sauce.

These wings had a small crunch on the outside but the meat inside was moist and fell off the bone. Wings don't usually do that, everybody!

Another great thing about this particular pizza shop is that they have a pantry that includes pasta sauces, bread, vegetables and and dry pasta since this pandemic has all these grocery markets packed.

They are doing what they can to help out the community and that's what makes this shop even better to take a visit to whenever you get a chance!

I know it's a bit of a drive for all of you Downey locals; however, the freeways are empty during this pandemic so it would be a nice drive to just get out of the house and pick up your awaiting deep dish pizza at Blackbird Pizza Shop.

With that being said, please stay tuned for next week's column and take care of yourselves.

Art With Impact discusses powerful cinema for Sexual Assault Awareness Month

Daniel Suarez
Staff Writer

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Mental health, sexual violence and cultural stigmas were the main topics of discussion on April 16 at the Movies for Mental Health Virtual Workshop.

It was hosted by a panel of Cerritos College students and campus resources partnered with Art With Impact, a nonprofit charity dedicated to promoting mental wellness and connecting young people through art and media.

The online seminar is just one of several events planned for Sexual Assault Awareness month and was a free-to-join Zoom meeting that connected students, faculty and mental healthcare professionals that offered "private chat" for participants.

Art With Impact also screened three short films, all winners of the charity's annual short-film contest.

Following each movie, the webinar was asked a couple of poll questions before being divided into several breakout rooms where women discussed the issues portrayed, how it made them feel and how it may have connected to their own experiences.

The first film, "Gladys" directed by Jessica Jones explores the inner conflicts felt by a battered immigrant woman who bat-

les a longstanding stigma in Latin culture that puts down women who seek mental help.

By overcoming that obstacle, Gladys was finally able to see a therapist and confront the traumas of her past.

"Touch Me Don't Touch Me" was an emotional display of conflicting feelings of fear and desire between two lovers, all through the medium director Lucie Rachel calls "contact movement."

The film is a depiction of the physiological pain caused by domestic abuse and domestic violence.

The most poignant film screened at the seminar was Maya Bastion's 2019 picture, "Me Too."

It told the story of one sexual assault survivor from the perspective of her webcam.

Using a single frame, Bastion was able to create a very real "dramatization of a very private struggle faced by millions of women worldwide."

The response from attendees was overwhelmingly positive with 100% of participants saying they felt the event created awareness of the mental health impacts of sexual violence.

On an attached document were dozens of "thank you's" to organizers.

The discussion panel was led by Angel Gray, Giovanna Martinez, Tina Montoya

and Dr. Valyncia Raphael who together make up a diverse group of four women, each representing several different organizations including STIXA, Rise and the Human Services Association.

Before the virtual workshop was concluded, organizers provided a number of resources along with keeping the chatroom open for 30 minutes of free discussion.



PIXABAY

Art With Impact: *The Movies for Mental Health virtual workshop aimed to educate women on the impact of sexual violence on April 16.*

Animal Crossing New Horizons makes quarantine a little more tolerable

Oscar Torres
Staff Writer

[@05CARTORR35](#)

REVIEW

Animal Crossing: New Horizons is a wonderful experience for fans of the series, or newcomers alike, with many hours of creating your own fun island experience.

When the game was announced in 2018 many people did not know where the series would take itself.

The game already made the players the mayor in the last game, so what more can they do?

Fast forward to June 2019 where they fully announced the game and its premise not taking place in a city, but a remote island.

With dozens of activities to do in the game, many were excited to get their hands on it.

New Horizons starts off with a player's own character or "Villager" traveling to a getaway island by Nook Inc. and its owner Tom Nook.

Players get to name the island and then it is the player's choice as to what to do next as the game progresses once a day, with many days being different for many.

Its ultimately the player's responsibility to do whatever they want to on the island, from creating a beautiful resort to a big community with many other characters coming to the island.

With tons of islanders, each

day would not be boring and will be more exciting than the last.

The start of the game gives a good amount of time to get the player adjusted to the controls and how things work, which helps the player if they have never played an Animal Crossing game before.

The player can start building tents for their companions / islanders, or start creating a museum with the animals or fossils that they can acquire.

Each day, many can have a schedule:

Do they want to fish and collect shells to sell them to the shop and get more bells?

Do the nook mile challenges to get nook miles to travel to other deserted islands and maybe find another islander?

The game gives the player freedom and that is what all games should strive for.

Playing with a friend online and local play is also there, but Nintendo limited them and restricted some stuff that players can't do.

Players can't break anything from friends' islands unless they are best friends with them, or in local play the guest player has to follow the owner of the island. These are minor gripes that does not affect the games quality.

What makes this game fun for many is the creative things that people can think of doing.

People have been using it to

host weddings and birthday parties since they cannot go outside due to COVID-19. It is really caring and heartwarming to see.

Since we live in a world where many cannot go outside due to the virus and being told to stay inside at all times, it is always the best thing to have a game like this to do things that give our minds the calm and peace from the outside world and think outside the box.

All-in-all "Animal Crossing: New Horizons" is an amazing game with over a ton of content in it and many things to do.

Many will be spending their

social distancing at home quite well if they own this game. It is definitely a reason to pick up a Switch.

A must-have for all people who own a Switch.

Rating



OSCAR TORRES/TM

Animal Crossing New Horizons: *You can collect many types of fish in the game ranging from big to small. Many can either sell it or donate it to the museum.*

Monthly Quote

"When you face difficult times, know that challenges are not sent to destroy you.

They're sent to promote, increase and strengthen you."

— Joel Osteen

Monthly Goals

Subscribe to our weekly newsletter at [Talonmarks.com](#)

Upcoming Events

April 29 - LA Regional Food Bank Drive-Thru Food Distribution 1-3 p.m.

April 29 - Sexual Awareness Month Denim Day All Day

May 1 - President's Spring 2020 Speaker Series Challenge Yourself, Explore, Empower and Embark 10:00 a.m. - noon via Zoom

May 5 - Cinco de Mayo

May 7 - APCTC First to Finish Support Group Surviving College Life 1 - 2:30 p.m. via Zoom

May 10 - Mother's Day

The Quaran-Times: Family Mentality

A column dedicated to providing a weekly list of movies, TV shows, podcasts, social media and video games to help you get that dopamine during an unforeseen quarantine.

