**The “New Normal”**

A personal essay by Amir Delgado Grade 6 (Oakview Preparatory School)

March of 2020 is when I first learned about COVID-19. The news reporters said that Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19 is a virus that causes a respiratory illness that can result in death. Everyday my mom and I would watch the news and it seemed like COVID-19 is all they would talk about. Governor Cuomo closed down the schools and non-essential businesses, such as hair salons, nail salons and clothing stores. All essential businesses such as hospitals, supermarkets and pharmacies remained opened. The Governor urged people to stay home. Both my parents were essential workers so they continued to work during the height of the pandemic. My mother supports people with disabilities for a living and she was worried about going to work because she didn’t want to contract COVID-19. I was sad that I could no longer go to school, karate, or basketball practice. I was sad because I wouldn’t get to see my friends in school and play with them. We began to do online school and I got to see my friends and teachers there. It was kind of weird at first, but I got used to it. I have a 4-year-old brother named Aiden who has a learning disability. Aiden was sad and didn’t understand why he couldn’t go to school or go on his school bus anymore. Every day was a struggle because Aiden would cry because he wanted to go to school.

My mom had a talk with me and she said that it was going to be a tough time being on lockdown everyday but it was going to be a great chance for us to spend quality family time together. Every night after I finished my homework, we would have family movie night. My mom would make special treats for movie night like funnel cakes, cookies, and rice krispie treats. Somebody at my mom’s job was sick while she was supporting them and she later found out that they tested positive for COVID-19. My mom started feeling sick soon after. She had to go to the doctors because she was having trouble breathing, so she had to get tested for COVID-19. After about week, she found out that she too had tested positive for COVID-19. I remember hearing her cry to my dad because she was afraid that she would get my little brother and I sick. She was especially worried about me because I suffer from asthma. My mom had to stay in her room for days as she tried to recover. My dad took some days off of work to take care of her. My mom was out of work for a month. It was really scary because one of the people that my mom supports at work had died of COVID-19 while she was home recovering. She was really sad. By the grace of God, my dad, Aiden, and I didn’t get sick or having any symptoms of COVID-19.

After a month, we were finally able to go out and get some fresh air. We went to my grandparent’s house to visit them. Then I realized the reality of our “new normal”, we all had to wear masks in order to go outside. When we went outside, mostly everyone we saw had masks on as well. When we got to my grandparents’ house we had to stay outside and we had to social distance. We couldn’t hug or kiss them, which was really weird. My mother carried around hand sanitizer and we had to disinfect our hands every time we touched something. We mostly communicated with our family by phone calls or facetime. For the next couple of months, the COVID-19 numbers decreased enough for the economy to open back up. My summers usually consist of fun things such as amusement parks, playgrounds, family cookouts and family vacations but because of COVID-19, my mom cancelled all of these things. Things seemed to be getting back to some normalcy. Governor Cuomo’s daily briefings about COVID-19 began to decrease as well.

By the time September came schools were able to open back up. My parents decided that because of my Asthma it was best that I continue virtual school. My parents made a decision for my brother to go back to school 2x a week so that he could get his therapy. That didn’t last long, the COVID-19 numbers began to spike again. My parents pulled Aiden out of school again. The daily briefings by Governor Cuomo were back. It seems like thing were going back to the way things were when the pandemic first began. I had a dream that my family had COVID-19 and died. When I woke up, I started to cry and didn’t tell my dad about it. When my mom came home from work, she noticed that something was wrong. I eventually told her about my dream. My mom told me that it is normal to feel sad and afraid, she said that in life good things happen and unfortunately bad things happen as well. She told me about all of ways we were blessed even during the pandemic like the fact that her and my dad still had jobs, which many people lost. My family was healthy, despite my mother having COVID-19, she was healing and was doing well. Many people died from COVID-19. She told me that some people look at the glass as half full and some people look at it as half empty, and that I needed to be one of those people that looks for the bright side even in a world full of darkness. She said that your perspective of your situation will determine how you come out of it. I am using this pandemic and our “new normal” as a chance to look at the glass half full, in fact if I had to look at my glass, it is actually overflowing with blessings!