

My name is Lisa Crossman and I'm Deputy Director for Cobb and Douglas Public Health.

We're 350 employees serving 900,000 residents between Cobb and Douglas county and in probably 30 different programs, and a lot of people and their businesses reached out to us for guidance. And because of those relationships we built with individuals and business owners, they've continued to come back to us for other information. I will tell you it, you know, not everybody has. There are a lot of people that, that are tired of hearing from us and so we recognize pandemic fatigue. We have it as well. We can't give into it at public health, right? It's our job to continue to stay on top of the information, to stay on top of the surveillance, and to give folks the credible information as we have it. And so then, we have to leave it up to the residents to do with it what they think is appropriate.

Things are really different, than they were two years ago. We do our work differently and I think that probably the biggest thing is that I've learned what's important and what's not that important. We realized our health, our family, our wellbeing all were critically important and that those were - I used the term glass balls versus rubber balls. The glass balls are the things that you hold near and dear, because if you drop them, they shatter. And so I do think that a lot of us learned what were the glass balls in our lives. I find before, whether I was at work or my community efforts, it was very structured. Go, go, go. I was pushing, pushing. And after the pandemic, you kind of realize what are some of those key things that add meaning to the community and to your own life and the other stuff is just superfluous noise and you just learn to let it go because we had to let it go during the pandemic. Because there just wasn't time to deal with some of the stuff that was fluff. Now it's like, wow, I didn't have to deal with that for two years. Guess I don't need to deal with it anymore either. And so that's very liberating.

I also learned that the people who criticize easily are not the ones that I have to pay attention to a lot. I just have to accept that being in a public position and being a person who may be giving out information that at any given time, half the people think is helpful and half the people don't, that I just am gonna get some of that criticism and I just have to let that roll off my back because there used to be a time when I would fret over that. I would fret that, oh my goodness, this one person thinks that I am just an idiot. And now I'm like, I can't do anything about that. I just have to do my best and let them make their decision about me. And so that's gone by the wayside more than it did in the past.

I have seen in the past couple of years that, man, some folks are just ugly on social media. You know, things that I might not even consider saying to you sitting here in front of me, that person would say on social media without a blink and not just to us or to our staff, but to others. To watch some of that meanness was really eye-opening.

But you know, also, I was amazed at the level of kindness of people during the pandemic as well. I saw people working hours at food distribution sites to give produce and other food to residents in need. People who had lost their jobs, people whose kids were now home from school and not getting the meals that they normally would get at school, that they were just turning every resource over that they could to find a way to help their fellow neighbors and community residents that they didn't know at all.

And that happened over and over again. Volunteers who sewed masks. Oh my goodness! I had a couple of agencies in the community where they had folks who had a sewing machine and said, this is how I can help. And they made us thousands and thousands and thousands of cloth masks to give away to people in need. Man, so many people found a way to help make a difference in this community that just was awe inspiring. So that's what I'm gonna hold on to as part of the pandemic.

We all have something to contribute to make this community better, and you've gotta be able to look past the burdensome parts and be able to get up every day and make a difference and do what you do, just like you. Right? I mean, if you said I cannot go interview one more person or take one more picture, then think of all those people who don't get the benefit of your skill and your expertise. And so we all have to do that, I think .

The way that we are going to get through this pandemic and recover from the pandemic is linking arms with each other. Right? And I'm gonna depend on your expertise and your field, you're gonna depend on my expertise in my field, and we're gonna walk forward together in, solving all of these things that came up during the pandemic. The other is, I'm gonna rest on the kindness that people showed during the pandemic - we need to keep that going and continue to reach out to those residents in need. And that could have been, you know, our kid, our husband, our neighbor, some person, we have no idea who they are that just lives in the community and has a need. I'm gonna rest, that people know how to be kind and know how to reach out and help, and they're gonna continue to do that as we recover from the pandemic. Cuz I hope that's not just a

one shot deal. That it was just during that tragic acute crisis phase that, that came out in those people. I'm hoping that that'll continue for years.