Edgar Mendoza
Community Editor
@edgarstevenmen1

If you've had your fill of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, or are looking for something you can watch with your kids without fear of Game of Thrones levels of violence, this week's list will offer a refreshing change of pace.

From lesser known gems to mainstream classics, we're covering things to watch and play with your family.

Gaming

Starting off we have the game that took the world by storm, "Minecraft."

Though it needs no introduction, "Minecraft" lets your imagination run wild, with countless materials to build with, ores to mine and where the only limit is what you can think of.

The game supports up to four-player split screen and has countless game modes ranging from creative, in which supplies and materials are infinite, to survival, where mining at night can lead to certain death.

The game is available for the PlayStation 4, Xbox one and the Nintendo Switch.

Just as entertaining is the often overlooked, "Rocket League".

"Rocket League" is a high-speed blend of arcade-style soccer matches and vehicular mayhem with easy-to-understand controls and fluid, physics-driven competition. The game is easy to pick up and play, needing no introduction save for a few base mechanics.

The goal is simple: get the ball into the opponent's goal through the use of tricks and your own custom car.

"Rocket League" includes casual and competitive Online Matches, over 500 trillion customization capabilities, a fully-featured offline Season Mode and supports cross-platform play.

The game is also available for the PlayStation 4, Xbox one and the Nintendo Switch.

TV Shows

For my Netflix users, we have "A Series of Unfortunate Events," based on the book series by the same name.

The series follows Violet, Sunny and Klaus who wish to uncover the secrets of their family all while being chased by the nefarious Count Olaf.

Neil Patrick Harris delivers an enjoyable humorous performance, with Patrick Warburton serving as a narrator that keeps watchers entertained with no regard for the fourth wall.

For those with Hulu, "Myth-busters" provides a wild ride from start to finish.

If you've ever wanted to see the world's biggest waterslide, or learn how to escape from a submerged car look no further than this show.

Disney+ offers no shortage of family-friendly content but if you're looking for something outside the realm of princesses and superheroes, check out "Gravity Falls."

The series follows twins Dipper and Mabel who spend the summer with their Uncle Stan and face off against everything from Pterodactyls to Bigfoot.

If you're interested in cryptids, aliens, or anything supernatural, give this show a watch.

Movies

Though this list tends to stray away from the mainstream Marvel movies, "Spider-

Man: Into the Spider-Verse," available on Netflix, offers a refreshing change from the formula fans have grown accustomed to.

This film follows not Peter Parker, but Miles Morales, and sees Spider-Men and Women from all iterations of the character come together to help Miles when he realizes that with great power, comes a great amount of doubt.

The action and beautifully-vibrant animation will keep the whole family entertained for the entirety of the film.

Old fans will love seeing nods to classic moments, while new fans will find that Peter Parker isn't the only web-slinger who can wear the mask.

If you're in need of a western film, but don't want all the bravado and serious tones, hop onto Hulu and check out "Rango."

Johnny Depp plays a chameleon that longs to be the hero of an epic tale, but when he ends up in a western town overrun by bandits, he realizes that playing the role means protecting the town and its people.

With great jokes and a charming visual appeal, "Rango" captures all the charm of a Clint Eastwood western while still providing countless laughs for a younger audience.

Disney+ houses an entire list's worth of family-friendly movies on its own with classics such as "Toy Story" and "Frozen."

This list, however, will feature the often overlooked film "Atlantis: The Lost Empire."

This hidden gem follows historian Milo

Thatch as he leads a crew of archeologists, explorers and mercenaries in search of the legendary lost kingdom of Atlantis.

The team's mission soon shifts from exploration, to protecting the city, and a fierce series of battles ensues.

Though set in 1914, the film feels timeless and the animation holds up very well after nearly 20 years.

Anime

In our newest section, we have Japanese animation, or anime.

Starting with Hulu, we have none other than the anime everyone is talking about, "My Hero Academia."

The series follows Izuku Midoriya, a young boy who strives to be a superhero, despite being born without a superpower, known as a quirk, in a world where nearly 80% of society does.

Following a fateful encounter with the number one hero, Midoriya applies to the best superhero training school around, and learns what it means to be a hero.

Young viewers will enjoy the charming variety of character and the upbeat tone, while older viewers will be thrilled by the action and plot lines that are reminiscent of such classics as "DragonBall Z" or "Naruto."

On Netflix we have "Little Witch Academia," which shares no relation to "My Hero Academia" despite the similar names.

What they do share however is their charm. "Little Witch Academia" follows Akko, an aspiring witch who enrolls at the Luna Nova Witchcraft Academy.

She's not the best student but her bright attitude is the key to her and her friends' success.

The series carries a similar magical feeling as the beloved "Harry Potter" series, and is suitable for all ages, with its action sequences and modern animation style.



CAROLINE MEDINA

Rose Buds: It's time for the virtual sesh

"Rose Buds" is a cannabis-friendly column intended for readers 21 years and older. We encourage only legal and responsible enjoyment of all cannabis products.

Kianna Znika
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When it comes to celebrating 4/20, a holiday meant for smoking or celebrating the act of smoking marijuana, one of the first ideas on every cannabis-enthusiast's mind is, of course, having a "sesh" with their friends.

A "sesh" is the act of gathering, usually with two or more people, with the intention to enjoy smoking together. However, due to stay-at-home orders, this is seemingly impossible. Right?

Wrong.

In a period of shared trauma such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now more important than ever to stay connected, socially, while we have to stay apart, physically.

Here at Rose Buds, we encourage legal, responsible enjoyment of cannabis products and are here to let everyone in on "the age of the virtual sesh."

For most college students, the word

"Zoom" might trigger something within, but truly the app has provided the world with an amazing way to stay connected with groups of people all at once.

You can play games, have parties, and even work on an important project regardless of who has an iPhone or not!

