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George Bey

LESSONS FROM COVID: NORTHSIDERS DISCOVER A SLOWER WAY OF LIFE WHILE COOKING AND RECOGNIZING ONE'S OPPORTUNITIES

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Tue, 04/20/2021 - 4:00 PM

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic forced a slower way of living for many people, one that George Bey of Jackson usually adopts three months of the year.

“I’m an archaeologist, I spend months living in the jungle pretty isolated,” said Bey, who holds the

THE E-EDITION



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Chisholm chair in arts and sciences at Millsaps College.

Most years from May to July, Bey lives in Yucatán, Mexico, and directs the school's Kiuc archaeological project.

"When you're there, you read books, you sit outside, you slow down," said Bey, an expert on the ancient Maya culture and a National Geographic explorer.

Bey hasn't made an official study of the time-out from regular life brought on by the pandemic, but he's thought about its influence on his life, his work and interactions with others.



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"I'm wondering how it's going to change us, not at the most profound levels of our lives but our day-to-day interactions," he said. "Will we ever go back to shaking hands and hugging and be as touchy feely?"

"I tend to think for some people they will not ever be as likely to touch you. I've heard some folks say they're relieved not to do that."



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Perhaps the most important lesson learned has been the value of spending time with others, he said.

Bey said his son, George, moved back home for about six months from St. Louis after his office shut down and he could work from anywhere.

“We look back on that pretty fondly,” he said. “It was a chance to become a tight family.”



3 / 6



Like many others, the Beys cooked meals at home, spent less money because stores were closed and turned to the internet, social media and Zoom to communicate with others. “The computer and social media became the glue that helped us interact,” he said.

Bey recalled how he ordered over the internet toilet paper from China and it took six months to arrive. “They’re tiny, little rolls of toilet paper, so small you wouldn’t want to use them,” he said with a laugh.



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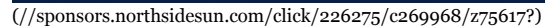
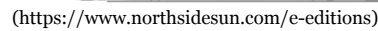


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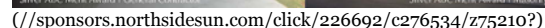
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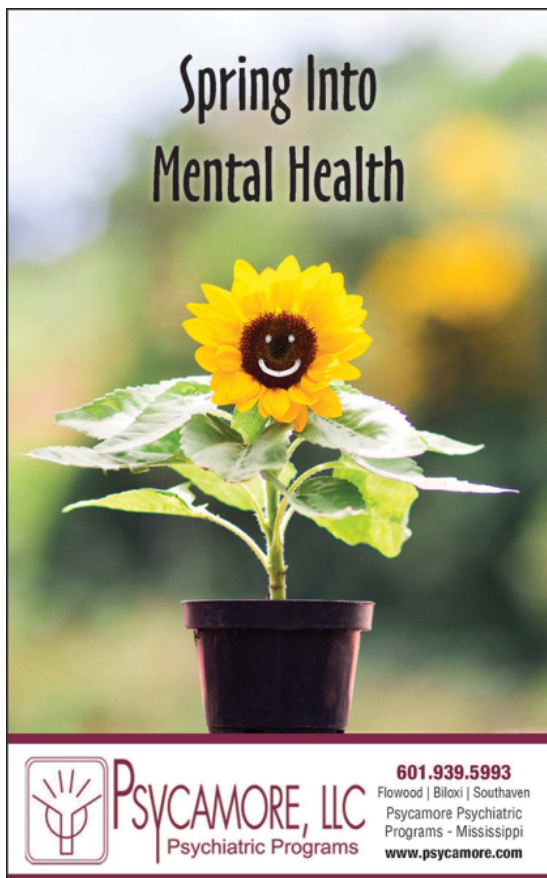
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Sugg said her son, Andrew, remembers the uncertainty of not knowing when life would return like he knew it before the pandemic. “It seemed fun at first but after about two weeks of not seeing your friends and having your mommy as your teacher, it wasn’t fun,” she said.



