

Interviewer- Nicole Rodrigues

Interviewee- Courtney Kelley

Nicole Rodrigues- Do you see a red dot up on the corner?

Courtney Kelley- It's there.

NR- Okay. So, this is COVID-19 interview with Courtney Kelley on April 17th at 10:30 AM, Arizona Time. Courtney, can you give me the date and time of where you are?

CK- April 17th and it is 1:31 in Indiana.

NR- Perfect. So, can you give me your name, your full name, and the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis?

CK- My name is Courtney Kelly and I am a wife and a mom. And so basically, I am a homemaker and we also farm, so I help out with that. I did work a part-time job, but now that we are doing foster care, I no longer work there, so.

NR- And you said you live in Indiana?

CK- Yes.

NR- And can you tell me where in Indiana you live?

CK- We live in Springville, Indiana. It's close to Bedford and about twenty minutes south of Bloomington, about an hour and a half south of Indianapolis.

NR- Okay. And you said you have a farm. So, you're out in the country?

CK- Yes, very much. So. There's not much to Springville. It's very small.

NR Ok. So, being out there, when did you first learn about COVID and what were your initial thoughts about it?

CK- Honestly, I didn't think too much about it until mid-March, early March, I guess. And then I realized it was hitting pretty close to home as far as the United States, I guess. And we had went to a big convention and they were saying this might be the last large gathering... they started closing down large gatherings and we're no longer able to church together and everything has gone virtual. So.

NR- So how have your thoughts change since your first impression about COVID-19?

CK- I wasn't so worried about it at first, maybe naively. I have been very busy and occupied, so honestly I haven't kept up with the news a ton. But then after everything started changing close by in my immediate surroundings, I realized I probably should be a little more worried about it, maybe take it a little more seriously. And then it started affecting our every-day life, literally. And I still, I haven't personally worn a mask out in public. I've only gone to the grocery store probably once a week. And I sanitize with hand sanitizer to get in my car, you know, sanitizing wipes. But we, I guess since we're out in

the country, we get a lot of fresh air and wide-open spaces. So it hasn't, it has affected us, but I guess I'm just not one to overreact either, maybe.

NR- So as of right now, what issues are you most concerned about where Covid-19 is concerned?

CK- Mostly, well, my husband's the uncle, had a serious accident. So, his health is fragile right now and his wife is a diabetic. So, she's in the same condition. So I mostly worried that one of us will be a carrier and not realize it and then pass it to someone that we love. And my husband was helping with, you know, staying overnight after his accident, that kind of a thing. So that probably made it seem a lot more serious to us, only from the standpoint of we were worried that we might give it to them, not worried so much for ourselves, but that we might give it to someone else and then, of course, the children in our home as well. We would feel horrible if we brought something home to them.

NR- Alright. So, I know you said you're a stay-at-home mom. You are doing foster care. So, how has COVID-19 affected that specific job?

CK- It's affected it quite a bit, actually, because of the virtual visitation. So, in our case, the children in our home, the baby was going to visit on a regular basis. And then the two older girls, they're 4 and 2 years old, their visitation had just started with their parents about two weeks before all of this pandemic crack-down and everything had to go virtual. So, we went from someone picking them up and taking them out of the home for a little while, to now we are on Zoom which has changed our whole routine around. And also therapy appointments. We have to do that on Zoom as well. So, we have morning and afternoon somedays.

NR- So, do you feel like the COVID-19 has actually made the whole foster care situation harder?

CK- Yeah, it's definitely made it more complicated because in normal circumstances, there's a facilitator who comes and picks the children up and takes them and then bringing them home. And now in this case, since we can't have anyone into our home and the kids can't go in a vehicle with someone because of social distancing, all of that burden rests on us. So, it's changed things quite a bit.

NR- So you are home, but your husband obviously has a job. And so has this affected his job in anyway?

CK- Yes. He's also at home now. Their company had everyone stay home. All the office staff are home, working from home. So that's interesting as well because we have five kids in the home because no one can go to school, no one can go to visitations. So, he's trying to work upstairs. And then, you know, with our, where we're located and our signal and our WIFI, and trying to juggle all that with him working and being on conference calls and his Zoom call, and then us trying to be on with the kids and it's, it's changed everything around.

