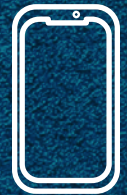


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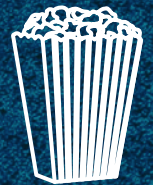
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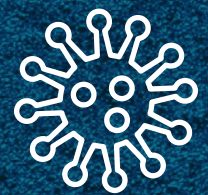
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YEARS LATER



D LONG HAULERS

that she had long term antibodies in her system, meaning her mysterious sickness from January had likely been COVID-19.

However, Sharp isn't the only one in her family dealing with post COVID conditions. Her parents and siblings have all dealt with it as well.

"I watched my mom almost die," she said. Sharp described her mom as young and healthy. However, after COVID-19, her blood pressure spiraled, and she experienced cognitive complications. "She started slurring her words."

Sharp said when she was infected with the virus itself, her symptoms weren't much different than a common cold. "I was more tired," she said. However, as time went on, she developed other issues.

"I had a really hard time focusing," she said. "Before my mission I was a straight A student, but I could not get any better than a 50% on a test ... I was like, 'something's wrong with me.'"

Along with difficulty focusing, Sharp experienced depression, anxiety, rapid heartbeat, and shortness of breath. She also participated in a cardiovascular study at a Department of Veterans Affairs hospital where she was told her cardiovascular system looked 10 years older than it was.

"My heart would beat really fast, and I felt like I had anxiety all the time," Sharp said. "I was like 'I feel like I should be running from a bear but I'm not.'"

Jeanette Brown, director of the University of Utah's long COVID clinic, said such symptoms are common in long COVID patients, but that it's difficult to pinpoint the conditions.

"There are definitely some patterns, but there's a lot of individuality for how those manifest, so it's been kind of a learning experience," Brown said.

Brown said some emerging trends show that women are more likely than men to be affected. She also said the average age of patients at the clinic is 47 but they see patients as young as 18.

According to Brown, there is no shortage of individuals dealing with long COVID, and around 20% of adults who had COVID-19 also experience long COVID conditions, based on CDC estimates.

"We typically get about 105 referrals a month," Brown said. "We've seen 1,800 patients since we



Madison Sharp is a BYU student studying German. Sharp was diagnosed in May 2021 with post-COVID conditions or long COVID.

opened in July of 2021."

Brown also said their data shows that most patients of long COVID had the virus before vaccinations were available. "We do have data that shows you're less likely to be a long hauler if you've been vaccinated."

For the most part, Brown said many of their patients are relieved to find a source for their symptoms and finally receive treatment.

"Just knowing you're not crazy makes the biggest difference," Sharp said of her own diagnosis. Sharp said she and her family members didn't

see much improvement with long COVID symptoms until participating in cognitive therapy at Cognitive FX, a post-concussion clinic in Provo, during October 2021. Brain scans showed what appeared to be brain damage due to the virus, according to Sharp.

"I do have ADHD," Sharp said, "but all of my symptoms were exacerbated by the fact that COVID messed with everything."

In fact, Brown said as the clinic has continued research with long COVID patients, the deficits they see are primarily in attention. "If you can't pay attention, you can't make a memory," she said.

Brown said the clinic has been working with Utah Rep. Melissa Ballard, R-North Salt Lake, to receive government funding to continue research, care and to teach other primary care providers about long COVID treatment. With approval, \$4 million will be allotted to fund the efforts for the next four years, she said.

According to a research snapshot by the clinic, patients with long COVID struggle to work and may lose health insurance. The funding will be used to increase care capacity for uninsured and underinsured patients and improve access for rural communities and areas in Utah with low health improvement index.

Although BYU ended its general mask mandate in Winter Semester 2022, Sharp still wears a mask anytime she's inside a building.

"I always wear a mask inside because I know what this virus can do," Sharp said. "I don't want to get it again and I don't want to give it to other people."

These days, Sharp still deals with the chronic condition and must choose what she has energy to accomplish each day. "I just kind of have to pick and choose, but that's kind of how it is with chronic pain," she said. "I do my homework in the morning because I know that's when I have energy to do it."

Despite the challenges of being a long hauler, Sharp is hopeful for the future and grateful for available research and treatment.

"I guess this is one of the huge blessings is that you're getting people who are actually recognizing that autoimmune diseases should be solved," she said.

MISSIONARY WORK WILL NEVER BE THE SAME



The COVID-19 pandemic flipped traditional methods of missionary work on their head and provided an opportunity to develop a social media centered approach to spreading the Church's message.

By Brigham Tomco

The 20 months Matthew Day served in the Marshall Islands were typical of a Latter-day Saint mission.

"It was just talking to people face to face, stopping on the side of the street, knocking on doors," said Day, now a junior at Brigham Young University studying cybersecurity.

However, Day's daily routine – study, tract, proselyte – which he had both fallen in love with and mastered, was suddenly shattered. After weeks of rumors about missionaries being pulled out of Hong Kong due to a mysterious virus, he and his fellow missionaries were told they had until morning to prepare to leave their Marshallese home.

Within 24 hours, Day and his companions had packed up all their belongings, caught a ferry to the closest island with an airport, and flown to Majuro, the capital of the scattered island nation. Two days later they were on their way to North America, with

Day returning to his family in North Carolina just in time for the Sunday session of the April 2020 General Conference.

"I just remember throughout all of it, it was just like, 'I can't believe this is actually happening,'" Day said.

The dramatic end to Day's mission, an experience shared by thousands of others, now appears in hindsight to be the accelerated beginning of a permanent transformation in the way The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does its missionary work.

The new approach, years in the making but catalyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic, relies more

heavily on digital teaching resources and a prominent social media presence to update missionary work for an online era. But while Church leaders have extolled these advances, a precipitous decline in convert baptisms during the pandemic highlights some of the difficulties inherent to Internet-mediated evangelizing.

A trend accelerated

Scott Howell teaches courses in instructional psychology and mission prep at BYU and was able to observe the pandemic-induced shift in missionary work – and its fruits – firsthand as the mission president of the North Dakota Bismarck Mission from July 2018 to July 2021.

"For me, it was a realization that the Lord really is hastening His work and allowing us to maybe reach areas where we could not have reached otherwise," Howell said.

The North Dakota Bismarck Mission received smartphones in May 2018 as part of a growing experiment that had begun with the New York Rochester mission in 2010 and had expanded to about 80 missions by 2015, according to the Church News. At the time, smartphones were mainly used to organize missionary records, study the gospel library and communicate with family.

