The Class of 2020 Has Seen It All

BY: JAMIRA NETTLES
Gata Data Staff Reporter

The year 2020 has taken an unexpected turn for students, especially graduating seniors. With the rise in cases of COVID-19 that caused schools worldwide to resort to online schooling, the class of 2020 has been filled with uncertainty about the future of their high school career and regret over what could have been different.

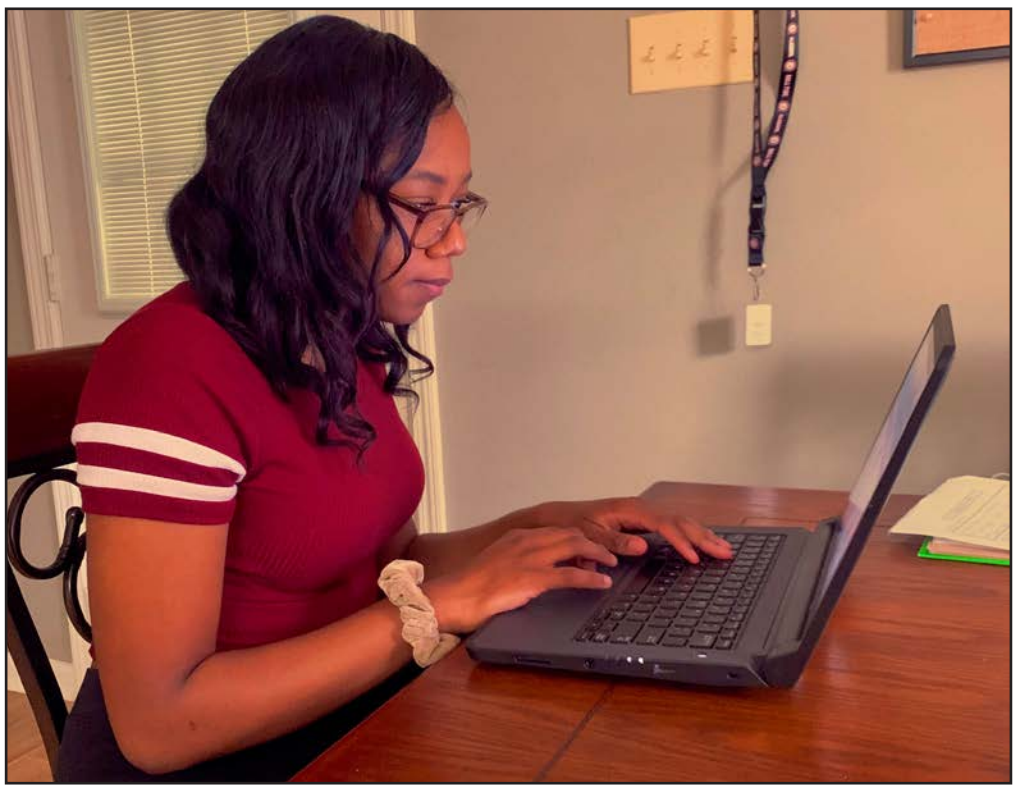
The transition to online schooling has been a learning process for both students and teachers. Teachers are forced to convert content to an online format where students can still get all of the information that they need to learn, and students have to be responsible for not only keeping up with schoolwork but making sure they understand the materials without having the face-to-face interaction in a classroom.

Although teachers are available during the day either on Remind or through email, students are missing out on personal teaching in a classroom setting. Many students find this learning disconnect difficult. Senior Romona Thomas acknowledges that she is "more motivated to do work when in a classroom environment," and Trinity Bartlett feels as though the transition does not allow for her to have "a teacher to help explain the content" in a way that is effective.

Other seniors like Brynne Mire agree the transition has affected their learning overall. Mire said, "The environment in which I do my work is an aspect of how I learn, but I'm making the most of it." Even though some aspects of online schooling, such as extended due dates and lenient grades, can allow students to work at their own pace, they are still struggling to understand topics, which for seniors can be discouraging as they are close to moving into the next chapter of their lives.