NR- Turned your house into quit the busy place.

CK- It has.

NR- Is your husband concerned at all that this COVID-19 is going to affect his employment status?

CK- Not so much, although they already have given pay cuts to all the upper management. I don't think that it has affected his division. They're under a big branch, you know, that owns them, but, or rather they're one of the branches under the company that owns them. And the Indiana limestone industry is still doing really well. But then some of the other companies within their company have struggled. So

thus the pay cuts. And then of course, he has employees that either can't get childcare for people or the situation that they don't have to work because they can get off through the government during this time. So he's had to deal with a lot of things as far as that goes also.

NR- So outside of your husband and his employees and you personally, is there anybody else in your world that COVID-19 has affected their employment?

CK-Not off the top of my head. I mean, my brothers, they work for a large company in Texas and I know they're kind of facing the same thing that I think that my husband is. But they have to go to work every day. They're essential and they just have to majorly suit-up every day when they go in, you know, all about that extra. I do have some friends that are kind of in the same situation here as far as there were a lot of people that aren't working where they work. But since they're part of the essential people, they're still going in every day. But just lots of changes in the workplace, all the extra precaution, the social distancing, you know, that kind of a thing. I don't know of anyone personally that has had to, like has lost their job or has been laid off. Personally I don't.

NR- Okay. So, I know you said you now have five children in the home. So you've got five children in the home right now. I know that you said the foster kids are pretty young, but you've got some school-aged children. So how are you managing that particular side of having the kids that are school age in the house right now, right?

CK- They haven't been doing, they were doing school from home. And then we were taking them to the school to score their work and check in with their teachers. And then our principal felt it was best to stop everything for a while and just kinda wait it out. And then he also notified us today that they'll be going back Monday as far as doing schoolwork. So, with our school, it's a small private school, so it's a small group, and we are able to stagger families to come and check in with their teachers... and sanitation... so they don't actually have to all be together at once or they can sanitize before and after. But they can get back on track as far as school goes. And also most of our students are ahead of their schoolwork for the year just because of the curriculum that we use. And so there hasn't been a big concern as far as them getting behind. I know my children personally are almost a whole grade above that, but they would like to finish out the goal they had set for this year so that when they start next year they're right on track where they had planned to be anyways.

NR- How has COVID affected the way that, obviously you guys are kind of out in the country, but how does it, how has it affected the way you associate with your family and friends during this time? How are you communicating?

CK- FaceTime, which we do a lot of it anyways because I have a lot of family out of state. And then we've been using Zoom a lot. We use Zoom for our church services. And then for us, our family lives, just mostly a lot of our family live just down the road. So like I said, since we're in the country, we can be outside and still see and talk to each other. We just haven't, like on Easter, and we didn't have a big family gathering like we normally would. But we're all pretty close-knit and close by, so we still get to see family. And now when it comes to friends, it's texts and phone calls. And my daughter, she's nine, and she and her friends have been writing old-fashioned letters to each other and stick in in the mail, so let's kinda fun for them. And I think it's neat because there's not too many people that do that anymore. So, we're still keeping in touch just by different means, I guess.

NR- So what do you think the biggest challenge has been for you to face during this pandemic?

CK- I personally, for me, the biggest challenge is just having what, along with every other mother in the nation, probably is having all the children at home all the time. And then in reference to foster care, it's just these virtual visits. With our children, it's really hard because they're so young. They're four years old, two years old, and a five month old baby. So, the four-year-old is not so bad cuz she can sit and actually converse and doesn't have to be monitored the whole time. But the two-year-old, as you can imagine, does not like to just sit in a chair for 30 minutes and in a baby is just that's just not gonna happen. So that's, that's just been really frustrating on a daily basis. That's how we start our mornings out. And unfortunately, that's just part of foster care, so you just roll with it. Other than that, it hasn't been awful, except that I miss the social aspects. I really missed being at church together with my church family and seeing the other school moms every day and that interaction. But really, I've had it pretty easy. I been grateful because we haven't had to deal with anyone in our immediate family or even our close circle that has contacted, contracted the virus or anything like that.