But when COVID-19 was declared a worldwide pandemic in the spring of 2020, these devices took on a central role in missionary work. Only a few months before, in January 2020, President Russell M. Nelson, president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, approved smartphone access for every missionary.

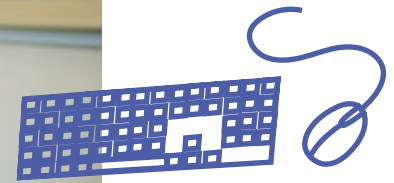
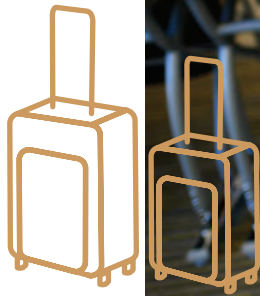
"That's huge," Howell said. "Every mission in the world is now using technology in ways they have not used them before."

With companionships stuck in their apartments, Howell moved quickly to assign sisters and elders with prior social media experience to advise him on how social media could be used to continue the work and to help their fellow missionaries create and maintain ward Facebook pages, regional Instagram pages, and personal social media accounts based on unique talents and messages.



CHURCH NEWSROOM

Sister missionaries from the Kenya Nairobi Mission after a special sacrament meeting with Elder Ronald A. Rasband of the Quorum of the Twelve in 2022.



CHURCH NEWSROOM

A Missionary Training Center instructor works remotely with a group of new missionaries. Missionaries now initially participate online before traveling to an MTC and their assigned mission.

By the end of 2021, more than 27,000 people had followed local Church Facebook pages in the North Dakota Bismarck Mission, and another 2,100 had followed the local Church Instagram pages. But the mission’s online presence didn’t just result in likes and follows.

“We taught more lessons in social media than we had taught outside of social media because it was so much more convenient,” Howell said. “We had many of our people that we saw join the Church during the pandemic that were reached and taught through social media say, ‘You would not have found us any other way.’”

Against all odds, the North Dakota Bismarck Mission saw the exact same number of baptisms in 2020 as it had in 2019. Howell said he felt like he was living what Elder Dieter F. Uchtdorf, of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles and chairman of the Church’s Missionary Executive Council, had described in his October 2020 General Conference address.

“The pandemic is revealing new and more creative ways of reaching out to the honest in heart,” Elder Uchtdorf said. “We might have been so tied to traditional approaches that it took a pandemic to open our eyes.”

Miraculously, the COVID-19 pandemic did not slow the work in the North Dakota Bismarck Mission. But for many missions and missionaries around the world, it was a different story.

Challenges to less in-person contact

From 2019 and 2020 convert baptisms fell from 248,835 to 125,930. In 2021 the number remained relatively low, at 168,283, according to the Church’s yearly statistical reports.

“What the numbers show was that the number of baptisms dropped virtually in half,” said David Stewart, founder of the Cumorah Project, a privately funded initiative that performs detailed missiological research on Church growth and missionary efforts. This sharp decline, followed by only a partial rebound in 2021, reflects the obvious effects of pandemic lockdowns and restrictions as well as a decades-long downward trend, Stewart said.

Another reason for this recent decrease in convert baptisms, Stewart believes, is the very real limitation that comes along with internet proselytism, which include a perception that online communication is inauthentic, a decreased

sense of obligation among individuals to attend meetings with missionaries, difficulty feeling the Spirit during video lessons and the absence of in-person fellowshiping.

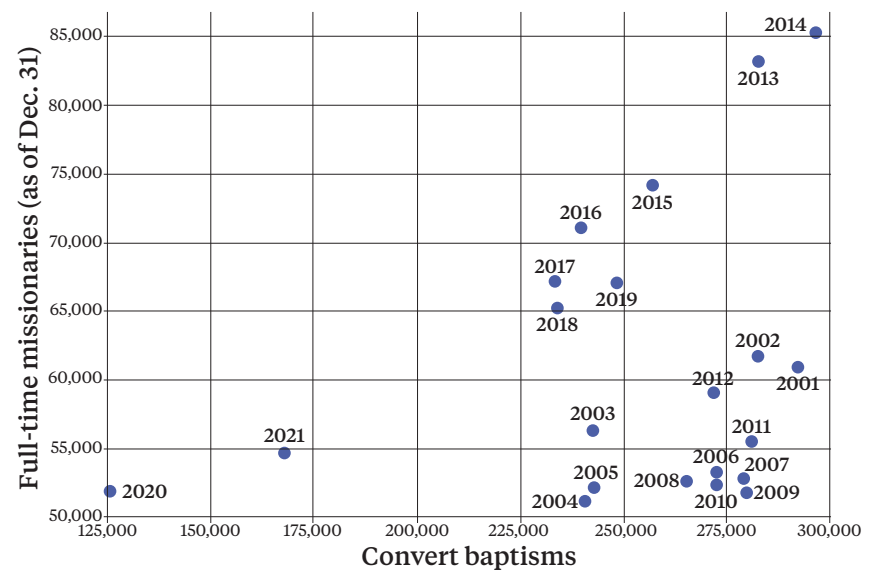
“I’m glad that the missionary efforts are utilizing the Internet strategies more,” Stewart clarified. “But I would also note that there are some trade-offs, and we need to be careful as we embrace the new technologies and adjust to a changing world with, in some ways, less personal contact for reasons beyond our control, such as COVID, less personal interaction, that we also don’t lose our skills and lose sight of the importance and the value of direct personal contact.”

An increasingly online approach to missionary work may also result in missionaries wasting more time on ineffective projects, a worry Howell said has been borne out time and time again. Aside from spending hours scrolling through social media feeds, missionaries might spend time producing content that is merely entertaining, at best, or offensive, at worst.

During the pandemic lockdown, missionaries recorded and posted videos of themselves dancing in people’s living rooms, doing back flips to Harry Styles, lip syncing to stand-up comedy and rapping about the Bible.

However, Howell said these problems were foreseen by Church leaders who still felt that the benefits of increased technological savviness among missionaries was worth the occasional distractions and who published technology safeguard booklets to prevent the worst misuses of smart devices. And, as Howell pointed out, videos posted by missionaries during the pandemic occasionally provided more positive exposure than any other method.

For example, a video posted by two elders in Greece early in the pandemic, featuring a trick basketball shot and a brief Christ-centered message,



BRIGHAM TOMCO

An illustration of convert baptisms in relation to the number of full-time missionaries. COVID-19 reduced the number of convert baptisms and missionaries.

garnered hundreds of thousands of views and led to several dozen lessons. And in 2021 another video of two elders singing the Georgian national anthem went viral, earning them a spot on prime time television where they could explain their purpose and message.

