

Essential People

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I'm a small-town girl and have spent all of my career as a public servant in various forms, never believing that I would at the age of fifty-five, after living my whole life in what I would call the golden years, find myself, my family and the rest of the world struggling through a pandemic.

In the opening days of this pandemic, it all seemed so far away from us. I felt that it couldn't possibly affect us as it had the people in China and Italy. We then seemed untouched. This illness was something that existed only in the news on the radio between work and home. As the days, weeks and months unfolded and I watched and listened, it seemed surreal, like something from the Stephen King movie, "The Stand."

As Covid spread far and wide, we were ordered to lock down. It had reached us. I had prayed it wouldn't. I was separated from son and grandchildren. My personal life was put on hold. My work truly became my life. I was given a title I never expected to gain, that of *Essential Worker*.

Following the same path that I had taken everyday for years, traveling to my job was so very different from what it had been. The roads and streets were empty. In the early morning and late at night driving home there were no sounds, no people jogging or walking pets, just an eerie silence. In that silence, most businesses were being shut down. Still, I always had a calm inside of me. This would take time, but we would survive this.

Fall came and drifted by. I disinfected groceries and put them neatly into cupboards next to extra cases of drinking water and other supplies, just in case. I remember feeling somewhat like the squirrels in my back yard, gathering nuts. Christmas came around once more and in that short season I had the pleasure to see a whole town full of people. As our world seemed to stop spinning, people also seemed to stop and slow down, by no choice of their own, really.

People slowed down to give. What a wonderful treasure. I was watching people clean out closets, giving to less fortunate people. Some families were selling items to make ends meet or sending off emergency items, like masks, to pull family members and friends through these difficult times.

Plexiglass became a barrier that was despised, yet it was so important for our protection. I was seeing people from a totally different view. It was an honor for me to be there and experience the goodness of these fragile, yet strong people. At this point I realized how *essential* these people are to an essential worker like myself.

Without these people, the loneliness of being in lockdown would not have been so pleasant. We are as one big family it seems. The human need for each other is GREAT. Thank you to all of the smiling faces I saw and continue to see each day during this great test of our American Spirit. We do persevere.