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## "COVID Project- Walk A Mile in Their Paws"

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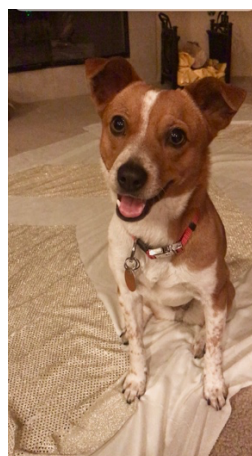
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## CSUSB COVID-19 Archive Project Submission

### Walk A Mile in Their Paws

COVID-19 has had a tremendous impact on so many lives. While some have lost a family member to this deadly virus, others have gained months' worth of family time thanks to it. However, we aren't the only species that has been affected by this virus. What, or who else has been affected? Our pets. People are spending an extended amount of time in their homes due to the loss of jobs, school closures, and stay at home orders. As a result of this, our pets have seen more of us in a matter of months than they probably would've seen all year. Our most loyal companions have definitely been affected by this pandemic in more ways than you might want to believe. Think about it. How much would your daily routine change if you had no job, no school to attend, and an order to stay home? How would your pet's daily routine be altered now that you're home 24/7? Well, I'll tell you how the lives of my two Australian Heeler Mixes have changed.



Pepper and Maple

Sisters from the same litter, 6 years old

Maple and Pepper have always been pretty well-behaved dogs. From the beginning, we noticed distinct qualities in their personalities that gave them each their own spark. We like to call Pepper the penthouse dog living in the city who naps all day but prefers to be outside when everyone is outside. Maple is afraid of everything from empty boxes to vacuums and barks at every passing dog on walks but will play fetch for hours. Now, because of the pandemic, my sister and I have been working and doing school from home. That means we spend all day at home and the dogs have slowly been clinging onto different things.

The first change we noticed is their dependence on specifically my sister and I. There are 7 people in our family living in the same house, but the dogs always wanted to be around my sister and I. At first, we didn't make much of it because we loved having them around. It was cute that they'd follow us every time we went into another room. The realization that they had become so loyal and dependent on my sister and I became clear when we'd need them to be in another room while we had a meeting. So, they'd stay outside the door waiting for us to be done. Someone might see that as loyal, but the more we paid attention to it, the more we realized that they were not comfortable anywhere that wasn't near us. If we're standing in the kitchen cooking, they're laying right at the line where the kitchen floor meets the living area carpet and they won't move until we sit down to eat, and they see that we're not going anywhere for a while. That's when they finally lay down for a nap. Although there is nothing technically wrong with this new habit, it has created an annoying situation for my mom to deal with anytime my sister and I have to be outside teaching on Zoom as a coach. They stay inside crying, watching us from the window and quite honestly, it breaks my heart, but their crying is

in fact annoying when they're whining and pawing at the window wanting to be outside with us. They have definitely become more clingy and dependent on our company to feel relaxed and comfortable enough to nap. We even have to sit outside with them when we feed them or they'll get mild separation anxiety and they'll be too busy crying so they won't eat.

The second thing we noticed is that Maple has become more frightful of things. It began with just things that made loud noises. For example, she hates the vacuum and will literally tremble at the mere sight of it rolling out from the closet to be used. We have to move her to another room while we vacuum so she doesn't pee on the carpets out of fear. Sad, I know. However, that's not the worst. She has also become afraid of empty boxes and bags and anything that's not normally there. Soda boxes that we take out of the mini fridge, she's scared of them, plastic bags on the floor from the grocery store, she's scared of them, loud noise that you made because you bumped into something, she's scared of it. We're not sure how these fears developed but it's begun to sound like there is a fear of anything outside of her ordinary surroundings. Especially if something was moved around in the garage, she'll be quick to notice and approach it with the slowest walk and the most caution. Luckily, she's never been traumatically scared where it affects her health, but that's definitely a concern if this list of things she's afraid of continues to grow.

The main thing we noticed about Pepper is the weight gain. We've looked back at pictures have come to prove that the weight came on during this quarantine. Our thoughts are that because we're home all day, they are inside with us more, so Pepper is running around outside less and getting less exercise. So, we began going on more walks than we used to now that we have the time. She's definitely getting a work out but her weight isn't changing. We

don't see it affecting her health so we're not too concerned about the weight gain. It's just very noticeable because compared to Maple, Pepper does look bigger. Even then though, she's not over weight. She just looks over weight next to Maple who has always been smaller than Pepper since they were puppies. I also thought, maybe Pepper eats too fast because she wants to get back inside. So, I'm going to get her one of those bowls with ridges to try and slow her down a little bit.

One main difference from the both of them, is that they've began telling us when it's time for bed. We always used to get home from work around 9pm. We'd eat something quick and then head to bed so they knew when it was time to head to the room for bed. Now, we've been doing homework and stuff in the living area every night and around the same time every night, Pepper gets up and makes her way to the room. She goes off to bed without us. After a while, Maple gets up and sits or lays down facing the hallway as if saying, "It's time! Let's go! I'll wait here." Maple always waits for us and then walks with us to the room. Pepper on the other hand, wants to get to her cozy bed asap, so she does not wait for anyone.

My advice to pet owners, whenever there is a major change in your lifestyle, take a minute to look down at the furry friend by your side and consider how their life might change too. Pets are loyal and will always be your best companion. They deserve to have you consider how their lives may be affected as well. My dogs have definitely gotten more of our attention. But I'm not talking about just cuddles and extra treats. We make sure to give them attention everyday where we examine them for a bit to make sure they still seem happy, healthy, and that nothing is out of the ordinary. Sometimes Pepper is more grouchy than usual, so we give her more uninterrupted nap time. Sometimes Maple is hyper aware of her surroundings and

gets frightened more easily, so we try to desensitize her a bit by walking around those scary things while staying at her side. It's little things that your pets will appreciate. It doesn't take much to keep them happy. Sometimes all they need is a little scratch on the top of their snout.

So next time your life changes, take a walk in their paws. Make sure they're ok too. We all need that loving hand on our shoulder.

Stay safe out there.

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