

## **Pen Pals – ages 13 and Under**

### **First place, *The Longest, Fastest Year of my Life*, By Evan Rosen, age 13**

Many lives have changed forever inside our community, nation, and the world over the past several months. At the start of the pandemic, I honestly didn't think the situation would be too bad, but I learned very quickly that I was mistaken. As a middle schooler, the first major impact on my regular life was virtual school. It wasn't the best experience, as I didn't enjoy learning from a distance and my education was limited. After a week or two in quarantine, I learned that many people in our community lost their jobs while others were becoming ill and suffering other unfortunate hardships.

As in most communities, we have elderly people who are very sweet, but vulnerable and isolated. The mere thought of them getting a virus and becoming sick turns my stomach and I could not bear to lose anyone, especially those close to me. Our elders have given so much to our community and I hope for them to stay strong, and know they have an extended community here to support them.

Prior to the pandemic, I personally enjoyed spending time at my friends' house to play football every day, however we quickly became restricted from doing so. I'm aware that this wasn't the worst of things, but it was still upsetting considering it was fun. Isn't that what being a kid is all about?

Of course, there are silver linings to everything. Even though I couldn't be with my school and social community, I was privileged to spend a lot of great time with my family. We played many games, watched movies, and enjoyed spending quality time with each other. All our meals were homemade, our house was clean, electronics were charged, and activities were a blast. My family also supported me in a volunteer activity that I identified to help provide meals to members of our community in need.

A good thing about quarantine is that I was able to socialize virtually with my community of friends who live near and far. While I played more video games than usual, it was always an interactive game with a school friend down the street or a camp friend several states away. I spent a lot of time with people who I don't interact with frequently and I can confidently say that some of my relationships have expanded due to the pandemic.

Another positive outcome is that I was able to workout more and get into better physical shape. I used my free time lifting weights, riding the Peloton, and biking - a lot! My father, sister, and I took long bike rides throughout our community at least once a week for about eight miles at a time. This was not exclusive to me, as I heard about other friends who were working out and staying healthy during quarantine.

Now that we're allowed to leave our home with restrictions, our community looks very different. Whenever I leave home (socially distanced, of course), I see masks everywhere. It's troubling to realize that our world and community requires us to be isolated and apart in order to stay safe. However, I've learned that the definition of community extends beyond physical space and now includes meaningful interactions in a virtual world. The 'novel coronavirus' forced us to conceive novel ways to engage as a community, and for that we should be thankful.

I am happier now because I can go outside and do some activities without being isolated at home. In order to reduce our Covid stress, my neighborhood friends and I are able to safely play kickball and

home run derby as well as touchless football. Other nights we ride bikes around the courts or simply talk in person. Of course, I still spend much time with my family.

As 2020 continues, this has been the longest, but fastest year of my life. There have been a lot of happy and sad moments during the ongoing pandemic. Unfortunately, some people became ill and passed in our community, and we pray for these lost souls. We still have to wear masks, remain six feet apart, and limit interactions with family and friends. Despite these challenges, I am able to spend more time engaging with family, work out more frequently, volunteer to support others, and work toward long-term goals. I have also enjoyed communicating with more friends throughout the quarantine and hope that these relationships will grow over time. My sense of what it means to be a part of a strong community has been redefined and bolstered during the pandemic. In conclusion, this journey has been a roller coaster of emotion for me and our community and I am confident that we will soon be back together and stronger than ever.

### **Second place, *Community Strength*, By Ariella Katcoff, age 11**

These times alone have been the nightmares of my life but have also made me realize just how important communities are and can be. My communities go from my family, to my friends at school and shul, to my neighbors, and to my teachers. A couple weeks ago, my mom and I were sitting down and discussing our summer plans, trying to fill the time we would have normally spent at our neighborhood pool, when suddenly it hit me. This summer was going to be very lonely and sad with no friends and family. No barbecues at the pool, no playing on the swings, no sleepovers and play-dates, not even any hugging.

Later that night I started thinking. I thought about what would happen if we could never be together as a community again. I thought about all of the great things we should have been able to do, but did not have the chance to do. I hoped this would all end soon; I prayed it would.