NR- So how are you entertaining the kids? What are you doing for recreation right now?

CK- Somedays, it's a little more structured. Somedays it's just, hey, whatever. When it's nice outside, everyone goes outside and plays. We have goats and chickens and cows. And the kids love to be outside where we have a dog and a play house and all that good stuff. When it's rainy, like it is today, and cold and everyone can't get outside, it's a little stir crazy. But we do a lot of crafts and coloring and thankful for good friends who's send coloring books in the mail and fun surprises. So, we do a lot of crafts, a lot of puzzles. The kids this morning were playing cowboys and my son was the bandit capturing the girls. I mean, somedays it's just really crazy, but, it's just, whatever happens, I guess, we roll with it.

NR- So as far as your community is concerned, have you noticed how people in your community where you're living are responding to COVID-19?

CK- In Springville, now it's a farm community, and I think a lot of the people here in Springville not maybe as concerned, whether that's right or wrong. It's just a bunch of farmers who are out working all day. And so I haven't seen anyone here in our local circle in a mask or now, we didn't have a store that they served lunch and well they serve food all day long. And it used to be a big thing for breakfast time. All the farmers meet and they have breakfast down at the store. They all meet and have lunch. Now they're not doing that because they've shut down their little area where everyone can eat, they're still serving food. So I would say that's affected some of the folks around here, but now when I go to Bedford to get groceries or run errands, this last week, I didn't notice there was a lot more people that were wearing masks and taking precautions. Of course, the stores are only allowing so many people in at one time, depending on their square footage. They're sanitizing the carts and have those ready for you at the door or you know, that kind of thing. So I think in the city you notice it more than you do actually in Springville.

NR- So do you feel like Springville is doing its job with self-isolation in this effort to flatten the curve, do you feel like they're doing, I know you said that you don't feel like they're taking it all that seriously. But do you feel like they're doing enough for their part to end this pandemic?

CK- Yes, I do. And maybe I didn't really word that correctly as far as not taking it seriously. I think it's just different because there's already, like someone said, we were doing social distancing before it was a

thing, you know, because there other than being down at the store or at the post office, it's farm country, so it's not a lot of, you know close contact. It's a lot of farmers out in their fields planting crops or out with their cattle or what have you. So there's not, other than the store and the post office, there's an auto repair shop, there's not really anything else where people are getting together other than churches. And I am pretty sure that all the churches in the area have canceled their services. So I would say yes, people are cautious, but there's not large gatherings on a frequent basis.

NR- Okay. So having said that, do you, you said you don't know anybody that's gotten COVID-19. I think you mentioned that earlier.

CK- Right. I don't.

NR- Now, in your small community or your family circle, or your friends or extended friends, in what ways do you think COVID-19 may be affecting people's mental or physical health outside of the symptoms of COVID?

CK- I think for the elderly community, it's probably very, very lonely right now. And so I know we have some elderly folks in our church who are able to join in the virtual services, but they're at home by themselves. And of course, because of their age, they're more susceptible. And so they're not getting out and seeing really anyone. I think that would be very lonely and even depressing because they're used to getting out with their friends. And, you know, even though they're elderly, they now they can't. I think for like my age group and moms and families, it's kind of in a way, that we've seen are neighbors outside more than we ever have because they're home. They're not at sports events with their kids or what have you. They're actually at home, in their yards, doing things. Now, we kind of live like that all the time, but even for us, it's a good reset to remember that, you know, what really matters in life is your family. But when you're on top of each other all day long and everyone's trying to work and do their regular chores. And then when you throw schoolwork into the mix and it makes very hectic days. And so I think it can make everyone's attitudes a little bit grumpy and less patient and you know, just the usual cabin fever, I guess.

NR- So what has been your primary source of news during this pandemic? Where are you getting your information about its spread?

