

# features

## On-campus isolation and quarantine: A new normal

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Imagine you woke up with a migraine on a Tuesday morning. You did not think much of it because you get them often. Nonetheless, it is pretty bad so you reach out to your clinical instructor to let her know that you might not make it through your Wednesday clinical. It is no surprise that she suggests you get tested for the coronavirus. So, without a second thought, you get tested on that Wednesday. Although you were confident that you did not have coronavirus, you tested positive. An hour after getting off the phone with the Ashland University nurse practitioner on Thursday, you are already moved into your on-campus isolation apartment. Within 48 hours of waking up with that migraine, your living and class situations have shifted. This is the experience of nursing major Alli Hylton, who was not expecting to be in isolation the third week of her senior year. “I had a lot of questions the first day just because I didn’t really know what was going on and it took me for a complete shock because the only serious symptom I had for more than a day was my migraine,” Hylton said.

and I have to take my temperature everyday,” Hylton said while still in isolation. Despite being sick and alone, Hylton strived to find the silver lining in her situation. “Getting my schoolwork assignments done, that’s been great because I have all the time in the world to do it,” she said. Her normal day-to-day routine in isolation was relaxing and productive, as she would make time to do both types of things. “I make checklists everyday so I make sure I can get as much as I can get done in the day,” Hylton said. “I go through the checklist and when I’m done, I turn on Netflix and just chill the rest of the night.” Since she has a history of anxiety and panic attacks, Hylton made the conscious effort to stay in contact with the people closest to her — her parents and boyfriend. “They’ve always reassured me,” she said. “I like to think that I’m a positive person but you know when you’re locked in a room for quite some time it can start to close in on you.” Undoubtedly, there were times when she felt there was no light at the end of the tunnel. Nevertheless, with friends who would stop by and wave from out-



Hylton decorated her desk with her nephew’s drawings sent from her sister.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: ALLI HYLTON

going through a lot worse than I am and I don’t even have coronavirus, it’s just the fact that I’m cooped up,” she said. “I just have to keep reminding myself that yes, it could be better but it could also be worse.”

they’re willing to help out or do any type of alternatives for me.” When it comes to the AU administration that handles monitoring students in isolation or quarantine, Zollinger sympathizes with the difficulty of it all. “It can be frustrating from my end and their end,” she said. “I know today I was asking them a lot of questions just because I was confused and there was a misunderstanding.” Ultimately, Zollinger understands that the administration is dealing with a lot in controlling the spread of COVID. “It’s new for everyone,” she said. “What they’re doing for everything, even though it can be confusing and frustrating, they’re doing a really good job.” Any employee of the university, faculty or staff, can volunteer to be a CARE team member for students in isolation or quarantine. Elise Riggle, COVID response coordinator and leader of the CARE team, says that their job as team members is to reassure students that they are okay and will get through this difficult time. “I call it standing in the gap for people as they’re adjusting to this temporary inconvenience,” she said. “We have to contact our careers at least daily to make sure that they’re doing okay health-wise and that their needs are being met.” While CARE team members do not provide any medical help, they ensure that trash gets picked up and dirty laundry gets cleaned, among other things. “We’re not gonna give them any

say contact the health center,” Riggle said. “So really it’s a triage if they’ve had issues with their food, issues with their health, issues with their trash picked up or if they need more supplies.” Riggle believes that this extra step AU has made, shows that they really do place an accent on the individual. CARE team members are assigned to students in isolation or quarantine both on and off campus. “If they decide to go home we’re still checking in,” Riggle said. In the grand scheme of things, Riggle feels that a CARE team member’s responsibility is to sympathize with their current situation. “It’s saying that we know this stinks, we know the situation is not great,” she said. “We just try to make it more bearable I guess and let people know they’re being thought of everyday.” Hylton, Zollinger and Riggle all want AU students to take the dangers of COVID seriously. “Everyone gets a little sick and stuffed up, but that’s the scary thing about this virus is it is something that looks so casual but it can be deadly to people that have underlying conditions,” Hylton said. “If you bump into the wrong person you could seriously hurt them.” For those who are currently in isolation or quarantine, Hylton shares some words of hope and positivity. “Stay strong, it is temporary,” she said. “Drink your fluids and stay safe.”



All students in isolation, and sometimes quarantine, are required to have their own bathroom.

PHOTO SUBMITTED BY: ALLI HYLTON

The harsh reality of being exposed to or having COVID comes with many changes. Students are required to switch to fully virtual learning, isolate or quarantine alone for 10 to 14 days and keep in communication with the AU health center and the Ashland County Health Department. For Hylton, the hardest part of isolation has been a need to rely on others. “I’m a very independent person,” she said. “I’ve never been one to make a list and give it to someone, like one of my friends. I can’t do that.” While students in isolation or quarantine can have food delivered from the convocation center, Hylton chose to have her parents drop off pre-made food. “My dad made a bunch of food at home and then brought up one of the microwaves that I’ve had from previous years at school,” she said. Hylton did not have any severe symptoms while in isolation. She did, however, begin to experience congestion and some shortness of breath. “I have to fill out a questionnaire about times and symptoms

side, Hylton was able to remind herself that this is temporary and she will get through it. Someone who knew what she was going through was her roommate and friend, Ella Zollinger, who had to quarantine as a result of possible exposure to COVID. “They recommended I quarantine just to make sure that no symptoms came up,” Zollinger said. Throughout her time in quarantine, Zollinger dealt with feelings of loneliness. “The first couple of nights it was just uncomfortable because it was a place I wasn’t used to and nobody’s here,” she said while still under quarantine regulations. Like Hylton, Zollinger found that this time alone was not the worst thing in the world. “It’s definitely given me a lot of time to focus on homework and also focus on myself because I feel like I’m very caught up in my everyday routine,” she said. “I’m at peace with it because I know this is something I probably needed in my personal life.” With support from family and friends, Zollinger focused on the positives while in quarantine. “There are people out there

Zollinger believes that her AU professors did a great job working with her situation. “Classes have been going well,” she said. “My professors have been super understanding and



Hylton did what she could to make her isolation room a comfortable space.

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