The next day, I told my parents that I needed to find some way to be with others, even if we had to stay distant. They agreed, and we decided to take one of our friends's up on their offer to let us use their pool. We thanked them and started making plans. A few days later, we went over to the pool and had a great time. We stayed six feet apart and wore masks when we were out of the water and got to race each other. I had a wonderful time and wanted to come back.

A few days later I was in the mood to go back to the pool. Sadly, when I told my mom, she told me it was going to rain that day and wasn't hot enough. Then the next day, the same thing happened; I wanted to go to the pool again, but the weather still wasn't cooperating. This same thing continued for the entire next week and soon, I was beginning to feel very lonely and sad, even with a few zoom calls a week.

Eventually, we were able to go to the pool. Spending time with my friends and playing in the pool catching pennies was fun. One time, I tried to see how long I could hold my breath underwater to catch a bunch of pennies. It was hard, but I did it anyway. Something that was even harder though, was leaving their home. It felt weird, holding myself back from hugging the family, but I managed. This tradition of going to the pool went on for several weeks.

As time went by, my days started getting busier. I began messaging and calling my school friends more and more, until my mom got mad because I was using her computer too much.

She decided that my friends and I needed to get together physically, so we arranged a play-date with two of my friends. When they came, we made friendship bracelets to keep each other together, even when we were apart. The whole time, we were all laughing and being silly. At the end, we tossed each

other our bracelets and gave each other air hugs. When they left, my mom and I started getting ready for dinner.

Later that night, we had havdalah on Zoom with our shul. As we swayed together in the flame of the candle, I finally realized how strong our community was. I knew our friends at the pool were kind and welcoming to let us swim and come into their home. I knew my school friends were caring to take out their time to talk and message with me about these crazy times. And I knew my shul was generous to schedule a Zoom for havdalah and services every week. I finally felt the community love that I had been missing.

## **Honorable Mentions**

### ***My 2020 Journey, By Aliza Sefret, age 12***

2020 was a year of challenge and testing our strength for everyone. In this essay, I will explain the events leading up to and during this terrifying pandemic and how I, personally, felt about them.

#### **Before the pandemic and quarantine hit. Until March 12, 2020**

I was a happy, energetic girl. I was able to do all the things I love to do and all the things that made me happy, such as writing and making music. My grades were slipping a bit, but I was able to focus on that and try a lot harder, so eventually the grades were brought back up. I was looking forward to spending a month of summer with my friends at sleep away camp. My Bat Mitzvah had come and gone. I was bright and felt grateful and blessed that my life was so comfortable and going so well. Then, COVID-19 shocked the world.

#### **The start of quarantine. March 13, 2020.**

Our school was shut down. I was so happy that I wouldn't have to see any of my teachers face to face anymore! Sure, I was going to miss talking to my friends in class, but I was always going to be able to see them when we have play dates. These were all the thoughts in my head before I realized how severe the virus was going to get. And every single one of them now seem stupid and confusing to me. Online school had been going great, and my grades still got even better! It was only until one day that I realized the downside of being completely online: social media. Before quarantine, I had always viewed social media as a place to connect with others peacefully and have fun. But I realized how mean kids can be online. Their train of thought is that since we aren't face to face, they can't get in trouble, and they use that to their full advantage. That's exactly what they did to me. People would talk bad about me to each other via email, and they assumed I wouldn't know. Once I figured out what they were doing, I was so mad that I disconnected from them, and deleted all emails they sent. I started to see the dark side of quarantine, and it overpowered me. I never thought about the lessons quarantine taught me, or the benefits it had. I only focused on the negative.

#### **May to June of 2020- The middle of quarantine. Very far in.**

I started seeing what has truly become of us when we have been socially, mentally, and physically challenged. We have grown so much and have learned that we have never been truly grateful for friends and family (and toilet paper!) I started seeing the true reason of why COVID-19 has been introduced to this world. Sure, scientists say it came from animals and that fact that we are all always so close together. But is that really the reason? In my opinion, no it's not. The reason we have endured all this suffering is because it's a test from God. He wants to see how we act when suffering and pain and grief have been inflicted upon us. To see if we would give up easily, see if we would never focus on the positive side of things, and see if we would survive not just physically, but mentally and

spiritually. We have absolutely passed that test. Together, we have fought through this virus, and we will continue to fight until the end of COVID-19. So many of us have survived this virus, and the people who have passed away continued to fight until the very end. We have tried to focus on the positive for so long, and we will continue to until the very end. And we have never given up throughout this entire time. And we will never give up.

