

# H-F allows me to live the good life during the COVID-19 pandemic

Is anyone else living their best life during the time of COVID-19?

Whoa, let's pull up short before I get this wrong: This is a trying time that has destroyed lives and stretched us all thin. The fiscal and social health of our communities is frayed, and there is no end in sight.

## VIEWPOINT



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There is no way to endure the pandemic without respecting it, and we know it's time to wear masks, maintain social distance, think smart and hunker down. I am literally self-isolating in my basement as I write this following a positive test.

That said, we all know that life

has changed, and some of the changes will outlive the virus. And not every change has been negative.

In coming months, I plan to examine what makes life special in the Homewood and Flossmoor communities. For starters, I want to celebrate the things that have highlighted those special qualities. Not all is bad – we have friends and neighbors who are surviving and thriving. What makes magic when the world is so weird?

**Backyard innovators.** Celebrate the parents who have strung the yard with lights, fired up the grill, inflated a mini pool and added a slide, built a fire circle and outfitted the space with smashball, spikeball, prokadamia, horseshoes, cornhole, croquet and bocce balls. The American backyard sweepstakes stepped up its game in 2020-21, and we've seen some fine entrants in H-F Land. Home schooling and virtual learning; meet staycation and fun in the sun. Celebrate our neighbors whose gardens have never



Provided photo

H-F residents have gotten creative with their back yards. Add tree lights, a grill and a little bonfire and yards of any size become safe havens from the problems of the pandemic.

tasted better, whose hedges are sharper than ever, and who have figured out how to attract yellow finches without letting the squirrels and raccoons shimmy down poles to eat all the birdseed. When forced to stay home, scores of us have made home worth the stay.

**Bicycles, Puppies and Walks.** To keep from going crazy, people have turned to the physical. It's hard to find either puppies or bikes for sale, but thank goodness for Goodspeed Bicycles and Kedzie's Bike Doctor, run by longtime Homewood and Flossmoor residents. If you can get your hands on a puppy or dust off the old bike, life gets better in a snap. And walking, the most elemental form of mobility, reminds us that we can take in the world, stay safe close to home, and breathe a little easier as stress dissipates step by step.

**The Forest.** Walkers have been drawn to the 3.6-mile loop at the Cook County Forest Preserve District's Vollmer Road Grove, and for good reason. The mix of bogs, wetlands, grassland

and forest enlivens the senses and soothes the soul. Enough people have discovered the life hack of escaping to nature that the Vollmer and Flossmoor Road parking lots have been full from dawn to dusk nearly every day during warmer weather – and not empty even on these coldest, darkest days.

The multigenerational amenity is free to the public and represents the best of a democratic space – and there's so much more to discover. From Lansing Woods to Sweet Woods to Glenwood Woods to Joe Orr Woods and Bartel Grassland, there are some 20,000 acres of natural space within 15 minutes' drive of H-F High School – and people are discovering that sleeping giant with joy.

**Working from Home.** Pandora is not going to put the PDFs, DocuSigns, Zooms and Doodle Polls back in the box. Didn't we see this coming when email was invented? When we can take a meeting in PJ pants and make and eat lunch in the kitchen, why exactly would we plan to go back to commut-

ing an hour each way, every day and paying for the space? It's been creeping along for years, but the coronavirus is finally the tipping point in the work-from-home revolution. Yes, it's not everybody, but we've all been surprised by the number of things that can be done from home, and for some jobs and roles we wouldn't have expected. We live in the future of work.

**Family time.** Haven't you had enough? True, depending on your perspective maybe this is just way too much togetherness. But be honest: We may remember this as the closest our families have ever been. I know my rational mind wouldn't have expected all the moments I had in our son's 18th year, a few challenging but several rewarding beyond measure. Disease has caused a re-evaluation of who matters in life and altered the sense of safety and closeness to the point that when the deck gets shuffled, family wins.

**Hyperlocal news.** It's not only the H-F Chronicle, but let's take a moment to recognize the Herculean and selfless efforts to keep the news going – at the Patch and Block Club Chicago, and this fine publication most of all. What happens around us just seems that much more important in a world gone mad, so let's be thankful for those laboring to figure out the social, financial and literary formulas to keep us on top of the news that we're reminded is so important to our lives.

**Neighborhoods.** All of this points to the increasing significance of the good old neighborhood, a thing nearly forgotten in the age of the global virtual community for everything from Swedish crochet patterns to artisanal bread baking. The reach of the World Wide Web is great, but lo and behold, proximity rears its head and reasserts itself: The neighbors we see walking, biking and gardening make a difference to who we are and how we live. There's no forgetting that now.

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