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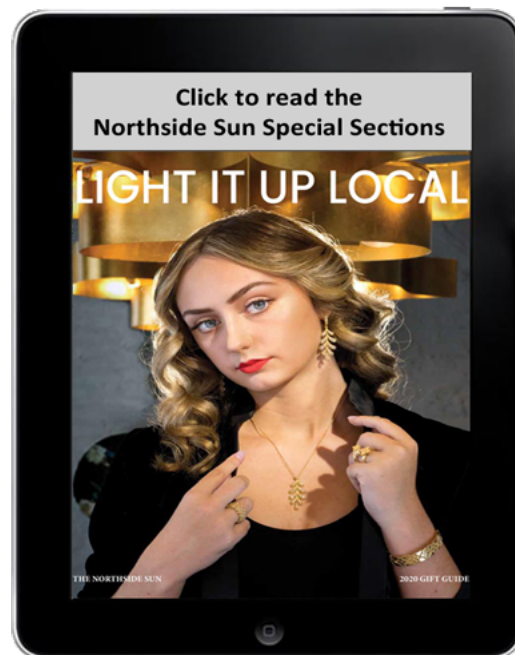
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Sugg's biggest takeaway is how privileged she is.

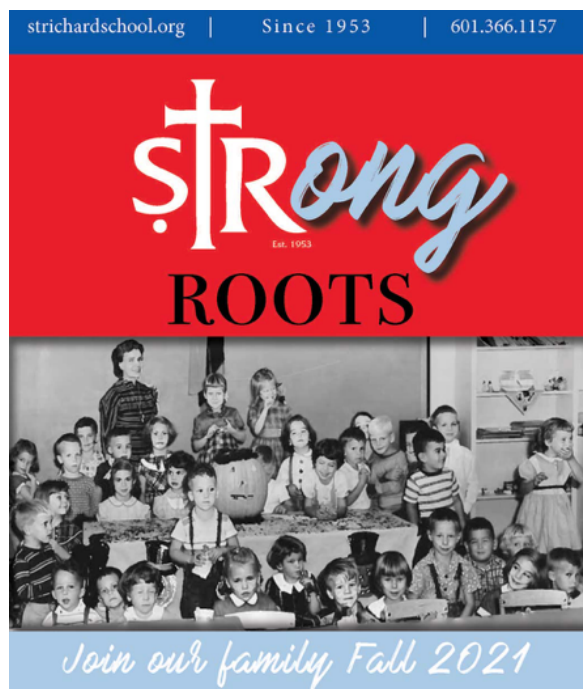
"It was a confluence of events that happened with the Black Lives Matter movement and the pandemic," she said. "I realized how much opportunity I have and can give my children. The pandemic made me cognizant of disparities."

Jane Clover Alexander of Jackson, president and CEO of the Community Foundation of Mississippi, found renewed respect for first responders from physicians and nurses to Instacart shoppers.

"You don't have to wonder if they're going to be there," she said. "The people we need the most are



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dependable.”

Alexander said she learned it’s possible to conduct all kinds of business remotely including grocery shopping and that’s made her consider how much and what she’ll want to return to do in person.

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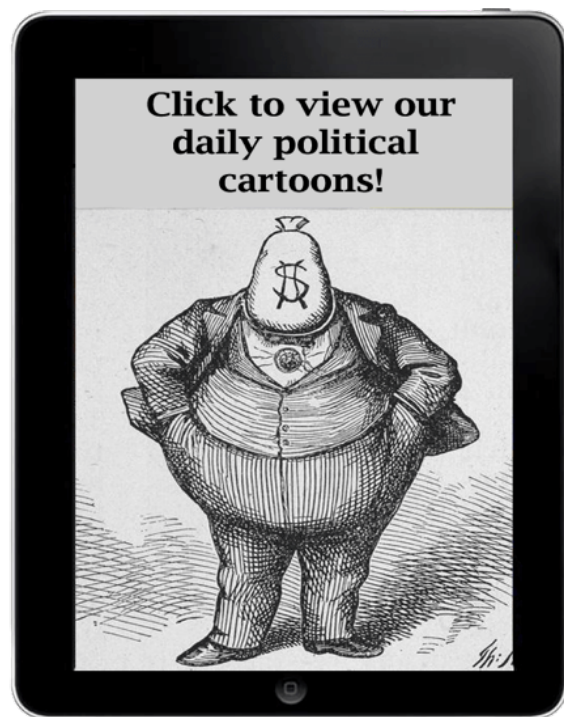
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It’s been good to see that many people do care about others in their communities, she said.