Missionary work going forward

“It’s going to take some time to change the culture of the Church, and especially older missionaries,” Howell said, referring to numerous conversations he had with members who felt that the increased amount of time missionaries were spending on computers and smartphones was not a good use of their time.

But Howell is optimistic that the Church’s emphasis on using social media more frequently and more effectively to share God’s word will help members, as well as missionaries, to reach people they never would have been able to otherwise.

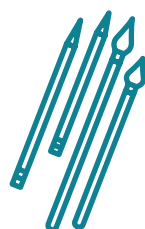
On a recent trip to eastern and central Europe, Howell was able to share three copies of the Book of Mormon in three different languages using a QR code generated by the Church’s recently updated Book of Mormon app.

“The missionary purpose does not change — to gather souls under Christ. But the way we do it is different,” he said.



NAVIGATING

SPIRITUAL



LIFE

DURING



COVID



MARISSA LUNDEEN

BYU student Amy Ottinger studies her scriptures. Through faith, Amy was able to find peace during the pandemic.

By Marissa Lundeen

When Amy and Kim Ottinger moved to Provo in 2021, their expectations of a college experience were promptly dashed by the reality of COVID-19.

Masking, social distancing and periods of isolation weren't exactly what these two sisters hoped for during their first semester at BYU. Originally from Bakersfield, California, Amy and Kim relocated to Provo in 2021 to attend BYU.

Amy, an animation major and an effervescent ball of energy and ideas, and Kim, an art major with an abundance of intuitive creativity and goodness, had to learn to find peace from within themselves as they adjusted to living in a new city and attending a new school during a pandemic.

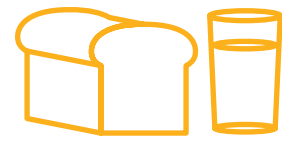
As Amy and Kim navigated this time of unique challenges, they found their faith in Jesus Christ to be an anchor during the tumultuous storm of COVID-19.

College is never easy, but when you throw in a worldwide pandemic to boot? Forget about it. It's a surefire recipe for hardship. Unmet



MARISSA LUNDEEN

Kim Ottinger works on a self portrait. Art was an outlet for Kim during a time of social isolation.



expectations, social isolation and plans cast askew led to feelings of fear and hopelessness for many. However, Kim, Amy and many other people of faith like them were able to find hope through God during this period of sometimes overwhelming darkness.

For BYU students, the darkness of COVID-19 came in March 2020, when the sky started falling.

BYU announced on Thursday, March 12 that classes were canceled for the rest of the week and would resume the following Monday through remote instruction. Slowly all of campus, then all of Provo, and eventually the whole world, followed suit, adopting social distancing, mask mandates and other safety precautions to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Grocery shopping as we knew it, connecting with friends as we knew it and church as we knew it were gone and replaced with pandemic-friendly solutions.

During this time when solid ground and peace and stability seemed to be disappearing by the second, many people found solace in their faith. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden,” Jesus said. “I will give you rest.” The people came running.

Four university professors published an article in 2022 explaining how spirituality may have affected the outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic for individuals. BYU professors David C. Dollahite, Spencer James and Loren D. Marks and Utah State University professor Heather H. Kelley discovered significant associations between the frequency of engaging in spiritual practices and relational well-being. They discovered those who engaged in spiritual practices, whether it be prayer, meditation, scripture study, or practicing mindfulness, had increased emotional closeness and were more likely to report a positive lasting effect of the pandemic on family relationships.

While faith may not be a cure-all for the world’s woes, the scholars’ article published in *Marriage and Family Review* documented how spirituality helped individuals find hope and meaning even in the most trying of times.

Amy and Kim, like others, spent the beginning of the pandemic at home with their family prior to coming to Provo. This time of togetherness was especially meaningful for Amy as their family studied “Come, Follow Me” together and

conducted their own sacrament meetings at home.

“Church became so much more intimate, and it meant more to me because it took more discipline from us. My mom emphasized that this difficult time was a time of growth. Keeping my faith kindled definitely helped me maintain hope during the pandemic,” Amy said.

When the local missionaries reached out to Amy and encouraged her to share her testimony on social media, she eagerly accepted their invitation. A recently returned missionary herself, Amy felt happy to share the gospel during a time when peace was so elusive. It allowed her the perfect opportunity to not only share her testimony but also connect with others. Being able to share her faith with friends and family via social media helped her maintain purpose and excitement while so many other opportunities were put on hold.

“I had just gotten back from my mission when the pandemic started,” Amy explained. “It was supposed to be this time of dating and socializing, and I felt like I was robbed of that. Trusting in the Lord that everything would be OK was the thing that helped me get through the pandemic, especially in moments when I was a little bitter,” Amy said.

When Amy and Kim made their way to Provo in the fall of 2021, their BYU experience was nothing like they imagined it would be.

“Provo was sad,” Amy explained. “I felt like I didn’t belong here until I was able to talk to people more.”

One thing that helped Amy maintain hope was her religion class. Required scripture readings and spiritual assignments kept her motivated to stay close to God.

“I really needed direction during that time because everything was so monotonous. Having structure in my gospel study was really nice,” Amy said.

Kim’s experience was unique from her sister’s. Transitioning to living at home during the pandemic was difficult after experiencing the freedom of college living, and although she loved being with her family, she missed her found family in Rexburg.

“Because I was dealing with a lot of things emotionally, I had to come to God. That was the

only way I could get through it,” Kim said. “Not just because He helps but also because I know my Savior has gone through the same exact things I have gone through. He is someone I don’t have to justify or explain myself to. He gets it, and that was comforting.”

Like Amy, Kim was excited about the prospect of having a community of peers again once she moved to Provo. However, she was disappointed when the reality of her BYU experience fell short of her dream.

“I need human interaction; it feeds my soul and keeps me going. I need to feel like I can serve and love people, but if I’m not interacting with people then I don’t know where I need to be and I’m not sure what my purpose is,” Kim said.

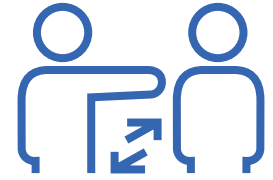
As she was struggling to find her purpose in pandemic-era Provo, Kim’s connection to the Savior became a lifeline. Reading Church leaders’ talks, journal writing and taking time to sit in stillness and listen to the voice of the Spirit were some ways she was able to stay connected to the Divine.