This is not the first serious setback this class of students has faced. The class of 2020 got off to a rocky start when they entered STA because of the flood of 2016. These students have endured "never being in a completely finished school building, being placed at Dutchtown, in the pods, and a new building with construction taking place all throughout our classes," observed Mire.

Now, the pandemic has prevented seniors from having a normal end to their high school journey. From their last prom to graduation, seniors are concerned about missing out on milestones that many were looking forward to experiencing. However, most seniors seem to be missing the simple things about high school more than anything. Ranging from the ability to see their friends and new people daily, being in a classroom environment, and seeing their beloved teachers, being in quarantine has made many seniors realize how much they appreciated these little things.



Senior Gata Data Staff Reporter Jamira Nettles works on her stories from home while school is closed.

Along with missing the everyday things, some seniors are under lots of stress during this time because of the other senior traditions they are missing out on. Things such as parties, pictures and other traditions are potentially off the table for this graduating class. "Having all of your plans cancelled can be disappointing," shared Thomas. The pandemic has affected seniors more than initially imagined since no one pictured March 13 potentially being their last day of school, leaving a "disheartening impact" on everyone.

Though this year's graduating seniors may not have had a normal high school experience, many still want to leave a positive mark on STA and encourage other students who will graduate in coming years. Doing so will allow them to leave a legacy they can be proud of, even if it is not under the best of circumstances. When asked for words of advice on making the most of high school, Mire stressed the fact that students should, "join clubs, be active in them, make friends and don't pour over the small things. It will be over before you know it, so enjoy as much of it as you can before it's time to move on."

Shutdown

Not only has the closure of school affected the way students are able to learn, but it has also interfered with many of their end of the year traditions. Riley Richard expressed a few traditions she and her fellow classmates worry they will lose out on such as prom, the water fight on the seniors' last day of school, graduation and senior trips. Richard is most concerned about whether the school will be able to have a normal graduation ceremony and said that is "obviously the saddest part" because the seniors "should be celebrated as a class."

As of now, the school board does not yet have enough information to reschedule any events, but Templet has assured the Gator Nation that she will announce any updates as soon as she receives them. "I will make every attempt to be able to uphold the end of the year traditions and events. I want nothing more than to be able to celebrate these milestones with them," explained Templet.

In the past few weeks, all aspects of our lives have been impacted by the virus, not just school. Governor John Bel Edwards has ordered all non-essential businesses to close for now, so places where students and others in our community would normally spend time, like the bowling alley and the movie theater, are currently shut down. All restaurants have even been limited to drive through or carry out service only.

All citizens have been told to stay at home unless it is absolutely necessary to be out, to practice social distancing and to take this virus seriously. Taking these precautions is the only way our community will be able to stop the spread of COVID-19 and get back to our regular lives.

Living in quarantine has taken a toll on many parts of our community. In addition to many people being afraid to have to leave their houses, some individuals and businesses are scared of the financial impact this pandemic will have since many jobs and companies are being put to the test through this time.

Of course, the most devastating aspect of the spread of this virus is the fact that it has infected so many people and taken so many lives. It is important for all of us to remember that our thoughts and prayers must remain with the sick and the healthcare workers who are putting their lives on the line to care for them.

Richard shared her feelings about the situation and said,"Even though I'm sad my high school years will be ending in this way, I don't want it to mask the fact that there are countless lives being taken away due to this virus and those affected. I think it's extremely important to remember those who are putting in so much effort to help, such as our medical fields and those risking their lives to help those in need. Hopefully everything will slow down soon. My prayers go out to them."

As a Gator family, we will get through this together, and we will be back at school when it is safe to return. Templet said, "I am extremely thankful to be a Gator, and I hope that everyone is staying safe and healthy!"



