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# Student Organizations and Clubs face challenges in COVID-19 conditions



By Claire Alen

Throughout the summer of 2020, one of the biggest questions was, "Will schools reopen in the fall?" As the decision was made for in-person class it became evident that this would still be a school year unlike any we have ever seen. The first few weeks of school are already vastly different with more classes beginning online to instructors and schools pioneering hybrid class options, as well as limiting, changing and postponing events.

In the first days on campus, back to school events were the first sign of how the experience of college would be different. Despite social distancing, the requirement of masks and limiting the amount of people in an area at one time, Gardner-Webb has held multiple events celebrating students' return to campus and the start of the new school year, such as the Back-to-School Bash and the Campus Ministries Prayer Walk.

Since then, it has unfortunately become evident that many clubs and organizations have had an extremely difficult time going about business as normally. For example, the Joyful Hands Ministry Team, has been severely restricted in that they are not allowed to travel off-campus. This limits their possible performances to only on-campus events, which are also few in number due to Covid-19. In typical semesters Joyful Hands, a service-focused group, travels to local churches to perform Christian songs in American Sign Language.

“Another COVID restriction that would hurt our club’s ability to function normally is the rule about wearing masks inside at all times,” said Linda Gelzer, vice president of Joyful Hands. “Although I completely understand that this rule is necessary and beneficial for the health of everyone on campus, it is super difficult to teach ASL signs effectively when you can’t see facial expression. This is especially true with music, when facial expressions are extra important to communicate the meaning and feeling of the song.”

For the fall 2020 semester, Joyful Hands has decided to rest and prepare for next semester.

There are several clubs and organizations that are able to meet this semester. Mac Inscore explained the precautions Delight Women’s Ministry is taking to meet as safely as possible. “We are following the University’s guidelines to be as safe as possible. Everyone is required to wear face masks and social distance. In addition, we meet outside. As a club, we are only allowed to provide pre-packaged snacks. We continue to overcome these obstacles by working together and asking God to lead and protect our ministry on campus,” Inscore said. “Through this time we are continually working to create a safe, fun, and life-giving environment for girls and Gardner-Webb. We would love for more girls to come to Delight. We meet on Wednesday nights at 7:43 p.m. on the back patio of Tucker Student Center.”

Despite the many challenges Covid-19 has presented students and faculty alike this semester, everyone is striving to make this time as enjoyable as possible while still complying with guidelines so that everyone may remain at school for as long as possible.