

features

A new kind of homesick

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When you think of homesickness, you probably think of being away at camp, sleeping over at a friend's house as a kid or going on a weekend trip with your school or church.

You are away from your family and the subtle ache for your typical routine sets in.

For freshman, Alexis Montalvo, it did not look like that. In fact, it was almost the complete opposite.

An only child, 15 years old, she was on vacation with her parents, but was not having as much fun as she thought she would.

She missed her dog and longed to hang out with her friends who, without hesitation, carried on without her as she watched, miles and miles away, through her social media accounts.

Though she still managed to enjoy her new adventure and time with her parents, she was desperate to return home.

Many individuals are experiencing that same thing right



DiLello and Montalvo heading to lacrosse practice.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: ALEXIS MONTALVO

ber of students leaving campus this semester.

"Homesickness is always go-

said. "School work is important but try and get out and meet new people to distract

providing multiple events on campus for students to attend.

So far there has been free bowling at Lurray Lanes, movies held in the student center auditorium, paint by number and embroidery kits provided, blood drives held and much more.

But what about the students who are not experiencing homesickness?

If it is so common is it wrong that they are not anxiously awaiting the next time they speak to their parents or get to sleep in their childhood room?

Although statistics for students who experience wanderlust rather than homesickness were not located, countless bloggers share their stories of the guilt they felt for not missing home.

They reported getting off of airplanes, starting a new life and not feeling a twinge of sadness from leaving home.

This lack of sadness often led to a feeling of shame or guilt when they realized they were not desperately missing family or wanting to return.

Freshman, Talia DiLello, related to this more than feeling homesick.

Although she did not necessarily experience guilt, she provided insight on why it is alright for students not to miss home.

"I'm happy here. I have good friends here and they keep me occupied," she said. "I don't really feel I should be homesick because I'm enjoying myself."

From a young age, DiLello battled with homesickness.

Whether it was staying with her grandparents or having a sleepover with friends, she usually reached a point where she had to call her parents.

"When I went to my grandparents' home or a sleepover, I just wanted to be back home," she said. "I would miss my dog and my parents, and I just really wanted a hug."

Her parents usually did not come pick her up, so she was forced to combat her feelings.

"I would just have to push through it and take time for myself," she said.

However, she has not felt that since arriving on campus. She believes experiencing that as a child really helped her learn to overcome those emotions.

"I haven't really felt it," she said. "I've had times where I really want to see them, but I'm doing okay here."

Although she is not homesick, DiLello still deals with the struggles of schoolwork just like many students on campus.

She shared her most successful way of coping with the stress.

"Take some time for yourself," she said. "Focus on yourself. That's what helps me. When I take some Talia-time it helps me relax."

Whether you are sitting on a beach missing your dog, friends and routine or lying in bed longing for a hug from your parents, both of these feelings are entirely normal in individuals who have left home for the first time.

It is important to know that strong emotions of homesickness, especially with new regulations due to COVID-19, will go away with time on campus.



DiLello, Montalvo, and Grace Miller enjoying free bowling at Lurray Lanes.

now here on campus, especially freshmen who are probably learning to be on their own for the first time.

According to a survey by the UCLA Higher Education Institute, 69 percent of first year college students report feeling homesick.

For Montalvo, it was vacation all over again two weeks after she moved in, but this time she did not long for her friends.

"I want to go home, but with lacrosse we're not allowed to because of COVID, so I'm stuck here, and I miss my dog and my mom and dad," she said. "I try to call them every day, but it's not the same."

Residence Life Coordinators Cait Hamilton and Lexi Keller discussed, together, their observations on students and homesickness this year.

"Students are definitely in their rooms more than the typical year," Hamilton said. "We also see students seeking community but not knowing how to find it in their hall, unlike previous years where students could easily find community through hanging around in the common areas and visiting friends often."

In their experiences, it became clear that homesickness will always be a challenge for college students.

However, there has already been an increase in the num-

ing to be an issue facing students when a new year starts, but this year students definitely seem to be going home or missing more often," Keller said. "We have seen an increase in incidents around this feeling this year so far."

This feeling could be linked to the lack of engagement with others.

Much like Montalvo's ache for her friends over 700 miles away, students are not able to make typical connections with new people.

The new rules on campus, such as not being allowed to have more than one guest per person in the room, floor party events being cancelled and social distancing guidelines all aid in the inability to connect as well as in the past and are creating a void students long to fill.