If everyone in the group has an iPhone, of course Group Facetime is available as well. The most important thing is that everyone in the group is seen all at once, helping the individuals feel as if they are all actually together.

Once everyone is virtually connected, cannabis enthusiasts may begin "the sesh."

Of course, it is very simple: everyone who wishes to participate is basically enjoying their cannabis product on their own.

While this may seem lonely, there are actually many benefits to this.

For starters, the person may choose their own strain of weed.

Some people love Sativa but for others, it may give them anxiety. Some people love Indica, while others may argue that it will just make them too sleepy. Hybrids are usually the favorite compromise but then there are the many brands to choose

from.

Ultimately, in a real life sesh, everyone in the group is usually sharing one type of weed.

In the virtual sesh, everyone is enjoying their own favorite type of weed, knowing that they are not pressured or obligated to consume something that may or may not give them the benefits they were looking for.

Bonus points for everyone experiencing their own unique high.

Videos on apps like Twitter and Instagram have also shown others finding humor and joy in the virtual sesh.

While in real life people will pass a joint to the person on their left, the virtual sesh has inspired people to lift their joint up to their camera while the other person "takes" it from them on the other side of the screen.

It definitely brings a lot more laughs into a setting that was already designed to make you laugh.

With these laughs, people feel more connected to the ones they love despite the fact that they can't all be together during this trying time.

Death by COVID-19: America's grand reopening

EDITORIAL

As protests gather in masses across the United States, demanding that the country be open again, many Coronavirus deaths are posted every night on news outlets and social media platforms.

The voices of those shouting for safety are becoming drowned out by a government that hears only voices accompanied by the rattling of coins.

This country is choosing to prioritize its pocketbook over its people and those very same people who are most at risk are encouraging it.

In California alone there are over 1000 new cases confirmed with each passing day, New York accounts for over 280 thousand cases across the country and the United States is well on its way to surpass 1 million cases.

President Trump has been pushing the idea of "opening up America again" into the minds of many Americans.

Those who are on board with the idea think this means they may be able to enjoy their personal liberties.

Back in March, President Trump stated in a news press conference that he would love to see "packed churches" on Easter Sunday which has continued to spark a resistance to not paying attention to statistical information and ignoring medical officials' orders to stay at home.

President Trump went so far as to tweet "Liberate Michigan." There is nothing to be liberated from, no rights have been infringed upon and no large-scale imprisonment is in place due to



FREELANCE ILLUSTRATOR/SOFIA GALLEGOS

COVID-19.

People are free to go on walks, or for a run, but when the leader of your country declares you need to be liberated, safety and precaution gives way to mob rule.

In response, many anti-social distancers are confusing their personal luxuries as essential needs and not listening to evidence, turning a blind eye away from reality.

Possibly opening the country has many citizens across America in fits of rage in response to getting fed-up with not being able to do their normal everyday things.

In order for America to reopen again, COVID-19 death rates and new cases need to be going down for at least 14 days and that's one thing that doesn't

seem to be happening throughout the country as new numbers begin to rise.

There needs to be at least 500,000 tests available in order for everyone to go back to their stock life accordance to Dr. Ashish K. Jha, Director of the Harvard Global Health Institute, but there continues to be barriers that prevent the U.S from opening such as CDC's faulty testing kits and the FDA prohibiting expansion of its' testing sites.

The CDC's current report of Coronavirus related deaths is updated every night at 4pm Pacific-standard time and yet people continue to demand that America undoubtedly needs to be opened for inessential businesses.

It's way too soon to be consid-

ering opening America and some wealthy elitists and conservatives choose their personal needs as a way to "fight for their freedom".

Doctors and nurses are on the front lines risking their lives to fight this virus and ignorant people in this country continue to choose their selfish beliefs instead of understanding that there is currently a pandemic taking an unprecedented toll on everyone.

We cannot continue to rely on a system in which our leader tells us to inject Lysol into our veins and news outlets have to forego the information that is important in order to deal with his inane claims.

These protests are the result of what the respective populations have been told.

When people are told they

need liberation, they will fight for it. When the nightly news tells you the virus was possibly grown in a lab, people will believe it.

Americans need to begin their own research in order to see the true effects this pandemic has on our country.

We are not in a race to reopen. There is no prize at the finish line.

If our country chooses to reopen its stores and unlock those doors, their first customer will be disease.

Do your own research, follow guidelines from health professionals and realize that this is bigger than all of us.

We are the United States of America, so let's start acting like it.

COVID puts 'America the exceptional' to the test and it's failing miserably

Sean Davis
News Editor
@talonmarks

Many Americans have been taught their whole lives that the United States is an exceptionally-good, powerful and capable country. The COVID-19 pandemic is yet another arrow that can pop that notion's bubble.

The U.S. had time to prepare for this pandemic and failed to for reasons of greed, incompetence and anti-intellectualism.

On Dec. 21, 2019 the World Health Organization informed the world that a mysterious pneumonia was sickening people in Wuhan, China and on Jan. 21, the U.S. had its first confirmed case.

The response by the Trump administration was sluggish at best with Trump referring to the crisis as a hoax and conservative

media playing into this narrative.

If the Trump administration had a competent pandemic response team in January, the response might have been earlier and saved lives.

Instead, Trump had fired the team in 2018 to "cut costs."

Due to the lack of appropriate early preventive measures, the U.S. is now the country with the most confirmed coronavirus cases.

Now the ongoing response to the pandemic by the Trump allies and followers is to argue that opening the economy is a better choice than protecting people's lives by giving people some money and expand healthcare.

The ultra-partisan nature of U.S. politics and the presence of a small thing known as the 2020 Presidential election makes the

nationwide response uneven and saddled with acquiescence to Trump by Republican governors and tiptoeing by Democratic ones.

All states are vying to outbid each other for key medical supplies because the neoliberal political-corporate complex has a pathological need to squeeze profits wherever they might be found.

If America "the nation" was as dedicated, knowledgeable and steadfast as the "Patriots" would have us believe, why the scandalous response to a serious issue?

We are not scientists or doctors, so we cannot provide a hindsight 20/20 solution to a pandemic. That is why a rational response to a staggering crisis like a pandemic is to let the experts take the lead and direct as

needed.