GATA DATA STAFF PHOTO BY EMILY POCHE

Since dining in is not an option right now, there have been long drive-through lines daily at the fast food restaurants in Gonzales.

Staying Considerate During the Pandemic

BY: SAMANTHA JOHNSON
Gata Data Staff Reporter

There is a great deal of confusion and uncertainty surrounding everyone during this trying time. Stemming from this difficult time, many people have gone into a state of hysteria and are going out and beginning to hoard almost anything that they can find in stores. While there is no problem with preparing and setting yourself up to remain well stocked throughout this period, we need to be reminded to think of things practically and not just buy everything that is within reach.

There is only so much product being delivered and stocked in stores at a time, so if everyone feels the need to grab the entire stock of certain items, then the situation only becomes worse. As a whole, we need to remember to stay within the limit of getting only what we are able to use within a manageable time frame. If we only go out to get items as we actually need them, then everyone will be in a much calmer state than if the first few people who get to the store buy out everything and leave everyone else to fight over the leftovers.

This will also help to keep stores less crowded and reduce the number of people who are together in one place at the same time, which will result in less widespread panic from so many being in close proximity to others. Additionally, it will give workers at the stores the necessary time to keep things in order and clean to reduce the spread of germs. Products can then be evenly distributed within our community, preventing people from having to go to multiple places in search of supplies.

Along with being considerate when getting supplies, there is also a need to think of ways we can help one another during this stressful time. Think of your neighbors who may not be able to go out for themselves, and offer to pick up supplies for them if needed. You can volunteer at places who are helping the needy as you feel comfortable as well. If nothing else, try to sign up to donate blood if you are eligible to do so, especially if you have a universal blood type. Just remember to stay courteous and show gratitude to all essential workers at this time since they are all doing necessary work to keep it so that others are able to protect themselves.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY TANYA WHITNEY

STA Coach Tanya Whitney, MSG (Ret.), is inducted into the Army Women's Hall of Fame for being a trailblazer and a pioneer in Army Aviation Maintenance.

Women's Appreciation

BY: ELLIE HASENKAMPF
Gata Data Staff Reporter

Since the month of March is dedicated to honoring women, it is important that we take a moment to appreciate everything that the great women at St. Amant High School do to make our school successful. There are so many strong and talented women who work together to create the environment that we have all come to love.

Tanya Whitney, MSG (Ret.), is one Gator who deserves special recognition. Whitney graduated from STA in 1979 and now coaches cross country and track. She was honored on March 11 in Arlington, VA, at the Women in Military Service for America Memorial. Whitney was inducted into the Army Women's Hall of Fame in recognition for her extraordinary service as a trailblazer and pioneer in Army Aviation Maintenance and for her work with other veteran women. Whitney participates in many veteran organizations and is a dedicated supporter of our school and our community.

Another woman at STA who was recently recognized is Mrs. Casey Sevario, who teaches food and nutrition. She was recently named Teacher of the Year at STA. Sevario has been described by some of her coworkers as a "ray of sunshine" who "always has a positive attitude and a heart of gold." She is genuine and compassionate with others and "truly cares and values every student." Sevario is committed to preparing her students for the future and creates relationships with them that make a lasting impact.

Although these two women have been highlighted for their specific accomplishments, many women, including faculty and staff members, students, cafeteria workers, custodians and administrators, all make St. Amant a great place.

Outside school, our mothers, grandmothers, aunts and others lead and guide us through our needs. The work they do makes a significant impact on our lives, and they all deserve appreciation.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY CASEY SEVARIO

Mrs. Casey Sevario, who teaches food and nutrition, is voted Teacher of the Year at St. Amant High School.

What does feminism mean to you, and what do you hope to see this generation of women accomplish?



