

## COVID Gina Palmberg

*Telephone interview with Gina Palmberg.*

*Cara:* The news, what was your reaction at the time?

*Gina:* I wasn't real worried about it at first. I just figured it was kind of like a serious strain of flu, I guess. I wasn't worried.

*Cara:* Who all lives in your home that might be affected by the virus as well?

*Gina:* All of us.

*Cara:* Who is all of us?

*Gina:* Well, it's Aaron, Baby, Tony, Rich, Dwayne, me, Alex.

*Cara:* What are the ages of these people?

*Gina:* Erin is 23, Phoenix is two, Tony is 16, Rich is 51, Dwayne and I are 47, and Alex is 25, right?

*Cara:* OK, when coronavirus first started to hit the news, did you make any changes in your home because of it?

*Gina:* No.

*Cara:* When did the virus become real to you or when did it start to really affect your life?

*Gina:* When it started coming closer to Ashland and when Erin was first tested.

*Cara:* Did she test positive the first time?

*Gina:* No, but she was sick and everybody got sick after.

*Cara:* So how many people in your family became ill?

*Gina:* Six out of seven.

*Cara:* Wow. Can you tell us a little bit about that? How long were you ill?

*Gina:* Oh, geez. It was like two or three weeks that we were all sick. And we had a cough that lasted for months afterwards, just a lingering cough. I personally felt absolutely horrible. No energy, I just did not feel good. I would get the chills, it was just all-in-all awful.

*Cara:* Do you know the date of your initial illness?

*Gina:* It would have been sometime in October. Well, I don't remember when Erin started working out at the plant. It's been a couple of months ago. So probably maybe August, September somewhere in there.

*Cara:* OK. Didn't Aaron become ill just a week or two after starting work?

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*Gina:* Yeah. They sent her home and told her to get tested. She came home, got tested, couldn't go back to work. And then they told her she can't come back until she was done coughing and just, you know, felt better. They sent her home several times because they didn't want her there because she was still coughing. And she even got a doctor's note saying that it was OK for her to go to work. The doctor had given her an antibiotic and a steroid shot and she could return to work. She had to go in and get her temp tested and she coughed, so they sent her home again.

*Gina:* And that's when she tested the second time and that one was positive. That was the first day of school that we found out she was positive. That was in August, I guess, when she started out at the plant.

*Cara:* So this has had a major impact on you, your family, and finances, to be honest.

*Gina:* Yeah. Dwayne had to take the first, initial shut-down. We didn't have any income. And then again, when Erin was positive, he had to take that time off as well. And when I told him that the kids were getting sick this last week and that he might not want to come home, he came home briefly. He wore his mask, put some money in the bank, dropped some stuff off that he had bought, gave me a kiss, and turned around and walked back out the door.

*Cara:* So how long did he have to quarantine from his own family?

*Gina:* He's still not coming home. He was going to come home tomorrow. But with Tony being in quarantine until he gets the results, I don't know if he'll come home. He can't get sick. We can't afford him to get sick.

*Cara:* Tony is the seventh person to become ill then?

*Gina:* Actually, Tony's been tested twice, so this time we don't know, obviously, but the first time it was negative.

*Cara:* We hear that so many people are tested false positive, and then you hear so many that tested negative and they come up sick anyway. So how do you feel about the testing process?

*Gina:* You know, I'm not real sure. It's like when Erin was sick, she tested negative, but she was still sick, real sick, and got the rest of us sick. And then when she tested again two weeks later, she came up positive but she had absolutely no symptoms.

*Cara:* Wow.

*Gina:* Yes, I don't understand. I don't know how accurate is. I'm sure they have lots of false positives out there, and I think that's what Erin's was, because there was absolutely nothing wrong with her at that point. But she also had to go through quarantine, even though nobody in the house was sick. And I don't know if it's completely accurate or not.

*Cara:* So the job situation right now is that your husband is staying away from home. Is Erin able to go back to work, or is she quarantined?

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*Gina:* She talked to her boss today and she said she didn't want her there until we got Tony's results back.

*Cara:* So can you tell me how the PPP Loans are working for you? Are you able to receive pay while you're being quarantined?

*Gina:* Erin did when she was at National, she got that, but of course, Dwayne doesn't get anything because he's self-employed.

*Cara:* Right. I'm sorry. This is something a lot of people are worrying about, what do we do if we get quarantined and lose income?