A quick addition of "I'm not a doctor" right before the "but..." simply doesn't cut it when Sean Hannity sputters out a plan for reopening baseball games during a pandemic.

But how do you expect people to act under the leadership of someone who says "it will go away," "we have it under control," and promising that things are going to go back to normal very soon?

Don't listen to these fools! Listen to the people who took an oath to do no harm, not the ones who take no oaths seriously at all.

Some proposed solutions to the pandemic, like a monthly check and universal access to healthcare, make practical sense during a time when 47 million

people may lose their jobs due to the virus.

The arguments to reopen the economy and call it a near miss is as insane and murderous as it sounds when coming from the mouths of billionaires and millionaires.

A solution must be found to the crisis other than endless social distancing but we cannot be guided by corporate profit-seeking.

We must listen to the science and let love for our fellow humans worldwide be the guiding principle for planning.

If the argument is that "America the Exceptional" can do anything with the vast intellect and might at its disposal, let's put this to the test in the pursuit of a just and equitable protection of all life, not the stock market.

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\$1,200 checks will not alleviate the worst job loss in decades

EDITORIAL

Unemployment is skyrocketing as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the United States, causing the most devastating job loss since the Great Depression.

The federal government's response to this unprecedented crisis is a \$1,200 stimulus check for qualifying taxpayers. That is not enough to stave off an impending economic collapse!

Since the United States first declared the Coronavirus pandemic a national emergency, more than 22 million Americans have filed for unemployment aid.

The consequences of an economic crisis of this magnitude are predicted by some experts to last up to five years after the country's eventual reopening.

California Governor Gavin Newsom called the economic downturn a "pandemic-induced recession." A Los Angeles Times article reports that less than half of the residents in LA county still have a job.

The millions of new applicants have overwhelmed unemployment agencies across the country, causing a number of backups and delays that only worsen the situation in struggling households.

As several governors begin

to unveil their plans to reopen their state's economy, qualifying Americans are receiving the first distributed stimulus payments since President Trump originally signed the \$2 trillion stimulus.

According to the Washington Post, the checks are primarily going toward gas, bills and food purchases.

Single heads of households are expected to receive a \$1,200 payment and married couples will get \$2,400.

Parents are granted an extra \$500 for children under 17 years old claimed as dependents but college students aren't allowed to receive this benefit if their parents claim them as dependents on their taxes.

The Coronavirus health crisis is creating an economic crisis and the president's delayed response for the country as a whole is a disservice to the United States.

COVID-19 put a stop to thousands of businesses and organizations leaving millions of Americans filing for unemployment benefits.

An article by the Washington Post states, "A Treasury spokeswoman noted the IRS processed nearly 80 million payments in less than three weeks."

There are 150 million pay-



REBECCA AGUILA/TM

ments expected to go out under the Economic Impact Payment program.

Undocumented immigrants are excluded from the federal stimulus package despite contributing billions of taxpayer dollars annually, funding schools, being taxpayers, students and overall contributors to society.

They serve a critical role in providing the food to be distributed to Americans in need, whether it be to food banks, grocery stores or farmer's markets.

Immigrants are known to work in the crop fields of California and other states that are needed now more than ever.

They are only some of the essential workers of the time and they aren't receiving the help they desperately need during the pandemic.

Mayor Eric Garcetti announced the release of the Angeleno Card for in-need households in Los Angeles that will provide financial assistance through a

no-fee prepaid card provided by Mastercard in amounts ranging from \$700-\$1500 determined by need.

Applications were open from Tuesday, April 14 through Thursday, April 16 at 4:30 p.m.

Applicants weren't required to disclose immigration status for the money and in order to be eligible for assistance there were only three requirements: households must be in the city of Los Angeles, total household income fell below poverty level prior to COVID-19 and at least one household member has lost a job or experienced a reduction in income of at least 50%.

We are still under the stay at home order by governor Newsom until May 15. When the order is lifted, we will have to adjust to a "new normal" until it is safe for us to go back to our lives before the pandemic.

Unemployment benefits have been expanded 13 weeks by the federal government until De-

cember 2020.

This is how long people are expected to be unemployed until around the end of the year, depending on how people fight to flatten the curve.

In the wake of an unprecedented crisis, Americans should be able to rely on their government to protect them from financial disaster but the rocky distribution of stimulus checks and the states' inability to process the surge of unemployment claims only reinforces the fact that the United States is far from prepared to handle this recession.

We must continue to ask our elected officials such as our mayors, district representatives and the governor to push for more help from the federal government.

We are in a crisis and if the people in power aren't helping or acknowledging our needs, we must make them and be loud enough so they can't ignore us.

Coronavirus taking over voters' rights during primary elections

Daniel Suarez

Staff Writer

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The Wisconsin primary was an egregious display of voter suppression that victimized Americans forced out of the political process by COVID-19.

We have to trust absentee ballots not only by preserving the well-being of the public, but by protecting their voting rights, too.

The worsening outbreak of Coronavirus in the United States has resulted in more than 17 million Americans filing for unemployment and 20,000 COVID-19 deaths nationwide.

Total deaths in the U.S. also surpassed that of Italy, which held the highest death toll for weeks.

With many adhering to strict social distancing guidelines, businesses and political processes have been halted or postponed, including the primary elections in 16 states.

Wisconsin, however, was not allowed to postpone.

More than 1 million voters had requested an absentee bal-

lot due to Coronavirus concerns. When the requests overflowed the elections office, Wisconsinites realized that their ballot would not come until days after election day.

In Milwaukee, they consolidated the polling centers from 180 to just five.

The surge of mail-in requests caused a backup that resulted in some voters receiving their ballot days after the election day.

Gov. Tony Evers (D) tried to postpone the state's primary election via executive order on April 6 to prevent in-person voting and allow mail-in ballots up to April 13.

That is, until the Republican-controlled state legislature blocked his order which was then upheld by the Supreme Court in a 5-4 vote.

This means that Wisconsinites had to choose between protecting themselves from a fatal virus or risking it all for their civic duty.

