As I leave my house for work, I always have my mask in hand and keys in the other, as the days where masks were only used in hospitals are a thing of the past. My life in these past 9 months couldn’t be further from where and what I thought I would be doing as a freshman in college and I am still learning how to live a life where nothing is a guarantee. I remember when we were dismissed from school for two weeks, we were excited for a break and it was going to be only for a short time. However, when the said “small break” prolonged into a month, then two, then three, I knew there was no going back. The excitement of graduation, prom, and senior trips had been taken away with the stay-at-home mandate and I felt for the first time in my life alone. What people are dubbing the “new normal” is something I’ve always hated, as I wanted to believe that in a few short months this would all go back to the way it was, yet, I’m slowly accepting the fact that normality is something that can never be attained as life in itself isn’t a straight path. The challenges this pandemic created showed how quickly your life could change and the idea that we just have to take things one day at a time is something I constantly remind myself of as I know that planning anything will just lead to more disappointments and frustration. When I wake up each morning, it is always a new challenge of whether COVID rates are getting better or if we are going back into the shutdown and the uncertainty of which one it’ll be is always looming above me. Resisting this uncertainty only makes it worse as life can no longer be planned as everything we know is still one giant question. The idea that masks are now becoming our second skin and that 6 feet apart is the closest we can get to each other shows how much our world has changed since the pandemic hit. It’s moments like these that remind me never to take for granted the small things in life such as a hug or a conversation between friends as even those can be taken away overnight. I can’t say I would ever want to go through this again as people I saw every day at school became distant friends and I stuck to a three-person friend group for the entirety of summer, but the connection I made with those in my circle is something I’m never going to forget.