



# **Finding Joy During COVID-19**

**Story by: Donna Anders, Student Services Coordinator  
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*We reserved our daughter's wedding venue in November of 2018 with no idea that the world would be turned upside down. They picked May 2, 2020, the 6<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of when they started dating. Life seemed normal until December of 2019 when two of our Chinese students from the UW-Eau Claire Host Friends Program talked about the COVID-19 virus back home. We watched the news with lock downs and mask wearing in China. My husband and I discussed that here in the US, we would not need to quarantine or wear masks. How wrong we were....*

*By March 2020, my husband and I started working from home and living like hermits. Our Host students worried about their families, and we finally realized that we would be impacted here in the US. Once the Governor imposed restrictions, we moved our reception to New Year's Eve 2020, plenty of time for the pandemic to end, we thought.*

*As May 2, 2020, approached our daughter and fiancé' decided it was important for them to be married so we had a small ceremony at St. Raymond's in Fall Creek with 10 of us attending. We live streamed the ceremony on Facebook and asked guests to send photos of themselves watching. It was a beautiful warm day. We had take-out in an open-air garage and a fireside dance. It was lovely and we got to spend the entire day with our daughter to celebrate.*

*With the pandemic continuing one of our Chinese students went home at the end of the May 2020 and the other one attended summer school and then went home. We enjoyed summer on our Pontoon and back yard patio. We had our reception plans solidified for New Year's Eve.*

*We were hopeful that going into Fall 2020 case counts would start to level off but by November we knew that was not going to be the case, so we postponed the reception to May 8, 2021.*

*Our last Host student graduated Fall 2020 and she stayed with us for a few weeks job hunting. She then headed to Seattle to continue her job hunt but returned to Nigeria the end of April 2021.*

*As I write this, we are 4 days away from celebrating our daughter's reception. We will celebrate an outdoor vow renewal ceremony instead of inside our church. We have a venue with large outdoor and indoor spaces and will have guest seated in family groups, a plated meal, and butler served appetizers. We are hopeful that many of our guests have already been vaccinated and excited to see families who we have not seen in over a year. We have been fortunate, and our families have been spared severe illness from COVID-19. We are joyful to be able to celebrate our daughter's reception with our families and are hopeful there will be many happy days ahead.*

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**Artist Amanda Bulger, Lecturer  
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