“I saw that in folks who wanted to help feed people,” she said. “I also thought it was astonishing to see how quickly the food insecurity issue bloomed.”



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Many nonprofits took on more clients when they saw a need and provided services they had never offered and that's inspiring, she said. "That's such a giving spirit," she said.

Alexander admires the role creativity played a role in keeping businesses afloat. "Our restaurants are a good example of how people pivoted to provide curbside service and sold boxes of food," she said.

Ashley Bronzi of Madison, a mother of three children ages 18, 16 and 11, said she valued having her family near, something she learned from her mother.

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"I lost my mother on March 12, 2020," she said "It was unexpected. She passed away within three weeks of us finding out she was sick. She had cancer and we had no idea. She taught us a lot in three



(/comics)

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weeks. I don't know if I would have realized it if it had been in the grind of life."

Bronzi, who works in medical sales, said she came to value stillness.

"I'm not a person who sits still," she said. "But I'm thankful for being forced to sit still and reflect on what's important."

Reed Hogan of Jackson said he and his wife, Caroline, and their four daughters, ages 14, 13, 11, and 9, used the time to slow down, eat meals together and be together, often in the hot tub outside at their house.

"That became our sanctuary," he said. "We were outside in the hot tub almost every day."

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A parking lot at First Presbyterian Church provided a useful place where Hogan's family could meet his parents, siblings and their children in a socially distant manner.

"There were 24 of us," he said. "The kids would bring bikes and go cars and toys and we'd all sit in family



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Mississippi Becomes 4th State to Allow Access to Federal Financial Aid for Career Pathway Programs
(/schools-press-releases-state/mississippi-becomes-4th-state-allow-access-federal-financial-aid)

Below is a press release from the Mississippi Community College Board:

Making Music: Retired state supreme court justice organizes group to present virtual dulcimer festivals
(/features-local-news/making-music-retired-state-supreme-court-justice-

Pods. It became almost a daily event.”

Hogan, a gastroenterologist, said he and his wife have promised themselves with life slowly returning to normal not to get caught up in the rat race but to find a healthy balance.

“As purposeful as we try to be, you realize life throws a lot at you,” he said. “You have to be disciplined to keep your priorities.”

The Rev. Ben Robertson, rector at the Chapel of the Cross in Madison, recalls nights spent with his wife, Ellen, and their two children enjoying ice cream and playing cards after they had to isolate for two weeks after a vacation overseas. “My wife is the best and she usually wins, but we can hold our own,” he said.

He looks forward to the celebration of friendships and other relationships as more individuals are vaccinated against coronavirus and begin to gather again.

“My prayer is that we value our communities and our connections more,” he said, “things like church membership, the Rotary Club, tennis groups, whatever associations individuals have. That we recognize the importance of those.”

organizes-group-present)

Some Mississippi community colleges are making their summer classes free (/state-schools/some-mississippi-community-colleges-are-making-their-summer-classes-free)

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Family mass (/local-news-schools/family-mass)



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Robertson touched on a point made by his mentor that ‘trauma that isn’t transformed is transmitted’ in his Easter sermon.

“Now that we stand on the other side of the resurrection and, hopefully, the other side of the pandemic, how is that going to be transformative?” he said. “How we will be transformed in Christ as disciples and as people of God? It’s an opportunity to take what we’ve learned and become greater people, a greater parish, a greater society.”



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