Coronavirus Diaries

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As the COVID-19 pandemic drags on, WKU is making sure to archive the experience as much as possible for future generations.

Not much has been found about the university’s response to the 1918 flu pandemic, but with today’s technology that shouldn’t be the case with the Coronavirus Diaries as Amy Bingham explains in this week’s View from the Hill.

“I can list something that hasn’t changed or been completely flipped upside down….”

Recording their thoughts and feelings about COVID-19 turned into an assignment for many students at WKU.

 “Folk studies and anthropology, one of the professors asked her students to do diaries and we sent a list of questions over for her.”

Questions like…

 “What can’t you do today that you did last week, that sort of thing.”

Have you contracted Covid-19? How long did you have it?

WKU archivist Suellyn Lathrop has sent the whole list of questions to the entire campus community seeking feedback.

 “We did a second call a few weeks ago and got more response because people are really seeing this as a bigger thing I think.”

Henry Hardin Cherry was president in 1918 when a flu pandemic forced the state of Kentucky to close everything for a month. Lathrop says there’s not much of a paper trail from that time.

 “It was a very small school then in terms of student population and faculty population was very small. So they could have met and said we’re closing for four weeks and known everything they needed to know in one meeting.”

That’s why she’s encouraging people to share their experiences.

 “Diaries, thoughts, if somebody wants to do an oral history or video of themselves we would accept those kinds of things about what is happening.”

“I’ve always been a very big fan of washing my hands…”

For students it’s a chance to give a voice to these unusual times and provide a perspective others may learn from in the future.

 “I really think it helped impress on them that history happens every day. We don’t think about it being history but history happens every day.”

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

To learn more about sharing your Coronavirus Diaries with WKU Archives, you can email archives@wku.edu.

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