With polling centers closing and as social distancing guidelines remain in place, voting via absentee ballot allows people to

cast their vote without risking their health, so why does the president criticize it?

According to President Trump, "Mail ballots are very dangerous for this country because of cheaters. They go collect them. They are fraudulent in many cases. They have to vote. They should have voter ID, by the way."

Here is a quick look at the facts surrounding absentee ballots:

Is there a problem with mail-in ballots and voter fraud?

Five states already vote entirely by mail: Colorado, Hawaii, Oregon, Utah and Washington along with active military overseas and Americans living in other countries.

Elderly citizens and disabled citizens may also vote via absentee ballot if they are unable to attend a polling center.

President Trump has made several unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud since the campaign trail and, after his election, Trump and his administration created the voting integrity commission which in 2018 reported

that they found no evidence of wide-spread voter fraud.

In spite of the findings of his now-disbanded agency, Trump continues to criticize absentee voting. "Mail in ballots substantially increases the risk of crime and VOTER FRAUD!" he tweeted.

New York Times national correspondent Michael Wines reports, "In an election in which more than 137.7 million Americans cast ballots, election and law enforcement officials in 26 states and the District of Columbia — Democratic-leaning, Republican-leaning and in-between — said that so far they knew of no credible allegations of fraudulent voting. Officials in another eight states said they knew of only one allegation."

In other words, credible instances of voter fraud are scarce. The most recent incident was in 2018 where North Carolina congressman Mark Harris [R] was charged with election fraud.

How will this affect the remaining primary elections?

Leading infectious disease expert Dr. Anthony S. Fauci an-

nounced that he hopes for a "real degree of normality" by November.

In the meantime, states will have to find ways to distribute the millions of mail-in ballot requests as polling centers continue to close and communities still advise residents to self quarantine.

Mail-in ballots usually have to be requested ahead of time by the voter. After it is filled out, the ballot is mailed back to the elections office where it is verified by matching the signature with the one on file. Some states allow voters to request mail ballots and then drop them off in person.

If voters receive their mail-in ballots after the election day, as was the case in Wisconsin, then more people will be forced to wait for hours at a crowded polling center just for their vote to count.

Absentee ballots are not a threat to our democracy, but voter suppression certainly is. At this unprecedented crisis, accommodations must be made to ensure that all citizens can vote and protect themselves too.

Quarantine Blues: The loss of spring training

"Quarantine Blues" is a column dedicated to sports stories and updates from various Falcon Athletes. Stories are published weekly on Saturdays.

Keanu Ruffo
Staff Writer
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Springtime is one of the most important times of the year for football players.

It's where we train to be bigger, faster and stronger inside the weight room and on the field; to show the coaches who is going to be "that guy" they can depend on once the season starts.

Losing this time is crucial and it is heartbreaking to see this period of time taken away from us.

It's time we'll never get back.

The weight room was always a home away from home for us football players. It pushed us to our limits and challenged us every day to be the best we can be.

"Since we've been told to quarantine in our houses, I've just been doing push-ups, ab workouts and pull-ups to stay in shape," Anthony Hernandez, defensive back for the Falcons, said.

Not being able to lift in the weight room anymore was devastating for all of us since we put so much precious time and effort into getting bigger and stronger for the upcoming season.

"I've been conditioning every day and weight training when I can, usually 2-3 times a week,"



JASMINE MARTINEZ/TM ARCHIVES

Game on: Cerritos College football team members watch the action from the sidelines. They wait for their opportunity to get back on the field Nov. 2, 2019.

Bailey Torres, Falcons wide receiver, said.

Cerritos College football's defensive coach, Tom Caines, once said, "it takes weeks and months to build up speed and strength, but just one week to lose it all."

There's so much truth behind this statement and it's become a reality for all athletes, not just football players during this time.

Once we go back to training and lifting weights it's going to be intense, as our schedule will be more compact and busier since

we will have to prepare quickly for the season which will come at us fast.

The temperament of the team will have to be at a high level as we can't afford to waste any time moving closer to September.

We'll have to be physically and mentally prepared in a timely manner.

As far as recruitment goes, it slows down the process for sophomores who have committed already and were scheduled to report after graduation.

For incoming freshmen who

are looking to attend Cerritos, it'll be harder for them to get to know the campus and how the system of the football team works.

As far as our education goes, we as players have to be more focused on our school work now more than ever.

Attending class from home doesn't mean we can slack around and start getting lazy.

Our coaches are expecting us to pass all of our classes regardless of what the circumstances are.

"Expectations for us will be simply going to practice and class,

as usual, nothing changes," Torres explained.

All of us are waiting anxiously to get back in the weight room and on the field.

Our goal for the season is to win conference and state but it's the small goals and small steps we have to conquer first in order to accomplish the big goals we have set in front of us.

Editor's note:

Keanu Ruffo is a Talon Marks staff writer and a corner back for the Falcons football team.

Staying fit while staying indoors during this pandemic

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Top My Workout, a Long Beach located gym which opened six months ago, has developed online workouts to keep members fit despite the stay-at-home order.

Through the use of the app TrainHeroic, owner Chad Seltzer said he and his assistant coaches have "banded together to create online programming that's in the home via the same app that we've been using for our athletes."

The gym has about 50 members and specializes in Olympic Weightlifting, as well as powerlifting and strength and conditioning.

They offer standard strength and conditioning training for those who wish to improve muscle mass and build endurance, the option typically taken by most members.

However, those who wish to compete in higher-level events will require a greater amount of training, and as such Top My Workout also offers Olympic lifting training for those up to the



CHAD SELTZER

Top My Workout: Bluey watches the gym diligently until athletes can return to the gym. The weightlifting facility is equipped with 5 platforms, 3 squat racks, and all the weights you need to make progress in your strength goals.

challenge.

Top My Workout's physical location closed when "the quarantine was basically pushed on us by a government mandate as of March 16 That was our last day being open."

With the shift to online

workouts, Seltzer and his associates have been able to make the most of what equipment their members have at home.

