

Students quarantined away from home

International students reflect on quarantine in the cornfields

By MARIAH HURST



“I don’t feel like our struggles are that much more than anyone else’s during this time,” said junior Jeanna Evans. “They’re just different. As international students though, we’re not struggling with being home, we’re struggling with not being home.”

As students across the nation grapple with the impacts of COVID-19, Evans said the 45 international students and “third-culture kids” who remain on the Taylor campus continue to process the unique dimensions of a quarantine away from home.

In the wake of hurried goodbyes, these students continue to experience the challenges of not being the ones to leave, rather the ones staying behind.

For Evans, the borders of Zambia closed before she was able to catch a flight out. She walks the empty campus, returns to the empty floor on third center English and enters an empty suite. This is not the same Taylor she knows.

“I’m constantly reminded of the people that aren’t here,” Evans said.



Despite the new reality, Evans finds joy as she grows closer to other students on campus.

In the same way that the cornfields of Upland prepared students to make their own fun, COVID-19 has spurred students to find new ways to enjoy their time.

From swing dancing to PowerPoint presentations on home and from sports days to game nights, students on campus have come together.

“We did TED Talks — we all just picked a random topic that we cared about and gave a presentation on that,” Evans said.

Junior Joel Williamson said creative pastimes have taken on new forms during his stay on campus, the most recent being frog hunting.

Williamson and his friend enjoy hunting and cooking frogs they find around campus. Having caught over thirty frogs, they willingly share their homemade snacks with their friends.

“My dad used to hunt frogs when he was at Taylor,” Williamson said. “The idea kind of came from me being like, ‘Hey I should try what my dad did when he was here.’”

Like Evans, Williamson was unable to travel home as the borders of Honduras closed on March 15. Despite not being able to go home, he feels blessed to be around other students, deepening friendships and making memories.

In this season of uncertainty, junior Meek Lee acknowledges the unexpected blessings and lessons learned while quarantined in a college dorm.

“I definitely have been encouraged to trust, even more deeply in God, even during the unknown,” Lee said. “I’m just so thankful to know that the God we worship is the same and doesn’t change.”

While Lee wishes she could be home in Kenya, she is appreciative of how Taylor has cared for her and the other students.

As she settles into a rhythm, it’s in the quiet moments that Lee finds joy — making herself breakfast, going on walks, playing her mini guitar and drinking tea with friends. A life of prayer is present in her routine.

In the end, everyone has a different story and all need to be lifted up in prayer.

The Taylor community is called to pray for safety and peace for students affected by COVID-19, whether in the confines of their home or the cornfields of Upland.



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