“I love General Conference talks. They are modern revelation and speak easily to me. During the pandemic, I listened to and read a lot of talks and had a lot of reflection time. I always knew that my Savior was with me — the Spirit was there,” Kim said.

Art was another spiritual exercise that kept both Amy and Kim busy during the pandemic. Being immersed in various art classes required them to continue developing their skills and reminded them that there was a life outside of COVID-19, and that life was full of beauty, color and hope.

The pandemic rocked the world in more ways than we can probably understand as of this moment, and many are still reeling from its repercussions. However, research has shown that individuals who incorporated spiritual practices into their lives during the pandemic were able to find comfort and relational well-being during an incredibly difficult time. Just as Amy and Kim were able to find hope and peace through their connection with God, many people of faith turned to their spiritual practices to find peace when it could not be found anywhere else. And so, it would appear as if the data backs up the Savior’s promise found in Matthew 11.

“Come unto me ... and I will give you rest.”



THE STATE OF QOQ

A POST-LOCKDOWN LOOK AT FRIENDSHIP AND

By **Tennie Davis**

A few weekends ago, I was sitting in the backseat of a 2014 Honda CR-V, next to a tall and swaying stack of backordered National Geographic and GQ magazines brought along for collaging. I listened as some half-friends, half-acquaintances debriefed the party they went to the night before.

I tried to contribute to the conversation, making a few jokes that fell relatively flat and comments that seemed to miss the mark. I'm not saying these people were cold or uninterested, it wasn't that at all, but I found myself experiencing a distinctly familiar yet bygone feeling, coming to me like an old forgotten friend: the awkwardness of social self-awareness, and the self-loathing that comes with trying to make friends. You know, the peacocking of it all. I realized sitting in that CR-V that it's been a while since I've really tried to make new friends. The friends I've made over the last few years have been friends of luck and happenstance, and mostly of necessity.

It's been three years this month since the necessary evil of social distancing first began. I've been thinking lately about connectedness and my relationships, and the ways I feel different after such a long period of limited social interaction. I talked with some of my closest friends, wanting to understand if they feel impacted in the same ways I do. Maci Brown said the pandemic made her realize how fragile the

world is, and being isolated exacerbated her existing anxieties because there was no distraction or escape. Lately, she said it feels like she's had to re-learn who she is around people.

As the pandemic forcibly changed the shape of our everyday lives, many people got hit hard with mental health challenges, myself included. All of my classes were online that first Fall and Winter. I spent most of my time at my computer, and watching lecture after lecture in pajamas was just plain poisonous for my morale.

In December 2020, a Statista survey found that 56% of Americans aged 18-24 experienced symptoms of an anxiety or depressive disorder that year. Many of those challenges persisted, and another Statista survey found that 41% of American college students experienced symptoms of depression in 2021. My friend Mary Harris told me that her mental health took a blow in those years because of all the time she spent indoors, away from loved ones.

According to a study by the University of Queensland published in *Social Science and Medicine* in 2013, inclusion in social groups reduces a person's likelihood for current depression and prevents future depression. The more groups you're a part of, the greater the preventative effects. This is not to say that having friends or even just acquaintances is the end-all-be-all cure to depression, but rather to show the relationship between social belonging and mental well-being.

During the first lockdown, when there was still a nervous novelty to the pandemic, I remember friends, family members and classmates posting funny things on social media about toilet paper and the apocalypse and trying to make the situation feel more tolerable. I remember watching videos of people around the world singing together from their balconies and feeling a deep sense of humanity, a sense that we were all experiencing something together.

To a large extent, social media usage fulfills many of our evolutionary needs that also occur offline, like connecting with others, managing our reputations in the minds of others and prompting self-referential thought, according to an article by Dar Meshi, Diana I. Tamir, and Hauke R. Heekeren published in *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* in 2015. These social needs are hardwired in order to ensure our survival.

In the absence of real-world social input, or at least not enough of it, we turned to social media to satisfy those innate drives for belonging or companionship. My personal vice then was TikTok, where I felt like I had a sense of community because of the infamous seamlessly tailored feed. The problem is, TikTok, Twitter, Instagram, all of them, they're carefully crafted to be addictive.

Rebecca Rast, Joshua T. Coleman and Christina S. Simmers reported in the *Journal of Social Media in Society* in 2021 that many social media users experience time

distortion and behavior

changes, and even withdrawal symptoms when they take a break. In addition to the addictiveness, what we do on social media is not an accurate depiction of real-world relationships or community. Some people post candid of their happiest or most picturesque moments, and some people post cropped or filtered selfies. Very few people post about the boring or bad days.

Over time there are negative effects to getting a significant amount of our social stimuli through these simulated channels. Not only is social media addiction detrimental to our self-esteem, but it also harms our real-world relationships and can make it more difficult or uncomfortable to maintain in-person conversations, according to Rast, Coleman and Simmers.

My friend Jayne Barber was telling me about how she feels like there's a social media lingo word bank inside her brain, and she has to consciously choose not to use those words or speak that way. We are forgetting how to communicate without a backspace, how to maintain eye contact, how to be honest and not polished.

I realized the other day, standing in front of my classmates and giving a presentation, that I have a hard time looking in people's eyes while I'm talking to them. I didn't use to be like that. These days, in tense or uncomfortable conversations, I instinctually prefer texting rather than talking in person. Of course



QUALITY COMMUNITY

when I think about it, I know that an in-person conversation would be so much more beneficial for all involved parties, but those conversations are more vulnerable. What I'm trying to say is that lately I've been realizing the co-creational effects social distancing and social media have had on me. I've realized that my social muscles have atrophied.

The three friends I talked to for this article all said they have a harder time focusing on things that take awhile, and they feel more antsy if things aren't maintaining their attention. I've noticed the same thing in myself. But I don't want to be the type of person who's easily bored. I want to enjoy things that take time and don't offer immediate gratification.

So the question, nearly three years to the day after the first lockdown, is what do we do now? Well, I think it will look different for all of us. For me, I deleted social media apps from my phone and I am putting more conscious and care-filled energy and time into my friendships. I'm trying to compliment strangers more and not rehearse what to say before a phone call.

In the backseat of that 2014 CR-V, I was grateful to be with half-friends, half-acquaintances. I was grateful to be bantering aimlessly and listening to eclectic shuffled music. As Psychology Today phrased it, I was grateful to embrace my fumbblings and "enjoy the moment for what it's worth." I think there is quite a lot of worthiness in each moment for those who pay attention.