"We started to put together online programming for them based on whatever they had, kettlebells or they had dumbbells

or just bodyweight resistance bands, whatever equipment they had. And I made small suggestions like you could deadlift your couch or you can take a plant and hold it in front of you. And that's some added resistance right there," states Seltzer.

In order to maximize workouts and communicate with coaches, Top My Workout is making use of the App TrainHeroic.

Seltzer explained that "within the app, we can message them [members], we can check in with them, they can upload videos of themselves performing workouts, so we can do form checks to make sure that everything is sound, and they're not getting hurt overtime over the next, however many weeks or months that we're in this quarantine."

The app also allows members to set timers for workouts so they can follow along with a preset or customized number of sets and repetitions. Members can see examples of the exercises they will need to complete in a simple interface that makes working out as stress-free as possible.

Coach Mark Acosta, a specialist when it comes to Olympic Weight lifting, says "it is an app where we can push programming out to our athletes. For example, if someone wants to join up with the coaches would be able to talk to you and see where

you are and to see if you have any type of equipment at home, and work with you accordingly."

With an online environment comes challenges, as many gyms have seen a notable lack of motivation in their members and their drive to exercise.

Coach Tommy Staup specializes in weightlifting and power lighting and said, "I know a couple of our members have definitely had a harder time than others when it comes to staying motivated."

Top My Workout has countered this problem through one-on-one checkups, as opposed to posting workout plans and leaving members on their own to follow them.

Acosta says, "When you're working out with a coach there, not only is there a plan in place for workouts and what days to do them, but you also have a real person there that is going to be checking up on you."

This personal approach has led to the gym's success and growth, as numerous members have joined the online services even in this time of quarantine.

If anyone is interested in trying out this one-on-one approach to weight training or even Olympic Weight Lifting, they can find more information on the gym's Facebook page.

NFL Draft night one, dreams become reality



This year's NFL Draft is the most unique of them all. For the first, and hopefully the last, time ever the draft was virtually online where commissioner Roger Goodell announced the young athletes' name from the comfort of his home.

A night where we saw tears, families and robes only means one thing: the NFL draft is upon us.

We saw the homes of the soon-to-be NFL stars and homes of head coaches and general managers during the draft.

The commissioner had a set-up of two big television screens with one screen showing the current team's logo and the other screen showing NFL fans of that team live streaming the commissioner as he announced their draft pick.

The draft started off with Jennifer Hudson singing "Lean on Me" inside of her recording studio.

The song was dedicated to people around the world to encourage them to lean on each other through this pandemic.

Hudson was not the only performer of the night. A New Orleans Saints fan Harry Connick Jr. sang the United States national anthem.

The first pick of the night left no one surprised as the Cincinnati Bengals selected Joe Burrow from LSU.

The young quarterback returns to his home state of Ohio where he was raised in Athens.

One player whose selection was a little bit higher than expected was the quarterback from the University of Alabama,



ROBTRELL SCOTT/TM

Virtual Draft: Tua Tagovailoa getting the call of his dreams from head coach Brian Flores of the Miami Dolphins telling him he is moving to south beach. The NFL draft starts off April 23, 2020 and is held virtually because of COVID-19.

Tua Tagovailoa.

Some predicted he would be the sixth pick which would send him to the Chargers but the Miami Dolphins beat them to the punch, taking him as the fifth pick in the draft.

The Los Angeles Chargers had a backup plan and they picked Justin Herbert, the Rose Bowl winning quarterback from the University of Oregon.

The Chargers have a lot of faith in Herbert, as he threw 3,471 yards and scored 32 touchdowns last season for the Oregon Ducks.

A very big pick in the draft came at the eleventh pick for the New York Jets when they selected Louisville offensive lineman Mekhi Becton who is 6'7" tall and weighs 364 pounds.

This pick was smart for New

York because Becton can help the Jets protect the quarterback Sam Darnold in during their plays.

One of Becton's greatest skills is that he ran the 40-yard dash with a finishing time of 5.1 seconds making him the fastest three hundred pounder to run it.

One draft pick that shook the entire football world was when the Green Bay Packers selected Utah State quarterback Jordan Love.

This selection raised a lot of eyebrows because the Packers already have an elite quarterback who won them a championship and won an MVP award, NFL player Aaron Rodgers who is now 36 years old.

To all Packers fans and Rodgers himself, this may seem like deja vu to them because in 2005 the

Packer had a championship-winning MVP named Brett Favre who was 36, and Rodgers was the same age as Love is right now when the Packers drafted him.

A few years later Favre got injured and he never played for the Packers again and Rodgers took over the starter position ever since.

Henry Ruggs III a young wide receiver from the University of Alabama is the first person ever to be drafted by the new Las Vegas Raiders.

The Alabama receiver ran an outstanding 4.27 in the 40-yard dash at the NFL combine.

Ruggs was relaxing at his home with his family wearing an all-white robe with a red old spice logo on his chest as his name was called by the commissioner.

The Raiders head coach Jon Gruden and general manager Mike Mayock are looking for speed and hoping it leads to a future championship for the Las Vegas Raiders.

One team that disappointed their fans was the New Orleans Saints when they selected a center from the University of Michigan of all places, the player being Cesar Ruiz.

Saints fans had mixed reactions with the selection because the Saints drafted a center last year. Some were disappointed, excited and confused with the pick.

However, coach Sean Payton announced that he plans to use Ruiz as a lineman instead of a center to add youthful strength to protect Drew Brees from other defenses.

Off The Field: Excitement grows for young athletes in NFL Draft



Sports Opinion

This year's NFL draft is very unique because the draft will be done virtually.

Normally the draft is held in a big city and the NFL commissioner Roger Goodell calls a young player's name and that player walks up on the stage to shake Mr. Goodell's hand.

This year, the media attention is there but the big city, grand stage and act of meeting the

commissioner in-person is not a possibility for these athletes.

The draft is like graduation for athletes, walking on stage and getting that diploma from the principal. The player gets a hat and jersey of the team that selected them with their last name on the back.

The 2020 NFL draft is a very big event and will be aired on ESPN starting April 23 and ending on April 25.

