

Person Interviewed: Dave Cort

Date Interviewed: January 16, 2021

How has your daily life been affected by the quarantine or Corona Virus?

I'll just say that the biggest effect has been...well, I will be turning 65 in late April of this year and in all of my 65 years, except for maybe when I was born, this has affected my life more than anything. On Friday March 13, 2020 at 5:00 pm the San Geronimo Valley Community Center (SGVCC) closed. At first we thought that the SGVCC and the school would close for 2 weeks and so here we are almost 10 months later. While the SGVCC has continued to do its work and change its work, I have completely worked out of my home. This is my 30th year working at the SGVCC and I used to go 5 days a week and now I maybe go to the community center once or twice a month for maybe 5 minutes to pick up mail or something like that. I'm completely working from home and completely working on Zoom or FaceTime or the phone, so it's been the most profound change in my entire 65 years.

Do you feel supported by The Valley community during this time? If yes, in what ways has your community supported you? Can you think of any other challenging time in The Valley that would compare?

Once again this has been...a word that's been used a lot...unprecedented. The reason why I'm so happy I live in The Valley and work in The Valley is because early on in this pandemic people like family members, friends, neighbors, colleagues, different schools, non-profit organizations...everyone knew right away that we were going to have to work together. Collaborate, cooperate, and support each other at a level that we've never supported each other. It's been an honor to work here and live here because I've never seen a level of people supporting one another as they do here. One of the terms we were using a lot in the first few months was that we were literally building the plane while flying it. We're really trying to figure all this out while we're in the midst of it. How to get people food, how to give people emotional support, how to provide information. Everyone came together, it's been the silver lining and so positive. That cooperation and collaboration was the key to everything that we're doing.

Do you think that the safety precautions such as masks, social distancing, and hand washing are too much, too little, or just enough?

For decades the SGVCC has really worked closely with our County of Marin Public Health Department and I thought that was critical. I know the people at public health and really trust them and so we felt it was really important for us as a community center for our staff and our board of directors to really model what public health was recommending that communities should be doing. Absolutely, early on we really embraced wearing face coverings and supported the distribution of face coverings, to

our food bank, and social distancing. In those early months people were questioning it. Even locally...we know all the challenges from the national and federal level, but locally, I have friends who are nice, loving, caring people who were unsure. I felt as someone, you know in my position, as executive director of the community center, that I had to send out a really clear message about how I felt through our staff. Really early on we made videos of us wearing our face masks and coverings, maintaining social distancing, and washing our hands. We put it up on our reader board for weeks and weeks, so we really believed in it and tried to do every thing we could so we could walk our talk. I think it has definitely proven, 10 months later, how critical that was.

Have your thoughts about the pandemic changed at all since March of 2020?

Yeah, they change every day! Every morning I wake up and say, "Whoa! This is really still happening!" It's easy to get overwhelmed if you let your mind go there. Our lives are so different. Of course, we're all staying home. Back when I was watching different things like a Family Music Hour concert or a ball game, you never thought twice about going with a big group of people to a concert or Family Music Hour where we'd gather in the multi purpose room lots of people side by side. For our whole lives it was so natural. You maybe thought if you had a cold you could pass it on, but 10 months later, just the thought of walking into a big group of people in the multi-purpose room or a classroom or a senior lunch at the CC seems unreal. It's really unknown when we're going to be able to do that again. Is it going to be 6 months? A year? Or will it ever be normal again? Will I ever go to a packed park to see a Giant's game? In some ways it's reality and in some ways it's surreal.

Let me add something, I've had the really good fortune of knowing this man who lives in Marin. He's world renown and his name is Dr. Larry Brilliant. Larry has been working in infectious diseases his entire life. He's now in his 80's and, with many other people, he helped cure small pox in India. It was affecting billions of people, so I've had the good fortune to speak to him. He's been interviewed on CNN and he's written articles. In some ways Larry knew how it was going to happen. It's something our society is going to have to deal with and learn. In some ways I almost feel that we will view the world as "before COVID" and "after COVID." Our whole world is going to be different. And maybe a lot of things will be better. We've seen there are silver linings, as there often can be when something affects every human being on the planet. I heard this program the other day that in the 1400's the Bubonic Plague in Europe a third of the people died from it. What followed the Bubonic Plague was the Renaissance Age. Hopefully, something like that will happen! The hard part, the sad part, is that many people have gotten sick from COVID and many have died. A very close friend of mine died about 2 months ago from COVID. We've all known someone who's been touched by this.