BYU PHOTO



ENTERTAINMENT & SOCIAL CONNECTIONS IN THE TIME OF COVID

By Evadne Hendrix

Tom Cruise fans flooded movie theaters during the summer of 2022 to see “Top Gun: Maverick.” Mike Daniels, owner of Water Gardens Theaters in Pleasant Grove, joined the masses with high expectations.

Daniels’ friend, on the other hand, did not look forward to the film. He had never been a Tom Cruise fan, and he dragged his feet to the theater only to appease his wife and friends.

As the magic of the movie screen brought heroes and villains to life, Daniels watched his friend’s skeptical eyes grow wide. Within the first 15 minutes the film captivated both the skeptics and the optimists in Daniels’ party. From a few seats away, Daniels noticed his friend start to reach for the popcorn without looking away

from the screen.

When the credits rolled 131 minutes later, Daniels’ skeptical friend couldn’t help but admit his love for the film.

“Well, I still don’t like Tom Cruise, but that was a good movie,” he said. “I’d see that movie again.”

For Daniels, “Top Gun: Maverick” was more than a good movie, it was an opportunity to strengthen his relationship with friends and family. They came away closer friends than they had been before. The people Daniels experienced the movie with were as important as the film itself. Daniels said that every time he sees a movie, it affects his relationship with those in the room.

The magic of the movie screen not only serves as a source of entertainment, but it also facilitates

conversations, trust and common interests after the credits roll. Daniels’ experiences are not uncommon.

In today’s world movies play an important role in fostering conversation and facilitating social gatherings. National conventions like Comic-Con and online chat rooms bring people together from all over the world, just because they share a common interest. Sometimes, movies even serve as a convenient excuse to get together with colleagues outside of work or school. When asked about a favorite movie memory, many people mention the people they watched the movie with.

Daniels pointed out that movie theaters are great places to build camaraderie with perfect strangers, while in-home movie viewing typically only builds pre-existing relationships.

People watching a movie together are all rooting for the same heroes and feeling the same wins and losses. Without speaking to one another, movie theater-goers can build a unique relationship with one another.

On the other hand, in-home viewing has different strengths and weaknesses. Usually these are smaller, more intimate settings among people who already know each other to some degree. Smaller gatherings create opportunities for in-depth conversations. But the same conversations that make in-home viewing valuable for some may distract from the experience for others.

“Not everyone who is viewing the movie likes the movie, and there is a lot of potential interruption because people are getting up to use the bathroom, or people are getting





EVADNE HENDRIX
The Water Gardens Theaters in Pleasant Grove, Utah.

something to eat, or people are taking care of some little thing during boring parts of the movie,” Daniels said.

When COVID-19 kept everyone at home, theaters closed and many turned to platforms like Netflix for entertainment. Yet, without a social group to watch with, that entertainment still fell short. Platforms like Netflix and Disney+ immediately developed “watch party” extensions meant to bridge the social gap. After their initial push, these extensions slowly faded away without catching on.

Benjamin Thevenin, a BYU film professor specializing in new media, recalled trying watch parties at the start of the pandemic. From his perspective social media can be a great tool to hearing new thinking about films, but digital watch parties still do

not foster quality social interactions.

“I don’t necessarily see the benefit of watching a film online at the same time as others,” Thevenin said. “Maybe my opinion will change as the technology develops further.”

Even though digital watch parties haven’t caught on, streaming still enhanced Thevenin’s small gatherings during the pandemic. For the first time he shared classic films like “E.T.” and “The Wizard of Oz” with his children. He described these shared movie moments as a highlight during a difficult time.

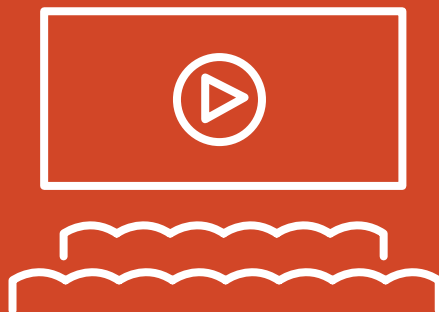
“The fact that — while we were stuck at home, unsure of how the pandemic would play out — we could click a button and share these memorable movie-viewing experiences together was a real treat,” Thevenin said.

Team members at the Palo Alto Research Center specifically studied group TV viewing with an eye toward replicating the social experience digitally. The study identified six essential components in viewing parties. The study was published in *The International Journal of Human Interaction* in February 2008.

Overall, all these components relate to the idea of eliminating distractions both in audio and video. Viewers may talk to one another, but usually during less important or transition scenes. One subject in the study danced as his team scored a touchdown. His friends commented on the action but did not take their eyes off the screen. Even though people at viewing parties enjoyed one another’s company, the TV always remained the primary source of entertainment.

Members of the study recommended ways to improve the social experience of movie-viewing online. One such example includes signaling important moments to viewers so that they know when to pay extra attention to the show. Reversely, a “Catch Me Up” feature could summarize scenes that viewers missed while talking over the film.

The researchers also recommend distinguishing different types of audio either through breakout rooms or separate speakers. Separating the main video dialogue from the social conversations will give viewers greater control over what they interact with. This would also allow side conversations to take place between smaller groups of people, just as large groups usually break up into smaller conversations.





traveling as



KIAN BANGERTER PHOTOS

Kian Bangerter and Emilee Hastings in Galway, Ireland.



Bangerter visited the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles outside of Paris.

By Sicily Stanton

Planning a trip to Europe in the middle of the semester right around midterms was probably not Emilee Hastings' brightest idea, not to mention with such a tight budget, but after she had put her mind to visiting Ireland, she wouldn't let anything stop her.

Hastings and her friend, Allyson Fife, both BYU students, had been talking about visiting Ireland for months. As two redheads, they felt that it was their right to visit the motherland of gingers and cheer.

With not much of a plan or knowing how they would accomplish such a feat, they bought airplane tickets as soon as they saw a sale and figured they would do what they could to just make it work. They each spent months gearing up for the big trip.

They made an effort to set aside a portion of money from each paycheck and, as the fall semester began, they communicated with professors

about their plans to take a week off. They planned to complete assignments and exams before they left so they wouldn't fall behind in their studies.

"Once I got there it was all totally worth it," Hastings said. "It was so stress free and I was just focusing on being in the moment and enjoying Ireland, not worrying about anything else."

The experience of planning a trip, saving for it and making it work with the demands of school and work was empowering.

"I felt like I could do it on my own," Hastings said.