### ***Community Strength, By Ariella Katcoff, age 11***

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## **Corona Diary, By Avigail Masinter, age 9**

MAY 13, 2020

NINETEENTH OF IYAR 5780

Dear Diary,

My grandparents sent you to me, as a Coronavirus journal. Now I can have something cool to show my kids when I'm *Im Yirtzeh Hashem*, a mother. Actually, that's not what they gave it to me for, but it's fun to imagine things like that. They gave it to me to take up time, because life is only becoming more boring every minute. Especially school. If possible, school is only becoming even more boring and annoying. I need to get on the computer at least ten minutes early because my computer doesn't load quickly. Here's a secret: I actually miss school a tiny drop. Also, my cello lessons got canceled a few weeks ago, which is bluh.

Sorry, I forgot to introduce myself and my family. My name is Temima Gold and I'm eleven. I have an older sister, Dina, and a younger sister, Chana. I want to have a lot of children and be a teacher. I go to *Bais Avigail* and I have school friends, but I want to be homeschooled. My favorite color is purple.

Corona isn't all bad though. I'm spending a lot of time with my mother and for the first time in many years I'm going to Mommy Camp this summer and I'm excited. (I'll also work part time at a camp.) Also, I'm learning what to do with myself when I'm bored. Here are some of the things that I do; bake, write a play to act for my family, listen to a story on my mp3 player while organizing/cleaning my room because, hey, it's actually fun when I have a good story.

My cousin just got a dog and I'm begging to go see it. Of course, my mother said no right away, because, hello, there's such a thing as Covid going on! Just yesterday my cousins called me to ask if I had any names that would work for a little girl dog and right away, I said Marshmallow because, Diary, I saw pictures of the dog and she soooooo looks like a little toasted marshmallow.

I'm in the middle of a really good book called *The Swiss Family Robinson* that my mother picked up from the library. Thank goodness the library allows pickups; it would be hard if it didn't. I can't wait to go into a library again though. I miss it! I also really miss swimming at the JCC. My mother and I used to go together and I can't wait to do it again.

Oops, there's Dina (my older sister), saying that Sarah, (my cousin), is Facetiming me. Bye

## **Coronoavirus Anagram, By Bina Masinter, age 11**

Directions: Unscramble the words for a secret message!

AIRUVSCOORN ANC EFNIDTAYL EB NAOYGIN. UTB I ILKE OT JYONE HET UNF APRTS FO TI  
VEEN ORME. IKLE ENSPDGNI ITME IHWT OYUR MLAYIF, NDA OOWOHO!!! SELL OCOHOLS!!!  
LUSP ERMO GXREAILN MITE. RUTE HIST UMSMRE IFMTH EB A TITLE TIB ORIBGN. UTB OS  
HTAH? SINT VEERY UMMSER A TTILE? MI' IOVLEGN TI! AHEV A ONWLUFRED ESTR FO MUSMER!





### ***Corona Confusion***

D34R C0R0N4V1RUS,  
PL34S3 G0 4W4Y. N0 0N3 L1K3S Y0U. 7H3 WH0L3 W0RLDS G0N3 0N 4 P30PL3 S7R1K3 8Y  
S74Y1NG S1X F337 4W4Y FR0M 3V3RY80DY 3LS3. PL34S3 L34V3 7H3 W0RLD. 4ND M4K3  
SUR3 N07 70 73LL Y0UR Y0UNG3R S18L1NG, C0V1D 20 480U7 PL4N37 34R7H.  
L0V3  
Y0UR P3N P4L