*Gina:* Yeah, it's hard. You try to get all the help you can find, but it's hard because you can't go anywhere and even if you have somebody in your family, but they're not sick, but they have a problem. It's like my niece. She comes over at lunch every day and the health nurse said, "Yeah, you can go ahead and go over there and get Dwayne's card, go get their groceries, take them back, drop them off at the porch and not go in the house. That's fine." But her boss wouldn't let her.

*Cara:* Understandably, if the boss is trying to be careful. Everyone's running scared.

*Gina:* It is, and that's the thing, I guess people need to look at it as, what if you're quarantined in your home and you need somebody to bring you something. Without coming into your house, they drop it off and then they leave, then you go out and get it.

*Cara:* That should be safe.

*Gina:* You would think, but her boss was absolutely adamant, "No, you can't do that." And I'm like, what are we going to do? How are we going to get our stuff? Of course, at that point, there's nothing I can do or say because I didn't want to get her in trouble with her boss. So it's hard. Even people in the family, when they first found out she was being tested, they acted stupid. So I was not happy with those two people that acted that way.

*Cara:* You think people are acting fearful?

*Gina:* No, they're just being stupid about the whole thing, getting mad and just making her feel bad. And I'm like, I guarantee you, she's not even got what you think she's got. She's going to test negative and you've made her feel bad. It's not her fault this happened. It was not a good deal.

*Cara:* Do you see that happening to other people who become ill? That they get blamed?

*Gina:* When she tested positive the second time around? Oh, yeah, a lot of people got angry at her personally because she tested positive. And so therefore, they were mad because, "Well, now my family's going to get it because we were around you." So they got angry and I'm like, she didn't know.

*Cara:* So you feel like there's people blaming the persons who are ill?

*Gina:* How can you blame somebody for getting something like this when they took all the

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precautions to not get it? And not now, when they need help. And to not make them feel bad because it's bad enough as it is, and then you have to go through quarantine and you can't go anywhere! It's hard.

*Cara:* When do you see this getting better? What do you think has to happen before this will improve?

*Gina:* I think it did help when they shut everything down. It was just hitting Dodge City when they opened everything back up pretty much, and that's when Dodge City exploded. Because, oh, yeah, go about your life normally, and then that's when everybody starts getting it because they didn't have to follow any guidelines, really.

*Cara:* Do you think we will be shut down again?

*Gina:* I think so, it probably will happen, yeah, because the number of cases is rising again. So, yeah, I'm thinking that's probably what's going to happen again. I'm just waiting for them to shut the school down again.

*Cara:* For real?

*Gina:* Yeah, I'm sure it's going to happen with all these kids coming up, being quarantined and being sick. Even the teachers out there are getting sick and getting quarantined.

*Cara:* Is this our new normal? Is this the way our lives are going to be from now on, is this normal now?

*Gina:* Yeah, hopefully not. But until... whether it's a vaccine or something can be done about it, I think it's going to be. Unfortunately.

*Cara:* So is the vaccine what you think will change all this?

*Gina:* Maybe it'll help, but, you know, everybody's also got to follow all the guidelines.

*Gina:* It doesn't help when, "Oh look, there's a party. Let's go party." Even though we know we're not supposed to be with a big group of people.

*Cara:* Do you see people following those guidelines?

*Gina:* No, I don't. When some of these kids are quarantined and they're still out running around town. Yeah, even the adults are still out running around when they're quarantined, and what good does that do? Yeah, Tony is quarantined and I went to the pharmacy and the grocery store. He sat in the car and I had my mask on. He didn't get out of my car, he sat there and said, "I can't go in?" I'm like, "No, you can't."

So he didn't get out, and he's not able to go anywhere because of this. He doesn't like it, but he also understands that he has to stay home.

*Cara:* OK, think 20 years down the road, what would you tell that those future people about what you experienced with covid, what would you want people to know about this?

*Gina:* Know that it was a really hard time in my life. And I would hope that people learn from

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it, how to maybe be a little more compassionate towards somebody and follow the rules that are set out there, if they have something like that ever happens again. You know, follow the guidelines and don't complain about it, if you know you have to do it. You're not only protecting yourself, but everybody else around you.

*Cara:* OK, I think you summed it up pretty well. Gina, thank you for talking with me. You have really been through the wringer. I am sorry.

*Gina:* I know it's hard. You know, if we get bored, we go out at night and drive around town. How do we do cabin fever when we're quarantined? We go ride around in the car at night.