Hastings and Fife proved to themselves that traveling as young adults was possible, exciting and worthwhile. When traveling is a priority, even as a young adult, with limited income and the weight of school and work, it still can happen. There's always a way to make it work.

Being in Ireland was unlike anything Hastings had experienced before. She and Fife explored the remnants of ancient castles, took in the breathtaking beauty of some of the world's most

famous cliffs and became well-acquainted with a culture and people very different from the Provo standard.

"I feel so grateful for everything that traveling has taught me," Hastings said. "I feel like I know so much more about different cultures and it's really taught me that I have so much to be grateful for."

The trip provided opportunities to learn through experience. They talked to the locals, tried new cuisines and took in the landmarks and architecture that can't be found anywhere else in the world.

Kian Bangerter, another BYU student, had also chosen to participate in this kind of experiential learning by traveling abroad. Unlike Hastings and Fife, Bangerter chose to take off the whole semester instead of trying to work around classes and extra academic stress.

For Bangerter, traveling offered more than a semester's worth of learning, so taking the time off felt like the best decision.

"(Traveling) made me realize how much I don't know," Bangerter said. "It actually made me want to learn more about different things rather than what I thought I wanted to study."

From August to October 2022, Bangerter, his sister and a friend traveled to 13 countries in Europe. The montage of countries, cultures and customs began to change the way Bangerter saw the world.

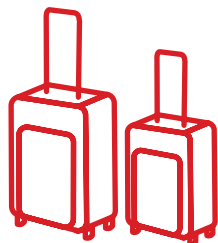
"It opened my eyes to how a whole other side of the world lives," Bangerter said.

Hastings and Bangerter had met over the summer while working at FSU. As new friends, they had shared their plans to travel in the coming months.

Upon realizing that they would both end up in Ireland around the same time, they made plans to reconnect on the other side of the world.

From Provo to Ireland, the five world travelers reconnected at the train station in Galway and shared what they had seen on their travels thus far.

"It was so exciting because we were in this whole new place that neither of us had ever been before, not a single other person in the country knew us, and here we are together exploring," Hastings said. "It was so much fun!"



a young adult

Roaming the streets together and dancing in the local pub created memories that they'll each hold onto for a lifetime.

As the magical week in Ireland came to a close, Hastings and Fife boarded a plane back to the United States and geared up for another packed week of classes and responsibility. Bangerter, on the other hand, along with his travel partners, moved on to the next country they felt drawn to with still a few weeks left to explore and travel.

The decision to travel as college students was an easy one for both Hastings and Bangerter. The benefits of traveling young and not having responsibilities such as a full-time job or family obligations allowed for flexibility and ease in traveling which completely outweighed any potential cons.

"There are so many benefits," Bangerter said. "First of all, you can travel cheaper because you have more energy, you're able to see a lot, there's also not really an opportunity cost like I wasn't missing out on my career and it didn't really put me behind in my education."

There may always be obstacles in life that may seem hard to navigate through when wanting to travel such as money, school, work or other life responsibilities and obligations. The obstacles never truly go away but they're definitely easier to work around as a young adult.

The sacrifices to travel abroad are most likely always worth it due to the life experience and world education gained, Hastings and Bangerter said.

The World Tourism Organization published in its Global Report on The Power of Youth Travel that "youth travel has become one of the fastest growing segments of international tourism, representing more than 23% of the over one billion tourists traveling internationally each year."

"Today's young travelers venture independently to further places, stay longer and immerse in other cultures to build their life experiences," the report said.



The Temple Bar Pub is one of many points of interest in Dublin.

ISTOCK

Resources are abundant for young adults and college students who want to travel. From study abroad opportunities to working as an au pair or just taking off a semester and applying the money that would've been spent on tuition toward a truly world-class education, the possibilities are endless.

Financial cost is often one of the main reasons young adults avoid traveling. However, study abroad programs often have plenty of financial aid offered, there are a plethora of websites that offer discounted rates on flights, hotels and other forms of transportation and most museums or exhibits around the world offer student discounts with a school ID, just to name a few opportunities.

Hastings said she didn't have to take on an extra job to afford her trip. She simply made it work by cutting corners, not going out to eat as often with friends and just being more conscious of the money she spent.

Bangerter, with quite a more expensive adventure, said he "basically just spent the money he would've spent if he had gone to school." By

taking off the semester, he saved his tuition fund and applied it towards traveling around Europe and, when he got back, lived at home to save on regular living expenses.

Travel is now back to being a viable resource and exciting source of adventure for young adults following the recent COVID-19 pandemic. After years of halted travel and extensive restrictions, most of the world is back to normal with arms open wide for visitors.

Not only has the return of regular travel been a benefit to tourists that now get to see the world just as freely as before the global pandemic, but it is an extreme source of revenue for locals abroad that suffered greatly financially through the pandemic.

Travel aids all involved. The World Tourism Organization released a study that showed how the pandemic "led to massive losses in international

revenues for tourism-dependent economies: specifically, a collapse in exports of travel services (money spent by nonresident visitors in a country) and a decline in exports of transport services (such as airline revenues from tickets sold to nonresidents)."

Since the pandemic has come to a close, and travel restrictions have been lifted, it's viable for young adults to travel again to restore the economic functioning of travel and show that it is safe for the world to open up their borders to travelers once again.

Following their European adventures, both Hastings and Bangerter have since returned to classes at BYU with a deeper understanding and appreciation for the world and what it can teach. Their studies have continued on and tuition was still able to be paid. Nothing but good memories and valuable experience lingers as a consequence of their time in Europe last fall.

For more information on traveling, visit Sicily Stanton's travel podcast at unvr.se/takeaflight



COVERING A PANDEMIC

Just like everyone else, The Daily Universe had to deal with COVID-19 while still working, learning and publishing. Here are a few of the events from The Daily Universe during that time three years ago.



UN declares global emergency

The World Health Organization declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global emergency last week after the number of cases spiked more than tenfold in a week.

The U.N. health agency defines an international emergency as an "extraordinary event" that constitutes a risk to other countries and requires a coordinated international response.

China first informed WHO about cases of the new virus in late December. China has reported more than 20,438 cases, including 780 deaths.



Masks at BYU

BY SYDNEY GONZALEZ

Face masks have been a staple in the U.S. ever since the 1918-1919 influenza pandemic. The university's plan for fall semester includes a requirement that students, employees and visitors use face coverings in classrooms, inside buildings and during intermission events. Masks are required in private buildings and on enclosed air space occupied by a group of people. The plan also requires physical distancing in all areas of campus.