P.S. M4K3 SUR3 7H47 Y0U G0 F4R 4W4Y

### ***Lost Connection, By Zoe Muher, age 12***

"Hello?" Cathy said in the cramped room, alone, and scared. "Is anyone here? Anyone at all?" Cathy, scared, lied down in the corner of the dark room. "Help. Somebody? Anyone. Anyone at all." Cathy, thinking no one will save her, begins to panic. "I'm going to die here. Where no one will know where I am if they even notice I'm gone." She begins to cry. "I'm all alone. I don't get to say goodbye to my family. Like mom. No one knows where she went. Maybe that's my fate. I didn't get to say goodbye to her and I don't get a goodbye now." She begins to laugh. "How ironic. I'm still alone. I just made my first real connection with someone. Scott. There's no going back now Scott. I don't know if you felt it between us. I don't know if you cared about me. When I was slow at work, slow doing work, and didn't get some work done, did you even notice?" Cathy gets up and walks forward. She holds her hand up and a door appears. When she opens the door, all she sees is white. Happily, she says "So bright." She walks through the door and on the other side she sees her family. She smiles and they smile back at her. Her father gestures for her to sit on the couch.

### ***Ms. Avery's Garden, By Allison Xu, age 13***

If Camberwell Lane were compared to a long strand of necklace, Ms. Avery's garden would be the elegant multi-colored pendant.

The stretching and curling street was lined with manicured lawns with potted plants by the front entry or well-trimmed bushes under the windows. Most of them were so similar that one could barely differentiate each house based on their landscapes.

But Ms. Avery's front yard was an outlier. An idyllic garden fringed with sandstone was carved out of her yard. Rose bushes sat and bloomed in the center of the garden, delicately-textured and glowing in magenta. Dainty begonias and geraniums came in shades of lemon yellow, baby pink, and deep red,

forming a vibrant motley of color like a painter's palette. A row of lavender flowers was arranged in neat clusters. The fresh scent of flowers and leaves wafted in the air.

While others hired lawn care companies to handle their yards, Ms. Avery pulled on gardening gloves and cultivated the garden herself, digging and loosening soil, watering and fertilizing plants, clearing away weeds, and making her own compost from dry leaves and kitchen scraps. Her 13-year-old half-blind Labrador dog moseyed around her while she worked, sniffing the fragrant flowers.

Her neighbors couldn't help but eyeing her garden with a trace of envy whenever they passed by. They would think to themselves, who has the time to do all this? Then they surveyed their own well-groomed lawns, feeling pleased and contented. Sometimes when a few neighbors gathered in a small neighborhood party, some would gossip that Ms. Avery wasted too much time on gardening and barely socialized with others.

But in the spring of 2020, no one on Camberwell Lane was in the mood to gossip about Ms. Avery and her garden anymore. The COVID-19 virus swept across the state, and even the country. People were ordered to stay home in lockdown, relying on the internet to work or learn remotely. Everyone took the first few days as a quick break, hopeful that things would get better soon.

But one week turned into one month, and the statistics of new cases didn't seem to make an optimistic turn. By then, boredom and frustration crept over people's faces. Their front windows revealed a depressing sight of their neglected front yard with overgrown grass and bare spots due to the pause of the regular landscape service. With a deep sigh, some picked up a shovel or a rake and tried out their novice green thumb, grumbling that it was harder than they thought.

The only exception was Ms. Avery's front yard, which looked even more dazzling compared to the others. Bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds weaved in and out of the riot of flowers. Despite the visual pleasure of her garden, Ms. Avery's heart was as heavy as her neighbors'. She wondered what she could do to help her neighbors. She gazed at her exquisite flowers and had an idea.

One morning, when Mr. Bishop, a man who lived on the far end of Camberwell Lane, was walking his dog, he noticed a wooden stand in front of Ms. Avery's garden. A poster on the top of the stand read "Please take one". On the stand were dozens of seed packets arranged next to the picture and name of the plant it would grow. The instructions for how to grow the flower were written on laminated paper under each plant type. Ms. Avery also left a hand sanitizer bottle on the stand in case anyone needed a squirt.

Mr. Bishop smiled and hovered his hand above the seed packets for a moment before selecting the marigold seeds. More people came across the stand later and took a packet each, and then fished out their phones to snap a picture of the instructions. Sometimes, when someone looked at Ms. Avery's house appreciatively, they saw her smiling and waving at them from her living room window.

