

It's been a wild ride beginning a new job amid the ever-shifting sands of the early COVID-19 response. Initially planned to coincide with students' return from Spring Break, my first week, March 23rd, instead coincided with the "bonus week" of Spring Break followed by a new virtual-learning plan and an order for students to not return to campus for the health and safety of all.

I arrived on campus for keys and a brief orientation and to receive all the trappings of a new, remote work experience. Then came the tornado. The end of my first week found me hiking the Perimeter Trail, clearing it of downed trees. Which looked a lot like sweaty grunting and shoving of huge tree rounds toward trail's edge. I loved it.

To be in the woods caring for a place and beloved community resource with my newfound "COVID [work] family" was a beautiful introduction to the teamwork, dedication and tight-knit, friendly collective I have come to associate with the Sewanee community.

The following weeks have been a mash-up of Zoom meetings with students and colleagues, turning Earth Month into a virtual exploration and celebration and a healthy smattering of days spent working on the domain helping with bat research, trail work and other summer projects. Along the way I've met and been warmly welcomed by a whole host of friendly faces and generous souls.

Although this time has been surreal and filled with a longing for a future filled with students, colleagues and a bevy of activities, it has also served to root me in place and show me that even in the hardest of circumstances, this new family I've joined is one of kindness and integrity with a hearty helping of compassion and humor.

As we all work toward a sustainable global future, Sewanee has already demonstrated great sustainability of spirit.