"I would like to see a change in the self esteem of women this generation. I want girls to push each other up instead of down. True feminism is lifting women up, and they are beginning to gain confidence." - Faith Parker



"I want to see more women in office and see change with women in less stereotypical careers paths." - Heidi Frederic

"Feminism is about women becoming equal to men, not over men, but equal. Women are beginning to make strides in the world as a whole." - Danielle Delaune





“Sara Bray inspires me because before freshman year I was scared to enter high school because I thought I wouldn’t have a place, but Bray/Choir gave me a sense of family and home for school.”
- Boyce White

“Rachel Carson inspired me because she was also an environmental scientist and writer. She wrote a book called ‘Silent Spring’ about how DDT pesticide is harming animals (mostly birds) and started a movement that led to environmental protections.” - Bess Corbitt

What woman inspires you?





“Malala Yousafzai and Greta Thunberg are two women that inspire me. Both women have fought for what they believe as teenagers, even when the society around them told them it was impossible. Malala was shot in the skull while trying to fight for young girls’ right to go to school, and Greta has organized many strikes for climate change that are changing the world.” - Maddie Perri

“Ella Fitzgerald's voice inspires me. The way she composed music inspires me to be a better songwriter for my music.” - Daniel Vides

Spring Sports Halted by Coronavirus

BY: ASIA GUILLARD AND TREVOR DUNNE
Gata Data Staff Reporters

All sports that play in the spring semester have been cancelled by the LHSAA due to the current coronavirus pandemic. Although teams like gymnastics, track, baseball and softball have been brought to a premature end, the Gator athletes have made many achievements along the way and have much to be proud of.

The gymnastics team's season was interrupted before they got to participate in their second meet. Their first meet took place on March 6 and 7 at Baton Rouge Magnet High School, where Carli Sheets, who is a junior at STA, was one of the only girls to place and earned first in floor and third on beam.

The students who are on the team are really disappointed on how their season has come to an abrupt stop. Sheets said, "Well, since like gymnastics is basically cancelled it really sucks because we had just started and only got to compete once." Many of the athletes said they were looking forward to improving in the next meet and redeeming themselves.

The team also found out recently that their state meet for gymnastics is cancelled due to the stay-at-home order being extended until April 30. "I wasn't able to make our first meet, so I won't be competing at all this season, and it's so upsetting for everyone because we worked so hard," shared Alycia Doner. Hadija Gray is a junior on the team and is upset about the season as well. "The coronavirus just cancelled the rest of my junior season, and this year I was supposed to letter, so it was really heartbreaking for me."

While they are home, some of the athletes are still staying active and trying to stay in shape, but it hasn't been easy for them. "I personally have some equipment at home to practice with, but most of our team doesn't, which makes it hard to maintain skills," Doner commented.

In spite of the season ending, the gymnastics team is proud of themselves because they know that they would have gone far and that they got to "bond" with each other. Even with just one meet under their belt, they have accomplished so much this year. "My accomplishments from this season would probably be learning a lot of mistakes I made in the first meet, and how to improve myself on the mat and off," explained Sheets.

Because of COVID-19, STA's track and field season also stopped after they were only able to compete in one meet. Before they could travel to Zachary High School to compete again, the team was told that their season was ending due to the governor's order to limit the amount of people in one area because of the coronavirus.

Senior Reagan West said, "Not being in track had affected me and the team because we worked so hard at practice, and when we weren't able to run anymore, it hurt everyone. I even started crying because I feel like all of our hard work went to waste, and the coaches were even a little upset too."

Many juniors and seniors are struggling with the season ending so suddenly because they won't be able to get seen by recruiters. Sara Braud, a junior on the team, mentioned, "Many people don't have a senior sports season, which can be really discouraging." Marty Jamison, another junior track athlete stated that it affected the team "because seniors had hopes of getting a scholarship, and juniors thought their scholarships were soon to come."