In today's world, we are seeing a lot of people losing their jobs due to the Coronavirus pandemic but on April 23 you will see young athletes getting called on by the top NFL teams and get the opportunity to chase their



JASEN VINLOVE/USA TODAY

Alabama Crimson Tide quarterback Tua Tagovailoa threw a touchdown pass to wide receiver Jerry Jeudy on this play.

dreams.

For those who do not know about the NFL draft, it is a yearly event where teams from the league will select young college athletes from across the nation

and draft them to play on their team and become a professional football player.

A name to have an ear out for during the draft is Louisiana State University (LSU) quarterback Joe

Burrow who is rumored to be the number one draft pick.

This means he will play for the Cincinnati Bengals which had the worst record last season, only winning two games and losing...
[Read more at Talonmarks.com](#)

Diamonds in the rough shine in the second round



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This is literally a different draft from the regular ones in the past years.

But while the teams, the organizations, as well as the players being in the comfort of their home is definitely a different feeling.

That being said, teams are not being “comfortable” and are determined to “win” the draft and get the best players to make their team the next championship winner.

With having the top pick in the second round, the Cincinnati Bengals are receiving “lots” of phone calls but according to ESPN, they are not listening.

This will be a highlight of the first six picks from the second round of the NFL virtual draft.

With that being said, let the draft begin with the Bengals on the clock.

The Cincinnati Bengals chose to go with Joe Burrow for the first pick of the draft. This comes as no surprise seeing as Burrow won the past season Heisman trophy and was predicted to be the first pick of the 2020 draft.

The Bengals decided to go



LUIS SINCO/LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

USC wide receiver Michael Pittman Jr. (6) makes a reception against Oregon at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on November 2, 2019.

choose a defensive player, Wide Receiver Tee Higgins in the second round of the NFL draft.

The Indianapolis Colts choose to pick Michael Pittman Jr. out of USC, with the overall 34th pick.

Pittman Jr. comes from a strong football bloodline given that his father is Michael Pittman

won a Super Bowl while playing with Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2003.

Make no mistake about Jr, who averaged 14.7 yards per carry totaling 2519 yards and 171 receptions in his four years playing with USC.

The Detroit Lions choose to

keep up with the ongoing trend of picking offensive players as they choose D’Andre Swift with the 35th overall pick.

Thanks to him rushing to more 1,200 yards in each of the last two seasons he played for the Georgia Bulldogs, he is ready to be part of the punch alongside

Kerryon Johnson and to get yards for quarterback Matthew Stafford.

Going with their first defensive pick the Giants choose the Linebacker Xavier McKinney with the 36th overall pick, out of the University of Alabama.

He is expected to be an immediate starter and roam the deeper field for the ball.

The New England Patriots choose Kyle Dugger, from the second-division school of Lenoir-Rhyne University in Hickory North Carolina with the 37th pick.

With the Patriots being already stacked at the safety, there will be fierce competition waiting.

The Carolina Panthers choose the defensive lineman Yetur Gross-Matos, out of Pennsylvania State.

He is a former four-star athlete who lost his father when taking a family trip to the Chesapeake Bay when the family was riding in a boat, at just over two years of age.

Not only that but at the age of 10, he was alongside his brother Kalau after a little league baseball game when Kalau was struck by lightning and died immediately.

The first round was quarterback-heavy but the second round of the draft was more like an equal dusting of each position.

Spike of defensive picks in the third round of the draft



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To kick off the third round of the 2020 NFL draft, the Cincinnati Bengals have selected inside linebacker Logan Wilson of Wyoming. Wilson, a three-

time team captain, will join North Carolina State linebacker Germaine Pratt, next season.

Wilson’s speed and athleticism enable him to make open-field tackles against better runners and effectively read quarterbacks in the pocket.

In 2019, he demonstrated his ability to consistently stuff the run in the backfield adding testament to his knowledge of the game and the offenses he faces.

This was Cincinnati’s first defensive pick in the 2020 virtual draft, after picking LSU quarterback prospect Joe Burrow, followed by 6’4” WR Tee Higgins who averaged 18 yards per carry while at Clemson.

Picking second was the Washington Redskins, who decided on Antonio Gibson, the 6’2” WR from Memphis University. While Gibson only had 44 receptions in his two years

at Memphis, he could still pose a versatile addition to any team being the running back and slot receiver hybrid we saw last year.

When Gibson got the call from Washington Redskins spokesperson Larry Mitchell, he excitedly stated, “I’ve been waiting for this my whole life.” He was only the second player selected by the Redskins after exchanging their 2nd round pick with the Indianapolis Colts.

In that conversation, Gibson also revealed that he’s originally from Washington DC and will be joining his mother and sister at home. “Wherever (Redskins) decide to put me, I’m gonna dominate,” he said.

Detroit was also looking to strengthen their defense with outside linebacker Julian Okwara from Notre Dame. The Lions are seemingly attracted by Okwara’s potential as an edge rusher and DE, having earned 23 tackles for loss, 15 sacks and 35 quarterback hurries, making him a great selection for the 67th overall pick.

The Detroit Lions also drafted Okwara’s brother, Romeo, in the previous 2018 NFL draft.

A video posted on Roc Nation Sports’ Twitter shows Julian talking to the Lions organization as he’s drafted. After he puts the phone down, Julian turns to his brother behind the camera and says “We bout to be roommates bro!”

There was definitely a spike of defensive picks in the 3rd round, several of which were

linebackers such as Zack Baun from Wisconsin, who was picked up by the New Orleans Saints and Alabama linebacker Terrell Lewis drafted by the Los Angeles Rams.

The Raiders, who did not pick in the second round, drafted three wide receivers in a row after using their double pick in the 3rd round on Lynn Bowden Jr. from Kentucky and Bryan Edwards from South Carolina.

Las Vegas’ strategy must be to increase Carr’s arsenal downfield, but their defense was ranked 24th in the 2019 season by Pro-Football Reference. Having gone 7-9 last season, the Raiders could have used one of the 3rd round pick on solid defensive players like Neville Gilmore from Oklahoma or Anerfree Jennings from Alabama.

They will still have plenty of picks for defensive reinforcement, but another WR pick is unlikely for Las Vegas.