CK- My husband. No, he follows that a lot more closely than I do, but I do listen to Fox News. We have XM Radio, I listen to that. I like to check in with our, you know, our state, the information they release, and then for each county. Last night, there is a thing that the Governor had done and we tuned into that you know, just for Indiana. That's pretty much it. I don't, I follow it, but enough to be aware. But I don't consume myself with the news because I also think that you can do that a little too much. And that's part of the fear that our country has right now where everyone is losing their head and wiping out the grocery stores, you know which just kind of, I don't want to be in that place, so I get enough information to be cautious and wise, but not too much that I'm freaking out about everything that happens.

NR- So what do you think are important issues that the media may or may not be covering?

CK- I think our media is tricky because a lot of times they thrive off of the fear and they don't share enough of the positive that's coming out of this, not that there's a lot of positive. But it's more about all the people that are dying, that, you know, causing everyone to freak out and go buy out everything they can. Instead of maybe, or maybe I just haven't read as much about the people that actually are surviving

and the people that, you know, I just heard the other day, we have a friend who is in New York, and assisting in one of the hospitals there and the patients that are being extubated because they've been on the ventilator and they're coming through, I don't think we hear as much about that as we do all of the negative things.

NR- So how have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak?

CK- Well, we're under a, you know, only necessary travel, the stay at home thing, and all of that. So I think they're being very cautious and they're handling it correctly, you know, according to their protocol. Then I think for the most part, everyone is following what has been set forth. I'm sure there's some people who are, just could care less and abusing it. But as far as the leadership, I think they're handling it according to what the President has asked and, you know, everything like that.

NR- So do you have any thoughts on how your local, state, and federal leaders are responding to the crisis differently. Because it does seem that the federal government's saying things different than local and state. So do you have any opinions about the differences and how they're handling it all?

CK- I don't think I could speak to that only because I haven't, like I said, kept up with it probably as much as I should have. And I wouldn't want to speak out of turn. But everything I've experienced, I feel like they're handling it very cautiously, but also not being crazy, over-the-top, freaking everyone out.

NR- So considering the future, has your experience with COVID-19 transformed the way you think about your family, your friends, your community, and if so, in what ways?

CK- And hopefully I'm answering this correctly, but I think it gives you a new appreciation for all of the things that we take for granted. The fact that we do have the freedom to gather together in our country whenever we want. And when that's taken from you, you miss it. I don't, I don't know if I'm answering that in the way you were hoping but if you wanted to re-ask it, I can rephrase.

NR- I'm just curious about how this experience has just changed the way you think about life.

CK- It has. But I also think that in the world we live in, we might not be facing COVID, you know, we've never faced something like this, but on a regular basis, we have the flu every year that wipes out so many people that we don't talk about. But when it's something new, then it's just like terrifying to everyone. I just, I think it'll change our perspective on how we react to stuff, maybe hopefully in the future. I don't, I don't know. I don't, I don't worry. I don't freak out about things very often, I guess. So. I feel like I'm maybe not the right person to be asking about these things. I just think, you know, it's another thing that we're going to get through and it will remind us that, you know, it's just part of life. This isn't the first time that something like this has happened in our world. It's just affecting us and we've never been affected by something like this.

NR- So final question here, but knowing what you know now, what do you think the individuals, communities, or governments should keep in mind for the future, should something like this happen again?

CK- I think, instead of just speaking fear and worst-case scenario, which I realize we need to be aware so that we can be cautious. But I think, you know, everyone just went completely crazy with buying everything, all the toilet paper, all the dry goods, all the, I mean, it was unreal when I went to the grocery

store and Walmart was just wiped out. I think, you know, giving people a little more hope in this situation or, you know, let's keep our heads about this instead of we're all gonna die. And that's kinda how it felt at the beginning was that people were just dropping like flies, which I know that people were dying and dying quickly in other countries. But when it hit the United States, it was kind of like we just automatically assumed that everyone was going to be wiped out.

NR- Okay. Well, I think that's it Courtney. Can you hear me?

CK- Yes, I can. But you're froze.

NR- Okay. You froze a little bit too. I'm going to stop recording...