Many of these athletes are trying to stay active and positive throughout the pandemic by practicing their skills on their own. "With everyone staying home, not everyone has the resources to practice. For running events people can still run, but for most field events most of us can't practice at all," added Braud.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY LAUREN LAMBERT

STA's girls gymnastics team gets ready to warm up before their competition at Baton Rouge Magnet High School.



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY SUSAN VAN NORMAN SPELL

The baseball team faces off against Mandeville High School.

Along the very short road of this track season, some athletes were able to compete in indoor track for a full season and then the one outdoor meet.

For instance, Jamison finished in the top 10 of the state indoor meet for long jump. In the one outdoor meet, he won first place in the long jump and hit his personal best of 23 feet.

West placed eighth overall last year in hurdles in indoor, and this year she came back and got sixth. "Moving up two places made me so happy that knowing I'm improving," shared West. She also hit a personal best by dropping her 300 hurdle time down by half a second, which is not easy to do. In their outdoor meet, she placed first in all of her events. "It's upsetting because I wish we could've had more meets where I had more competition."

STA's baseball and softball teams have also had to face seeing their games cancelled due the coronavirus outbreak. At first the teams thought they would be able to return to the field in April, but the extended stay-at-home order will prevent that from happening.

When the virus first started to spread, the baseball players were still able to compete as long as only 250 people were allowed into the ballpark at one time. Things then started to become more serious, and it was determined by the government that no more than ten people should be permitted to any gathering. This made the players start to question whether their games would be cancelled altogether. "If this is the case it will be really unfortunate for me and the rest of the seniors on the team," said senior pitcher Reece Blanchard.

Unfortunately, Blanchard's concerns eventually became reality. The players had hopes from the beginning of winning district this year and earning the chance to go on and win state. However, the Gator baseball team was forced to pause their season with a record of 10-5 because of the spread of COVID-19.

The current circumstances are certainly trying for the baseball team. Sophomore Lee Amedee acknowledged that it is a disappointment, especially since they were doing so well before this happened. "I wish we could have finished the season with all the seniors," said Amedee.

Still, the players are maintaining a positive attitude as best they can. "We all know what we're doing now is keeping our community safe, and we can only hope to get everything back to normal as soon as possible," Amedee expressed.

The Lady Gators softball team brought their season to halt with a record of 13-0 when they were forced to cancel their games. Like the baseball team, they also had high hopes of winning district and state, especially with the talented seniors on their team this year.

Senior Addie Bourgeois, who was recently signed to play college ball next year, shared, "I'm so heartbroken that this happened my senior year and took away my last season. My heart goes out to all the other seniors whose season has been taken away from them as well. I think this is a very tough situation, and it's hard not to be able to spend our senior year on the softball field with our best friends. We're all just trying to stay positive in such a bad situation."

Maintaining a positive attitude may not be easy to do, but it is so important for all of the student athletes to stay focused on what is important right now, which is staying healthy.

Jesse Allison agreed that it is heartbreaking that she finally "got to get on the field and play again" only to have things come to an end so quickly, but she just wishes the best for her teammates. Allison expressed, "It's sad not being able to play your last season of the sport ever and with the best team I could've asked for. I miss my team, and I hope everyone stays safe!"

The softball players, just like the other student athletes, wish they could have gotten back on the field just one more time this season. Still, Gator fans are extremely proud of all of the teams and are thankful for how well they have represented St. Amant High School this year.

Bravata Transforms Gator Baseball

BY: TREVOR DUNNE
Gata Data Staff Reporter



PHOTO CONTRIBUYED BY BRANDON BRAVATA

Brandon Bravata was welcomed to STA over the summer as the new head coach of the Gator baseball team. Bravata was previously a head coach at Berwick High School, where he led the team to a Class 3A State Championship in 2018, and it was the school's first championship win in 40 years.

STA's baseball players seem to really like Bravata's style of coaching so far, and they have formed a positive relationship with him. "He has brought a certain level of fun and swag to the organization, and it allows us to play loose, be confident and be ourselves, most importantly his energy," said senior Lathan Bourgeois.

