



MY PERSONAL MICHIGAN HEROES

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Mask wearing, social distancing, and online school all began back in March. How much we have changed, advanced, and become more aware of what a pandemic really is! It's hard to get through these challenging times without chatting and being active all day. We have had to rely on our support systems for inspiration and courage. For me, it was my three grandparents that gave me strength and encouragement. Each of my grandparents stayed positive, kept me in touch, and led by example.

Learning to adjust took time, but my grandparents showed me ways to stay positive. Although my family isn't huge, we are very close. Birthdays are celebrated together, yet during quarantine, it was too risky. So together, my grandpa and I would plan big birthday party drive-by's. My grandma shared positivity through cooking. She would pack up leftovers and other special goodies for us. It felt good eating delicious food, knowing it was made with her love. This made me feel like we were still together, eating and having fun even so far apart.

In addition, my grandparents found creative ways to keep me in touch, such as socially distanced chats, when my family would talk, eat, and make memorable moments from a distance. These hangouts were the highlight of my days. The hardest part was at the end: We could only give air hugs. It was somewhat awkward, but it helped us manage. My grandparents also helped me stay connected through messages and telephone conversations which made my days 10 times better. Staying connected is important; living without touching is harder than imagined.

Another way they inspired was by their example. Being a teen, I understood the need to wear a mask and social distance. Yet, I wanted to hang out with friends and felt down. To keep me active, my grandparents sent ideas: cook a meal, play a game, play with my dogs, and so forth. Their suggestions motivated me to accomplish something with the day. Life became more adventurous. To keep my mind off what I couldn't do, they made everything fun - including

masks. My grandma is a wonderful seamstress. So she bought colorfully designed material and spent hours making comfortable masks for my family and for my aunt to take to work. My grandma made a huge difference for so many when there was a shortage of supplies. She showed me that small things make a difference.

Things were weird during quarantine, but having my grandparents nearby helped. Like Jay Kesler once said, "Young people need something stable to hang onto - a culture connection, a sense of their own past, a hope for their own future. Most of all, they need what grandparents can give them." Grandparents affect our lives every day by showing what is right or wrong, giving advice, and so much more. I'm so glad that I have the grandparents I do. My grandparents are the reason I came out of the lockdown the way I am, and I wouldn't change anything.



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