Luckily, Hamilton and Keller agree on how to overcome this feeling — get involved.

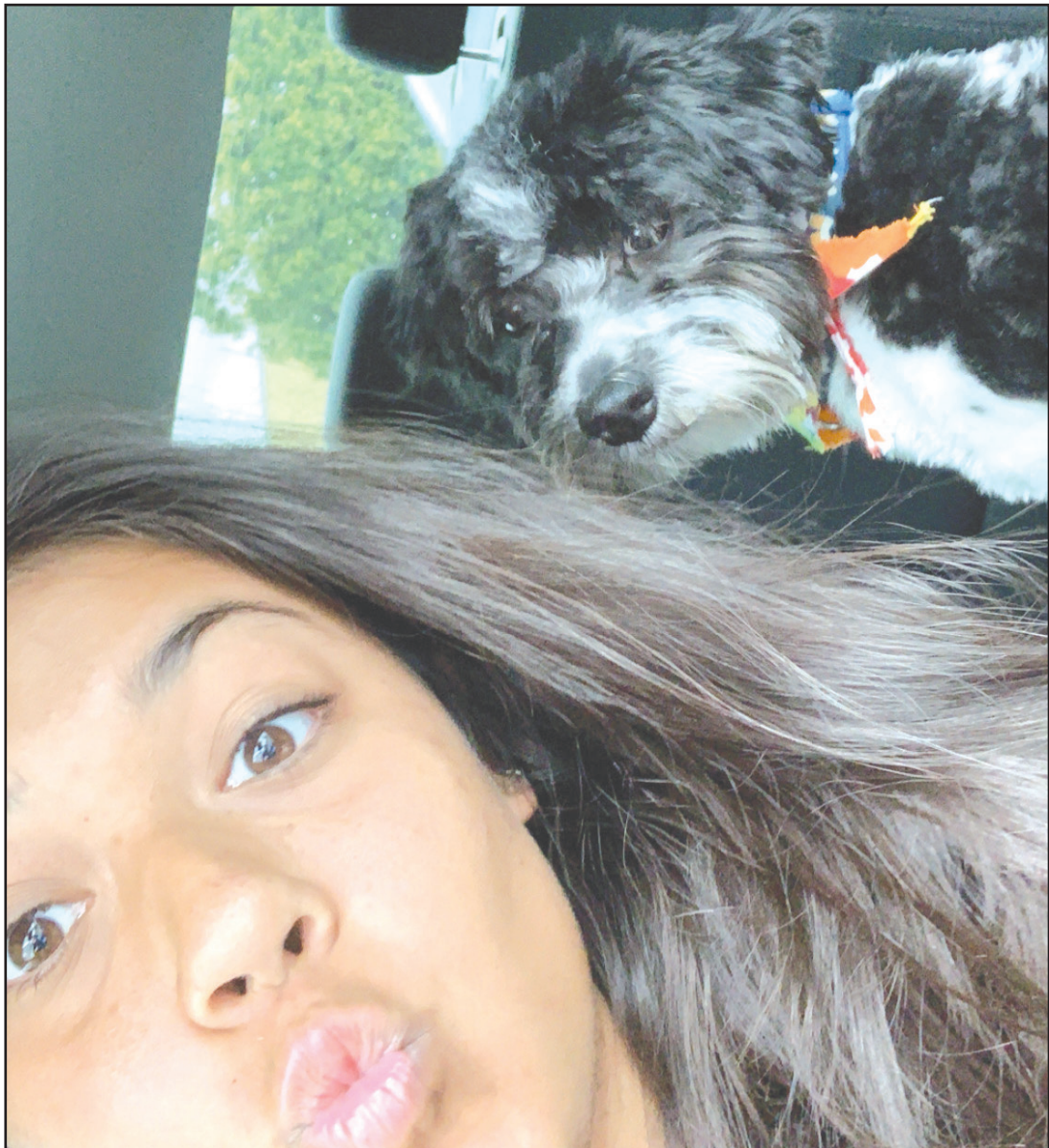
"Whether that's in their community on their floor or through campus organizations, it can help immensely with homesickness," Hamilton said. "By staying on campus over weekends and attending events, students can be a part of making AU feel like a home away from home."

Montalvo offers similar advice.

"Try not to be crammed in your dorm all the time," she

you."

Ashland University is working hard to make this easier by



Montalvo with her dog Leo, who she said she misses when she feels homesick.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: ALEXIS MONTALVO