The rules have been met with mixed reactions. Some students praise the move while others view it as a violation of their individual freedoms.

BYU President Kevin J. Worthen announced the decision to require masks in a letter to the community on Oct. 12. He stated that the university's primary responsibility is to protect the health and safety of its students, faculty and staff. He noted that the use of face coverings is a simple, effective way to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses.

Worthen said that the university's decision is based on the best available scientific evidence. He noted that the use of face coverings is a simple, effective way to reduce the spread of respiratory viruses. He also noted that the university's decision is based on the best available scientific evidence.

Division of the ban are already happening on social media. After BYU announced the plan for fall semester on Oct. 12, a social media post by a student named "Katie" on Facebook stated that she was "not wearing a mask" and that she was "not wearing a mask" and that she was "not wearing a mask".

The post was quickly removed by Facebook. The student who posted it was identified as Katie Smith, a sophomore at BYU. She stated that she was "not wearing a mask" and that she was "not wearing a mask".

The university's decision to require masks has also led to some confusion. Some students have asked why they are required to wear masks in some areas but not in others. The university has explained that the decision is based on the best available scientific evidence.

Reflecting on the pandemic's impact on BYU

March marks one year since BYU notified students that classes would take an extended weekend off and then be held virtually for the remainder of the semester. What if first-semester students had a chance to move back home with family turned into an ongoing, worldwide pandemic that no one at the time properly understood. In reflection of this anniversary, here is a recap of how the pandemic affected life at BYU.

Feb. 22, 2020

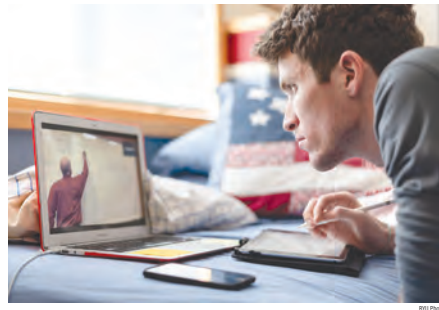
BYU has its first on-campus case
BYU was notified by the Utah County Health Department that an individual diagnosed with COVID-19 in attendance at the men's basketball game between Gonzaga and BYU on Feb. 22.



Associated Press

March 23, 2020

First BYU student tests positive
BYU received a notification that a student enrolled in classes at BYU tested positive for COVID-19. An off-campus program member reported the case to the university on March 23, 2020.



Math education major Christian Dabneke participates in his differential equations class online from his home in Chaska, Minnesota. Photo: BYU Photo

March 11, 2020

BYU begins canceling study abroad programs
At the time, students were still planning on studying abroad during Spring and Summer terms, but later all programs were canceled until at least Fall Semester 2021.

In this Sunday, March 22, 2020 photo, hundreds of people gather to welcome missionaries returning home from the Philippines at the Salt Lake City International Airport.

March 20, 2020

Missionaries begin coming home
The First Presidency and Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints sent out a letter to members worldwide on March 20 announcing changes to missionary work because of the continued spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

March 12, 2020

Winter 2020 classes go remote
BYU announced over Twitter that all classes in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints were going to be held online for the remainder of the semester. The university also announced that all worship services, activities and other public gatherings were temporarily canceled worldwide.

June 23, 2020

BYU announces Fall Semester plans
BYU announced it would hold hybrid classes, which combine in-person and remote learning for Fall Semester.

Aug. 27, 2020

Students begin returning to classes
BYU outlined its expectations of students regarding COVID-19 protocols for Fall Semester, but few if any would enforce those guidelines until at least Fall Semester 2021.



People dance at a Young/Younger group on Sept. 4, 2020. Photo: Preston Gray

Sept. 4, 2020

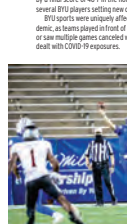
Parties continue despite pandemic
Prove-based party Young/Younger held an indoor dance party one month after receiving attention and social media criticism for a similar event. The "Dance Up Down Back to School Neon Dance Party" took place Friday, Sept. 4, contradicting BYU's week-back-to-work.

Sept. 22, 2020

Utah County officials pass mask mandate
The Utah County Health Department and county commissioners issued a public health order mandating masks on Sept. 22, 2020 after cases of the county spiked.

Sept. 26, 2020

Football starts without fans
BYU Athletics originally announced that 6,000 fans would be in attendance at LaVell Edwards Stadium against The Cougar. Home games were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.



BYU broadcast journalism senior Karmen Kodra poses for a graduation photo wearing a cap, gown and mask. Photo: Karmen Kodra

Jan. 5, 2021

BYU adopts new testing plan
BYU adopted a new testing plan developed by the Utah System of Higher Education. According to a message from University Communications, all students who are in campus housing or have a private residence were "asked to take a COVID-19 screening test" after the first days of winter semester.

March 11, 2021

Utah makes vaccine strides
As of March 11, 365,587 Utahns were fully vaccinated, with plans to gradually increase vaccine efforts and availability in the coming months.



BYU Photo

Oct. 12, 2020

BYU announces Winter Semester plans
BYU students learned they would attend Winter Semester classes with the same options of in-person, hybrid or fully online classes.

Nov. 24, 2020

Students make Thanksgiving plans
BYU encouraged students to return home and stay there through the holidays, and end winter with all classes going remote after Thanksgiving.

Nov. 8, 2020

Former Utah governor announces statewide mask mandate
Utah Gov. Gary Herbert announced a statewide mask mandate Nov. 8, 2020. The mandate required COVID-19 masks and face shields, Utah's most stringent, and required masks in all public places.

Jan. 19, 2021

President Nelson gets vaccinated
President Russell M. Nelson and his wife received their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine on Jan. 19, 2021. The president is the first of the church's top leaders to get vaccinated.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints on Jan. 19 says "The Church urges its members, employees and missionaries to be good global citizens, and to help quell the pandemic by safeguarding themselves and others through immunization."

COVID-19 OUTBREAK

Progression of COVID-19

World events: Dec 13 WHO declares COVID-19 a pandemic; Jan 31 WHO reports 100,000 cases; Feb 11 WHO reports 1 million cases; March 11 WHO reports 10 million cases.

Church events: Dec 31 Church members begin to return to church; Jan 1 Church members begin to return to church; Feb 1 Church members begin to return to church; March 1 Church members begin to return to church.

Staying healthy

Flattening the curve

The graph shows the number of new cases per day. The curve starts high and then flattens out, indicating that the spread of the virus is slowing down.