The athletes feel as though they are having fun and enjoying the game of baseball more than they have before. "He's the type of guy that you can be best friends with," according to Bourgeois. Bravata's great relationship with his players clearly impacted the start of this year's season, which was evident in their strong performance on the field.

Bravata may have a great relationship with his players, but when it is time to work, he is very serious. "He keeps us from being down and moving slow and lets us know when we need to pick it up. He just has so much passion and excitement, and we just feed off of it," explained Bourgeois.

There have been several changes since Bravata arrived at STA, including new uniforms and improved equipment. The school has also been making renovations to Gator Park to repair the fencing, pour new concrete and move the bullpen. However, perhaps the biggest impact has been made by the changes Bravata has made regarding players and their positions.

Many of the upperclassman players are being given more opportunity to play in other positions, and Bravata has changed the team's hitting aspect by making everyone on the team hit. Under Bravata's leadership the Gators are hitting .331 as a team compared to last year's .276, and they are currently 10-5 and ranked 7th in the 5-A power rankings.

How Worried Should We Be?

BY: MYA MRE
Gata Data Staff Reporter





PHOTOS CONTRIBUTED BY RALPH WILLIAMS

Shelves that are normally lined with soap, hand sanitizer and toilet paper are completely wiped out at Walmart as a result of customers trying to stock up on necessities when it is announced that COVID-19 is spreading throughout Louisiana.

Many people are on edge right now because of COVID-19, better known as the coronavirus, which has infected hundreds of thousands of people and killed thousands across the United States. Stores everywhere have been completely out of disinfecting wipes and sprays and toilet paper because people have been overbuying and stocking up out of fear. But is this reaction necessary?

Although the virus has spread quickly, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and many other medical teams around the world are studying and working hard to learn about and find a cure for the coronavirus. As of the beginning of April, the CDC had calculated a total of 395,011 cases in the U.S. and 12,754 deaths.

When the virus first began spreading, most of us did not think it would turn out to be such a major issue. Sophomore Brennen Winn commented, “I feel like since it is a new disease it is dangerous, but we don’t need to protect people as critically as they do.” Winn believed that the quarantining of people who were even suspected of having the virus was unnecessary. However, the number of cases quickly started rising, and as of April 2, Louisiana had reported over 9,100 cases of COVID-19. Louisiana Department of Health officials have confirmed that they are doing all they can to run tests as needed.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include many cold-like symptoms such as, fever, cough and shortness of breath. These symptoms are actually not as bad as flu symptoms, which include fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headaches, fatigue and vomiting or diarrhea. The flu had also infected 1 billion people and killed between 29,000 and 646,000 between Oct. 1, 2019 and March 1, 2020, globally. Meanwhile, the coronavirus had only infected 87,000 and killed about 4,000 globally at that time. These statistics caused many people to question the seriousness of the disease.

When asked about his concern over getting the virus, Winn replied, “I don’t want to get it, although I am not in the age range it affects.” It is true that rates do increase with age, but the reality is that no one is immune. Anyone can contract the disease even though it will impact some more than others. Usually when someone dies because of the coronavirus, it is because they are elderly and/or have underlying medical conditions that have already weakened their immune systems. If you are young and strong, you do have a greater chance at fighting off the sickness.

On March 16, Governor John Bel Edwards shut down all public schools in Louisiana due to the rapid spreading of COVID-19 in Louisiana. Since then, most people have been social distancing and quarantining inside their homes. Non-essential places, like bowling alleys, malls and movie theaters, have been closed to prevent people from going out, and the governor issued an official stay-at-home order that has now been extended through April 30.

Some believe the media has played a big part in creating excessive fear about the disease among people though. Sophomore Jade Boudreaux believes “that the media is making Coronavirus way worse than what it is.” Boudreaux also commented, “I am not scared of the coronavirus because I have no reason to be scared.”

