

Making a Difference During Lockdown

Shu-Jen Politella

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What does it mean to “make a difference”?
2. Describe some ways that you have “made a difference” in your family, community, or workplace during the pandemic.

Fear Made Me Depressed

Our lives have changed a lot due to the coronavirus pandemic, and we have no choice but to follow the stay-at-home order. It has been a very hard time for me. I worry my husband may get infected because he is in the high-risk age group and because he still needs to go to work even though the governor told everybody to stay home. I am also worried about myself. If I get sick, who will take care of our young son? This fear made me depressed and I couldn't sleep.

I Take Care of My Family

However, I have found some ways to overcome my fear and depression. For example, I take care to clean and disinfect everything every day, so I feel confident my family is safe and comfortable. Also, I stopped watching the news on TV every day, and I stopped focusing on the daily totals of confirmed cases. Instead, I plan something special to do each day with my son. It is hard to explain to him what is going on, but we are lucky we have a yard so he can run and play outside every day.

I Stay Connected

Another thing that helps is staying connected to family. I am glad to have the internet, so I can easily connect with my sisters and friends in other states and in Taiwan. Recently, we have been talking to my sisters more than before, and my son can practice his Mandarin. We are all talking to each other more but also encouraging each other with love.



I Took on a Project that Matters

Lastly, I took on a project that will help the larger community. In my English class, which is now meeting online, we learned about the census and some of us took a training to become Census Ambassadors. As a Census Ambassador, my job is to tell all my friends and family about the census and why it is important. I told them how much money each state can get from the government depends on the population. If everyone fills out the census, then the state can get enough money for our health care programs, schools, community services, and so on, for the next ten years. It is an important thing to do especially during the pandemic. We are staying at home to stop the outbreak, but we can also help our communities by filling out the census form. I believe that it will

make a difference for our future during this difficult time.

Thinking about What Is Important

These things have all helped me to pay less attention to the pandemic and more attention to what matters. The lockdowns and social distancing have slowed down the prosperity of human beings, but they have also helped people to think about what is important in the world.

Shu-Jen Politella is from Taiwan. She has lived in Vermont for eight years and is a student at Vermont Adult Learning in Brattleboro. She is volunteering at the library. She loves the beautiful Green Mountain State.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. Describe the structure of this essay. Label each paragraph with “I” (for introductory), “B” (for body), or “C” for concluding.
2. Summarize each body paragraph. How has the writer organized her thinking in this essay?
3. Write a similarly structured essay that describes how you are coping with the pandemic.
4. Shu-Jen says that becoming a Census Ambassador made her feel that she was making a difference for the future. Brainstorm ideas with your class about a project that might help your community. What would you like to do?



More Ways to Make a Difference

Check out Issue #50 of *The Change Agent* for more articles by students about how they are making a difference. In addition to covering the census and the election, this issue shares stories by adult learners who are finding many diverse ways to stand up and make sure their voices are heard in small ways and big ways. Below are some examples.

Visit changeagent.nelrc.org to read their stories and get the full issue.



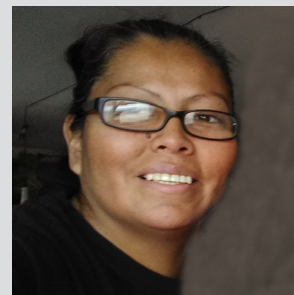
Velma Betz had to fight long and hard with the public school system for her son to get an Individualized Education Plan (p. 33).



Lou Pinkoff advocates for funding for adult education by speaking out at public meetings and lobbying his legislators (p. 52).



Judy Burnette formed a tenant association in her building to prevent evictions and unfair rent increases (p. 42).



Rene Chaco-Aragon worked with children and tribal leaders to get a playground and basketball court built in her community (p. 39).