

Kelly McCarty, January 8, 2021. Kelly is an accountant with Slaton and Co., of Ashland.

*1. When did you first hear about the Coronavirus?*

I heard about Coronavirus last year, probably sometime in December, in the news. It was still just in China at the time.

*2. What was your reaction then?*

I didn't think much of it. There have been several outbreaks in the world that have never made a big impact on the US (Ebola, zika, etc.), so I assumed this would be the same. Then when cases did start showing up in the US in January, it was just easier and less anxiety-inducing to think that we're remote enough it wouldn't really affect us. I knew it could, but it was easier not to really think about it.

*3. Who all lives in the home? and what challenges or changes had to take place specific to who lives in the home?*

Travis, me, and our two children live in our home. The biggest changes we had to make was homeschooling Asher while working full time. Travis also travels for work, so he had to stay on top of where he could or couldn't travel. For example, for a while it was hard to travel to Colorado. Luckily, he is considered essential, being a veterinarian and directly impacting food supply at feedyards, so he could still travel. However, he did have some yards cancel his visit due to worries about outbreaks.

*4. When did the virus first become "real" to you? Or, when did it first affect your life?*

It first affected my life over spring break when they canceled school for the rest of the year. Then it was really weird when they extended tax season. I know I've only been a tax accountant for about ten years, but I've never heard of them doing that before. I hated it. It made the season drag on forever.

It first became "real" when my own extended family contracted it in October/November. My grandfather was getting ready to have aortic valve replacement and tested positive. He is 89 years old with many health issues. It was touch and go for a while, but miraculously he made it. Then shortly after, Travis contracted it. We were in quarantine for what felt like forever. Travis had a fairly mild case, but a coworker who is the same age as him with no major medical issues was hospitalized for about a week. At one point he instructed Travis on what to do if something happened to him. I think the reality of that hit like a ton of bricks.

Also, the first time I heard the term, "social distancing," I thought it was a joke. I was in a meeting and it took me the whole time to figure out what it meant and that they were serious. I thought it was such a bizarre term at first.

*5. What things changed right away? How did you feel when the schools closed?*

We had to make changes so we could get Asher's schooling done, and make sure there was room for him in daycare full time. I was really upset when I heard they were closing school. It was so weird and unprecedented. The day they announced it, it was cloudy out and it made it even more eerie and heavy feeling. My first reaction (probably not the most rational reaction) was how sad I was that he wouldn't get to celebrate his birthday at school, or have the last day of school, all the things I remember as a kid. I know it wasn't like he was a senior in high school, but I felt like that preschool year was the last of his

baby years before he really got into the full swing of school, and I wasn't ready for it to be over so suddenly.

6. *What things changed so slowly you weren't aware of it at the time?*

I'm sure I'll think of something after I submit this, but right now I can't think of anything that changed so slowly I wasn't aware. I feel like everything has been so unusual that the change was felt pretty abruptly. Not many changes flew under the radar.

7. *What is your job/business situation right now?*

We are still working in the office like normal. We have our doors locked and ask people to either have us meet them outside or wear a mask in. We did this earlier on in the year, then relaxed in the summer. When cases started to really pick up in the area, we became more strict again.

8. *When do you think life will get back to normal and why at that time?*

Hopefully within this next year. With so many people being exposed and hopefully developing some degree of immunity, or people getting the shots, I hope the virus will run its natural course and mutate to not be as severe. I honestly think it will become like the flu and will be something we have to deal with from here on out, but I think (hope) the pandemic status will end within the year.

9. *What things do you think will temporarily change in a "new normal" and what things do you think will change long term in the "new normal"?*

This is a pretty cynical view, but as time distances us from the pandemic, I really think the things we say we will do differently now because of the pandemic will slip away and be forgotten. At first, we'll be skittish about any new threat or scare, but then we will start to relax. For example, people may say they plan to stay home when they don't feel well more so than they did before, but people will get busy and think they should be exempt from that because you know...they're busy and have to get work done. However, I do think there will probably be more options and leniency to work from home going forward.

10. *What is your reaction now?*

I have definitely taken the virus more seriously since it has affected us directly. My family has not kept completely isolated, but we have tried to be safe. We felt the need to find a balance between staying safe and living our lives. I am also very interested to follow research on the virus. I look forward to looking back at some point and see what all they've learned and make sense of things that really didn't make sense at first.