Many people are on the other side of the fence and have taken things too far and gone to extreme measures to prevent getting the virus. Hoarding items like Lysol is not necessary. The best ways to prevent getting COVID-19 are covering your coughs and sneezes, washing your hands frequently with soap and water and staying home when you’re sick.

Now that Louisiana is on a stay-at-home mandate, hopefully the spread of the disease will slow down. It is important that we all stay calm, only get out if we have to and stay safe.

Ask Sally



BY: SALLY
Anonymous Gata Data Reporter

Dear Sally,

I am feeling a bit overwhelmed now that we have transitioned to online classes. I am struggling with keeping up with all of my assignments, especially without having my teachers there in person to help. I also have a lot of trouble with procrastinating on my work, so that makes virtual learning even more difficult for me. I thought being able to work from home at my own pace would be easier, but it is way more challenging than I realized.

Do you have any advice on how I can better manage my online classes?

Thanks,
Struggling Student

Dear Student,

First of all, let me say that I’m sure you’re not alone in this problem. I know that I have personally been battling a lot with procrastination and distractions. It’s very hard to be productive in a setting that is not designed with that purpose in mind; it’s much easier to write an essay in a quiet classroom than in your bedroom. Some of the things I’ve found most beneficial for increasing productivity are actually pretty simple to apply to your daily life. I would recommend setting up a space in your home that is dedicated entirely to schoolwork, whether it be the kitchen table or a desk in your room. This will help your mind focus on what it should be doing instead of what it could be doing. It can also be very helpful to lean on the support of your peers; most of your classmates and your friends probably have their own work that they could be struggling with completing. If you all hold each other accountable for your responsibilities, it might lighten the load off your shoulders just a bit. Possibly the most important, and therefore the most difficult, tip that I can give is to create a schedule and stick to it. Devote certain time slots of your day to studying for your classes, and be sure to include breaks for yourself so you don’t get worn out. If you can find the right balance of work and play that keeps you on track, and try your hardest to stick to the schedule even when you don’t particularly want to, it will drastically improve your productivity and mental well-being.

Good luck!

Sally

Arts Affected

The biggest disappointment for the choir students was that they were forced to cancel a trip to New York that they had been planning for quite a while. The trip was highly anticipated by both the students and their director, Mrs. Sara Bray, and they felt honored that they would have the chance to perform in Carnegie Hall. They also worked hard as a group for a long time to raise funds for the trip. So, the students were understandably devastated when the trip was cancelled due to the coronavirus.

Senior Boyce White, who is Choir President, said, “Yes, I was disappointed that this life-changing trip got cancelled, but we will continue to move on and do bigger and better things.” This positive attitude and driven spirit has gotten the Gators through many tough times over the years, and this will certainly be the case in spite of the virus.

The Gator band has been affected by the current quarantine as well since all of their events for the remainder of the school year had to be cancelled too. Prior to the closing of school, the band had just experienced great success at their district festival, where all three bands received superior ratings. The students and their directors, Craig Millet, Joey Nassar and Andrew Graham, were looking forward to the rest of the school year together and are sad that things had to come to an end so soon.

One band event that Sophomore Jenna Spillman has really been looking forward to is their band banquet. “Last year, I loved watching the slideshows and revealing what our next show was going to be,” commented Spillman. Now, she is facing the likelihood that may not happen this year.

Senior Katelyn Green shares in Spillman’s upset regarding the banquet and expressed her feelings about the other band events they will probably have to miss out on. “Well, I was looking forward to our last concert, our last banquet, and just our last everything, and it feels like everything just ended so suddenly,” said Green. It is especially hard on the seniors since they will not be returning to the program next year.

Although the arts programs have been put on hold for now, the students of St. Amant High School will be back in action as soon as they can, and they will be determined to perform better than ever. STA is fortunate to have so many talented and dedicated individuals within these programs.