In the following mornings, when a sliver of the sun peeked over the horizon, Ms. Avery tended her flowers as usual, and to her delight, many of her neighbors were working on their own yards, seeding, weeding, and watering. Ms. Avery's instructions were full of clever tips and warnings. She would also walk around the neighborhood wearing a mask to give suggestions and answer questions from a 6-foot distance.

Within a few weeks, the flowers were budding and lawns were clearing up of bare spots or wild grass. People's once grim faces dimpled into a smile of joy and gratitude, as flecks of color were thriving and spreading along Camberwell Lane, brimful of life.

The seed of hope is always there; someone just has to be willing to plant it.

### ***My Quarantine Adventure, By Luke Miller***

Quarantine is a weird thing. I didn't even know what the word meant until now. Before the coronavirus reached America, I wasn't afraid because I didn't know something like this would ever happen. When they did start quarantine in America, I wasn't prepared. I didn't know what would happen and this was very new to me. A Lot changed, we went from physically going to school, to going to school online. I went from seeing everyone i knew, to only my family, I thought these events just wouldn't get better. Around the beginning of April, I found some light in the darkness, some hope that everything would be okay. I realized that spending more time with my family wasn't so bad, I still kept in touch with my friends, and I did well in online school. I even got to get some cool new books and toys to keep me busy this summer. It is so cool to see how the whole world keeps moving on, even under the circumstances of today. Everyone has helped me this summer and I have learned a lesson in these times. Even in the darkest of circumstances, the most dreadful times, you have to keep going, keep moving on, that is what helped me live, and thrive in Quarantine.

### ***Together, By Hudis Schnur, age 11***

I'm as light as a butterfly  
As strong as the wind  
As mighty as a lion  
And as sweet as a kitten.

But together, during these times  
If you combine all these things  
In each one of us  
The alternative will be  
One strong beautiful community  
Of us all-  
Our precious Baltimore.

With feelings and one voice  
We can do it together  
Help each other  
Whether it's anxiety or sickness  
Separation or restrictions.

We can do it  
But only if we help each other



And do it together  
We will get through this  
As one.

***To Be as Strong as Steel, By Amir Muhammad, age 12***

If this year was a natural disaster, I would say it was a tsunami. It comes in different waves for people all around the world. Sixth grade is a brand new experience for me, with new people. I thought I had to fully change my personality to fit in with the new people at my school. Then COVID-19 hit...and with it - online learning. So, one positive is that I don't have to change anything about myself.

This summer I was not able to hang-out with my good friend. We went to elementary school together, but now attend different middle schools. I was bummed and really sad. Then, I learned I will have so many more opportunities down the line, if I stay safe. It's pretty hard adapting to a brand new lifestyle with masks and staying six feet apart from other people.

There are some good things about spending all of one's time at home. You can get a new hobby or read that new book you have been waiting to read but haven't had the time to. Some people have a job that requires them to stay out during the virus - like doctors. They are always worried about their safety being near people who might be contaminated.

In the beginning, when COVID-19 first hit, carbon emissions were down seventeen percent. I went outside and drove to get groceries with my sister. Then I saw traffic outside for the first time in a couple months. I determined that we were yet again increasing the amount of carbon emissions in the air. The reason I care so much about this issue is because in debate this year we debated clean energy to lower carbon emissions.

I've done more exercise like running and tennis and have bettered my diet with more fruits and vegetables. I've been running around the track almost every day. I have some trouble in math, so I practice more in preparation for the school year to begin. I've been cooking more of my own breakfasts and I recently learned how to make pancakes. I've done more things I'm interested in like watching more shows and playing more games.

More and more, I am realizing what I really like. I like "The Dark Crystal". I feel it is one of the best movies and TV shows ever made. People might dislike it, but I really think most people haven't seen the movie. While in quarantine it feels like time is going by so fast - like time speeds up and it's suddenly the next day.

Every day I think where does the time go?

Then I realize I answer my own question every day. Since my sleep pattern has changed I stay up a lot later and go to sleep at ten in the morning and always wake up at five twenty-five in the evening every day. I've wondered while seeing these ads saying they are closer to finding a medicine to help stop the coronavirus outbreak. While at home, I've been scared for my family's safety. But, I think everyone is a little scared. It's just another issue we have to cope with in dealing with COVID-19.