One of the noteworthy offensive picks was the Tampa Bay Buccaneers drafting Clemson RB Ke’Shawn Vaughn, yet another potential weapon in the new Buc offense led by Tom Brady and Rob Gronkowski.

What sports commentators are interested in is how Vaughn fits with Brady’s offensive dynamic. His strengths are primarily his catch and run and pass block, but some commentators including CBS sports NFL insider Jonathan Jones feel that this third-round pick came as a surprise.



JASON BEEDE/ORLANDO SENTINEL/TNS

Detroit Lions wide receiver Kenny Golladay makes a catch past Baltimore Ravens safety Marlon Humphrey during the first quarter of the NFL Pro Bowl at Camping World Stadium on Sunday, Jan. 26, 2020.

Quarantine Blues: Switching gears from swimming to water polo

"Quarantine Blues" is a column dedicated to sports stories and updates from various Falcon Athletes. Stories are published weekly on Saturdays.

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"I don't think it hurts my recruitment chances but it has helped my recruitment of [high school] teammates," said Karina Oliveros when asked if the short swimming season has hurt personal recruitment chances.

Mia Carbajal said, "I don't think it hurts my recruitment chances but it has helped me recruit members of my club members who I went to high school with, about five girls are coming."

Carbajal and Oliveros are both freshmen on both the water polo and swim teams.

They both say that their thinking has already shifted to "water polo mode."

However, when it came to sophomore Marisela Olivas, she said that she felt the sudden end of the season hurt the chances of recruitment.

Coach Sergio Macias echoes the thought, "We are just thinking and trying to figure out about the summer, how to have any contact with our athletes."

Carbajal said, "Our coach is making us turn in videos of us working out and putting it in a google drive."

To keep up with their physical condition, athletes are encouraged



COURTESY OF MIA CARBAJAL

Practicing Drills: Mia Carbajal creates a sets up to practice shooting drills in her backyard to practice water polo at home. Athletes need to find creative ways to practice skills during quarantine.

to do as much working out as they can to be ready to go once students are allowed back on campus.

"Our coach is making us stay in shape by working out," Oliveros said.

"I found these [YouTube] videos to workout to so I've been doing those too," said Olivas.

These girls can't practice their sport in any similar capacity as some of the other sports may be able to. For example, a basketball player may have a hoop at home to practice with but swimmers or water polo players may not have

access to a pool.

Many of these aquatic sports athletes don't have personal access to a pool and with the stay at home order gyms with pools and public swim, stadiums are closed.

"This has been the longest time I have ever seen out of the pool, I've been in the past since I was really little," Carbajal said. "I miss the pool."

"I don't have a pool either! I miss being in the water!" Oliveros added.

These women also play water



COURTESY OF KARINA OLIVEROS

Working Out: Karina Oliveros works out at home to stay in shape for the upcoming water polo season. The coach Sergio Macias makes the athletes submit workout videos to prove they are keeping up with their physical conditioning.

polo at Cerritos College.

With swim ending abruptly, they are switching gears to water polo.

"Even during swim season my mind was on water polo," Carbajal said.

"I was pretty upset about it though because me and Karina were both in the relays together but my mind is always on water polo. I am pretty excited."

Oliveros agreed, "Yeah, even during swim I would be with Mia planning for next season, like oh we're going to do this and that,

so we were just doing swim to be conditioned, I'm excited too."

Carbajal said, "I have no doubt that we're going to do big things," in regards to their upcoming water polo season.

"I honestly see us reaching finals," she added.

Olivas will transfer to Cal State Long Beach.

However, she doesn't think she will continue playing competitively because they are a division one school and it would be too much of a time commitment.

Off The Field: Major League Baseball should stop dragging its heels

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Sports Opinion

With baseball in Korea getting underway perhaps Major League Baseball can take notes from how they are doing soul in a safe manner and moving forward.

They go on on a team bus from city to city and are playing to empty stadiums.

As the New York Post reports, "players are now funneled through a singular entrance at which an infrared body scanner checks their body heat and a team trainer also takes their temperature."

Hank Conger, who was drafted by and played for the Los Angeles Angels Of Anaheim, Houston Astros and the Tampa Bay Rays currently plays for the Lottre Giants.

Conger and his wife were on vacation in Australia when the virus struck Korea so they decided that it would be where they parted ways for now in mid-March as he headed for Korea and she headed back home in Orange County, Ca. Casey Kelly, a former big-



DIRK SHADD/TAMPA BAY TIMES

Tampa Bay Rays first baseman Ji-Man Choi is going back to South Korea until the coronavirus pandemic in the United States subsides.

league prospect in the Boston Red Sox minor-league system who ended up getting traded in alongside Anthony Rizzuto the San Diego Padres for Adrian González back in 2010.

Kelly is married and has a daughter. His family is all hopeful for a reunion in the near future.

Beyond eating separately the team is mostly together.

Outside of the requirement of having their temperature taken as they enter the first facility and having to wear an N 95 facemask, it is not ideal their lives are very typical.

The KBO teams at the furthest are a 200-mile drive apart from each other.

Under the MLB "Arizona plan" Mouse stadiums are only 60 to 90

minutes apart.

This is a more than doable plan for starting the season, for having a 2020 season.

Perhaps MLB should take note of what is working in Korea to get teams back on the field and propose it to the players union and get things as close to "normal" as possible.

Conger and Kelly are

separated by an ocean from family members. So perhaps it's time for players in the US to take note and "sacrifice" them being apart from family for a few months.

That is definitely better than watching the games when the re-running of old games or the airing of sports-like activities.

In an article from the Post, "Conger said that when the balls start to fly, it is easy to get lost in the sport — he called it 'bliss'."

Pretty sure he's not the only person in the league who feels that way. So many MLB players will feel the same.

Perhaps Major League Baseball can take a page out of what's working for teams in Korea in order to play their teams back on the field.

If the sport wants to maintain it's relevancy it is in their best interest to be one of the first live sports to be "back in business".

Even if one is not a baseball fan, it's certainly better than watching only re-airings of games one already knows how the game ends.

It sure beats watching players playing virtual versions of themselves.