COVID-19 Impact

181,379 cases worldwide
4,464 deaths in the U.S.
78 deaths in Utah
39 cases in Utah

Active US COVID-19 cases

The map shows the number of active cases in each state. California has the highest number of active cases, followed by Texas and New York.

Members deal with canceled travel plans for General Conference

BYU members who had travel plans for General Conference have been disappointed by the decision to cancel in-person attendance. Many members have expressed their disappointment and are looking for ways to stay connected.

BYU cancels classes March 13-17; Church cancels all public meetings

BYU has canceled classes from March 13 to 17, and the Church has canceled all public meetings. This decision was made to help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

CES advises students to beware of COVID-19 scams

The Church Educational System (CES) has advised students to be wary of COVID-19 related scams. Scammers are using the pandemic to lure people into fraudulent schemes.

March Madness, sports canceled over COVID-19

March Madness and other sports events have been canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This has led to disappointment among fans and athletes.

COVID-19 precautions prompt Costco

Costco has implemented new COVID-19 precautions, including mandatory mask-wearing and social distancing. These measures have been well-received by customers.

THE UNIVERSE

Serving the Brigham Young University Community

General Conference speakers focus on Restoration in honor of 200th anniversary

General Conference speakers have focused on the Restoration of the gospel during the church's 200th anniversary. The speakers have shared their insights on the significance of the Restoration.

BYU community adjusts to COVID-19 precautions

The BYU community has adjusted to COVID-19 precautions, including mask-wearing and social distancing. These measures have helped reduce the spread of the virus.

Y-Serve hosts mask-sewing station on campus

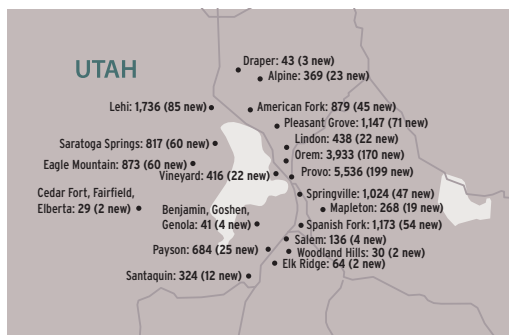
Y-Serve has hosted a mask-sewing station on campus to help students and faculty members. The station has been well-received and has provided many people with masks.

BYU virologist explains what you need to know about COVID-19

A BYU virologist has explained what you need to know about COVID-19. The virologist has provided valuable information on how to stay safe and healthy during the pandemic.

IN A PANDEMIC

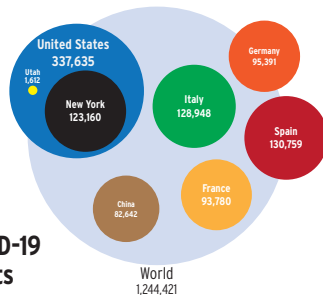
Total coronavirus cases in Utah County



Total cases and new cases as of Oct. 4-5 in each city according to the Utah County Health Department.

Allie Peterson

Current COVID-19 case counts



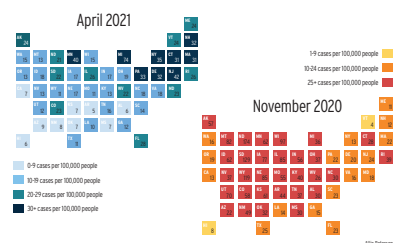
The U.S. has nearly one-third of total confirmed COVID-19 cases in the world. If the state of New York alone were a country, it would have the fourth most confirmed cases in the world. Information taken from John's Hopkins COVID-19 map at 10 a.m. on April 6.

Ben Daniel



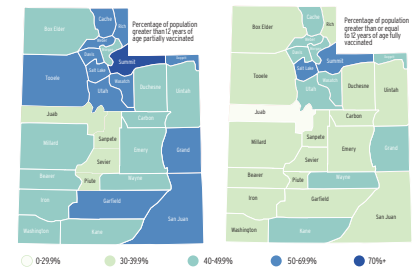
Ben Daniel

Virus cases per 100,000 in November 2020 and April 2021



Allie Peterson

Vaccination percentages per county and age group



Allie Peterson

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BYU PHOTO/NATE EDWARDS

BYU associate head coach Mark Robison high fives heptathlete Halley Folsom Walker at the 2022 NCAA Outdoor Track and Field National Championships.

BYU track and field associate head coach

Mark Robison

H A S H I S E Y E S

FIXED ON

THE BIG 12

By Alexander Amrine

As BYU track and field competes in its last year of independence, associate head coach Mark Robison is anxious to get the program up and running toward success next year upon joining the Big 12.

“The thing that was the most fun for track and field was the conference meet,” Robison reflected. “That’s what brings your team together. We were very, very good in the Mountain West Conference. Before that it was the WAC.

BYU’s track and field teams have been without a conference since 2011, when athletic director Tom Holmoe announced that the university would part ways with the Mountain West Conference. While most of BYU’s other programs joined the West Coast Conference, track and field was left homeless.

“For us to go to a conference, that is going to be probably be the best thing that could ever happen to our program for the past 12 to 13 years,” Robison declared.

Robison, with 35 years at BYU under his belt and having been part of 21 indoor conference championships and 20 outdoor championships, is no stranger to success. He yearns for motivation to push himself as a coach and to push his athletes.

“Without having the conference meet, the only barometer for knowing how good of a team we have is how (we) do at nationals,” Robison said. “At nationals, it’s a pretty tough

situation, because it’s one of the bigger meets in the whole world, with lots of international athletes.”

With Big 12 on the horizon, the program is excited for a way to better gauge the strength of its team and the individual athletes. BYU, however, is no stranger to the Big 12 programs.

Since BYU is not a part of a conference, it participates in a variety of meets across the country, occasionally even splitting up its distance team from the rest of the pack to send it to separate competitions. Some of these competitions have led the team to compete against their future Big 12 neighbors.

Robison said he believes that conference meets in the Big 12 will be more important than the national meets. He explained that program rivalries will factor heavily into this.

“The Big 12 will be, probably, the number two or three best conference for track and field in the country,” Robison said. “To go from no conference and just trying to find your way, to go to one of the best conferences, is going to be an amazing change.”

BYU has proved that it doesn’t necessarily need a conference to find success, producing numerous All-Americans every year along with national champions and even Olympians. However, that doesn’t mean the team isn’t looking forward to the new chapter in BYU track and field history.

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BYU

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