### ***A Moment in Time, By Talya Goldstein, age 10***

My journey with Covid-19 might be the same as yours or it might be different, but I am here to share it with you. When Covid-19 first started I thought it would be like this for a week or so, but soon I found out it was going to be much longer. There is a lot that I missed out on, but also a lot I am really thankful for. Covid-19 has taught me to be grateful for what I have.

I have a lot I am grateful for and I am learning not to take things for granted. During this pandemic, I got a puppy and his name is Jackson and he is part husky and part lab. My family and I are always very busy, between my parents working and me and my brother's extracurricular activities, and so we have used the time at home to add Jackson to our family. As a family we've also found ways to enjoy the summer heat whether by camping or going to the beach. We now have an inflatable pool that everyone in the family loves! My parents and I had the time to repaint my room. It is by the way a gray color, that is very cool. I also have loved the extra time with my parents and brother. We get to play games and watch movies more than ever before. I am also really grateful for devices because I can see my friends and family on them. Sometimes we even FaceTime for hours and play Roblox. And we can have virtual Shabbats through zoom too! This also helps me continue to be connected to both my family and my religion. I am grateful we have this tool to see each other and celebrate who we are. We did have a very interesting virtual Passover. The first night was with my family and the second night was with my synagogue. Passover is one of my favorite holidays, and we still kept many of our traditions although we weren't together physically. My mom and I also have taken several cooking classes virtually with celebrity chefs. My mom keeps reminding me that it is in my Eastern European blood to be a good cook and I think she is right. My parents also reminded me that this isn't as bad as I think. There are many people that have it much worse than I do. Even in my family. Over 40 years ago my aunt and my grandparents left Ukraine because they were not being treated equally and being discriminated against for being jews.

There are a lot of things that I have missed out on and one is my favorite activity, dance. I am really sad, because I recently went to a new dance studio and met so many wonderful friends. Competitions were also cancelled and I really wanted to show my family all of my hard work. I know they are always proud of me, but showing them my dances is something I look forward to. I especially love seeing my grandparents in the audience wearing the homemade shirts they made that say they are my grandparents. I am also really sad about missing out on the rest of my school year. This was my 4th grade year, and my teacher was amazing and supportive. I missed seeing her every day, but she found ways to connect with us and even created special google meets times to talk about the events happening across our country. But none of this compares to missing my family. I miss hugging my grandparents and Aunts, Uncle and Cousins. My dad works to help people in the community and because of that we have been very careful of being with family and friends. I know that his work and our community is important and that is why I understand missing out on regular family events and gatherings. I usually see my family every day because we all live so close to each other, and it's hard to be so distant when we are so close.

I also wish I was with some of my friends to be able to support them during the social injustices we are seeing. Some of my friends have experienced lots of negative things and I wish I were able to do more than I can right now, but again, we are able to spend lots of time together on FaceTime and support each other through these times.

This is definitely a moment in time I will never forget. I am most looking forward to wrapping my arms around each one of my family and friends when the time comes. Spending time with them and hugging them, is something I will never take for granted again.

### ***The Importance of Community, By Ben Silverman, age 11***

From a young age, I have been taught the importance of the community. Ever since kindergarten everything at my school, Krieger Schechter Day School, has been related in some way to the importance of community. Every year the day before thanksgiving, there is a day devoted specifically to community service. Every grade goes somewhere different to do some type of service, like going to a senior center or cleaning up a park. Once a month our school packs extra lunches to give to people in need. The day before Passover in the fourth grade, we go and do a seder for people at the senior center who can't be with their own families on the holiday. Even outside of those events, there are many more deeds and programs my school does to help people and create community. This has helped shape my view of how important community is today.

In addition to school, everyone in my family, parents and grandparents, are all very active in some way with the community. For example, my grandfather volunteers to conduct shiva services for people who need a minyan leader when grieving for loved ones who have passed away. One way this has shaped my view of the community is that at the shivas, it taught me to be supportive for people who need a support system.. Also, he is very active in our synagogue and that has taught me how important community is valued by the Jewish people. During the Pandemic, we have been able to continue the sense of the community even virtually by doing services and other programs on zoom. My mother is a very active supporter in my school community and also taught me from a young age to give to communities in need by making blessing bags for the homeless that she drops off on her way to work in Baltimore City. From experience, these blessing bags really make a difference in these people's lives. Once I was in the car with her and when we gave it to a homeless man, he was crying with tears of gratitude. That just shows that a little deed can make someone in the larger community really feel better. My father coaches basketball which brings all kids together to be on a team and to play together. From playing I have learned teamwork and how to create community in a different way.

The most important lesson is that being supportive and having a support system gives people assurance that they have others they can rely on and trust in good times and bad . This is the key in this Pandemic. We can all be supportive in many ways and stay connected to our community in this difficult time. Whether it's just having a zoom with friends (or playing video games with them), it's still a way to support the people who have been feeling lonely or disconnected right now. Just sending a "Get Well Soon" card, or anything else that can lift their spirits can help people feel connected too.

In conclusion, during this Pandemic, the best thing you can do is spread positivity throughout your community by trying to be happy and grateful. Smiles can make people's day and from experience, it is a small but big thing you can do for someone. My hope is to keep communities connected and supportive now, so that we will be stronger, better versions of ourselves in the future.

### ***My 2020 Diary, By Zachary Birenbaum, age 11***

December 31<sup>st</sup>. 2019. 10,9,8,7,6,5,4,3,2,1 . . . Happy New Year! Just like that 2020 had started.

January: The first month in 2020, I was starting a new year. On Martin Luther King Day, school was out, so that was good. A few days later it was my mom's birthday, and so we went out for dinner and had a good time there. At the end of the month I said my Dvar Torah in front of my class. It was on Parashat Bo and I wrote specifically on the eighth plague: locusts. The same day I went to a special event at my shul and me and my friends were up really late and did fun activities.

February: We celebrated my dad's birthday and did some quirky things along with it. After that in school I celebrated President's Day and my grade sang songs in the assembly. A little after that, on Presidents Day Weekend my family went to NYC and visited my Bubbe and Zayde at their apartment.

March: In March I celebrated Purim and it was fun dressing up as Godzilla. Sadly, a few days later school was closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. We would go online for the rest of the school year.

April: At least in April I celebrated my birthday and turned 11. We had plans for my Nana and Baba to come over for Passover, but that was canceled because of Coronavirus. Even though school was canceled I still was able to do the fourth grade's yearly flag dance for Yom Ha'Atzmaut.

May: Not much happened in May except for Lag Bao'mer, and Shavuot.

June: In June the much-awaited BT Spotlight came, and it was really funny. On June 12 I had my last day of school as a fourth grader, and lower schooler as a whole. My mom took last day of school pictures of me and I had my last lower school assembly. Two weeks after that, I went to the beach and stayed at my Mama and Papa's house for a week.

July: The only big thing that happened in July was going to Cleveland, and renting a house with my aunt, uncle, and cousin.

If I could change how 2020 went I would change it to have no Coronavirus so the year could have been more fun, but overall I guess this has been quite a year.

### ***My community helps with dealing with the virus, By Cole Trexler, age 7***

So you know about coronavirus right? Oh good, you scared me for a second there. And I have the same questions as everyone. Where did coronavirus come from? How does the virus spread? When will coronavirus end? Coronavirus sucks but we all have friends, cousins, and etc. to help us through this tricky time. Well anyway, let's get on with the story. So my name is Cole. I live with my mom, my dad, and my brother Ben. We live in a 3 story house in Baltimore, Maryland. Now let's get serious. So...um...uuu...well we are trying to have as much fun as we can this summer, but luckily I have friends nearby! It really helps me to have friends close to me! But for instance I bike ride, trade books, call my friends, and have fun! And well I call my cousins a lot during this time. They live in Las Vegas but I can use FaceTime and still do Legos with them. And me and my neighbors have created something called happy hour where we sit in a circle and talk! Sometimes we have special dinners at happy hour to help us out during coronavirus. Coronavirus sucks but we all have friends to help somewhere.