

## Tritons Meet the Coronavirus Challenge with Resiliency and Acts of Kindness



*iStock.com/VectorStory*

**T**hey have launched a pen pal program for seniors to combat loneliness. They are sharing nutritious yet affordable recipes with their fellow students. They are even helping their grandparents with daily errands. Despite having future plans, such as service trips and other in-person outreach efforts upended by the COVID-19 pandemic, many UC San Diego students have found creative ways to stay involved with the campus and give back.

Whether living at home or on campus, students have been demonstrating creativity and gratitude in the wake of the pandemic. They are also exploring new hobbies and using this period as a gift to spend time with family and overall make the best of the unique situation we

are all living in.

Here are some of their stories:

## **Second-year Olivia Michael is helping those in senior living combat loneliness**

Cognitive behavioral neuroscience and global health major Olivia Michael of Muir College has spearheaded a service project for the elderly. Because senior facilities no longer allow in-person visitors and have reduced programming due to the coronavirus, she wanted to help combat the feelings of loneliness the elderly may be experiencing in this time of social distancing. “I first got the idea from a trip I planned with Alternative Breaks specifically focused on the importance of social relationships and the detrimental effects of social isolation on an individual’s mental and physical health,” Michael said. “Isolation is associated with higher risks for a variety of physical and mental conditions including a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, Alzheimer’s disease and even death.”



*Olivia Michael spearheaded Sunshine for Seniors, a service project for the elderly.*

She started UC San Diego [Sunshine for Seniors](#), a campaign where students can design a card and nominate three others to do the same on Instagram with the hashtag [#ucsd sunshine4seniors](#). All of the cards will be sent to St. Paul’s Senior Services Nursing and Rehabilitation in downtown San Diego. “I wanted to get other students excited about exploring new ways to engage with their friends and family while also creating letters that would bring joy to seniors and brighten their day!” said Michael.

If you’re interested in participating in the Sunshine for Seniors project, [fill out this form](#). If you have any questions, feel free to email Michael at [omichael@ucsd.edu](mailto:omichael@ucsd.edu).

## **Third-year Todd Nguyen is inspiring other Tritons to get crafty in the kitchen**

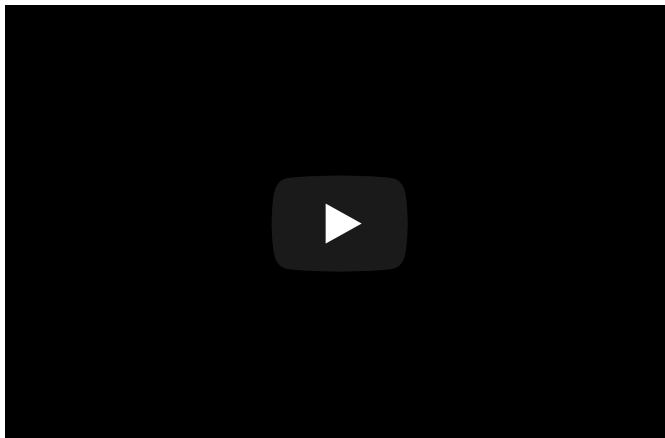
Todd Nguyen, a cognitive and behavior neuroscience major of Warren College, was looking forward to leading an Alternative Breaks service trip to New York before it was canceled due to the pandemic. Originally, a team of 12 students and a supervisor were going to go to New York to build a greenhouse for a summer camp that serves children whose families struggle with homelessness. Since Alternative Breaks ended all service trips out of concern for safety,



*Todd Nguyen has since shifted his focus by demonstrating how students can cook nutritious and delicious recipes with easily accessible ingredients.*

Nguyen has been developing a series of recipes and videos for UC San Diego students from his off-campus townhouse in La Jolla. “Growing up, I watched a lot of cooking shows on Food Network and YouTube,” he said. “When brainstorming my idea, I wanted a way to showcase my skills to UC San Diego students, while creating a space for cooking enthusiasts and establishing a stronger social network.” he said.

Initially, Nguyen hoped to create an on-campus student “test kitchen” with a team of student cooks running a video production program aimed to create content around students cooking meaningful dishes and sharing their stories. Due to COVID-19, he’s since shifted his focus by demonstrating how students can cook nutritious and delicious recipes with easily accessible ingredients. “Home cooking is such an important skill and now is the perfect time to learn!” he said. He’s since established this project under the official name of Triton Spoon and has been researching video production, editing, lighting, sound and more to create and film his recipes.



Learn how to make okonomiyaki, [a Japanese savory pancake, from his first YouTube tutorial](#). Follow his project @tritonspoon on Instagram. If you want to be a part of helping Nguyen with this project, or if you want to be a guest in a future video, reach out to [tritonspoon@gmail.com](mailto:tritonspoon@gmail.com).

### **Second-year Rey Lautenschlager is assisting her grandparents reduce their risk of infection**

Global health major of Sixth College Rey Lautenschlager was only supposed to be in her hometown of Geneva, Ill. for a few days. But once the stay-at-home order was implemented in California, she decided to make the most out of the opportunity by spending quality time with her grandparents and helping them run errands to minimize their risk for infection. “Like many other students, I never imagined spending part of college somewhere other than San Diego,” she said. “But living with and

reconnecting with my grandparents has been invaluable and given me a unique perspective on what I want out of life.” Lautenschlager has been enjoying spring in the Midwest, which has been very different than the mild temperatures of San Diego. The weather in Geneva can encompass everything from snowfalls to thunderstorms, and sunny days with fields of blooming flowers all in the span of two weeks. “College can be such a whirlwind and being back in my hometown has given me the opportunity to slow things down a little,” she said. “I hope to come out of this more grounded, inspired and optimistic, ready to make the most of every experience going forward.”



*Rey Lautenschlager decided to spend spring quarter with her grandparents and is helping them with errands to reduce their risk of infection.*

### **Second-year Ben Carfano keeping student voters engaged**

In Jan. 2020, Ben Carfano was selected as one of 29 students from various California colleges to participate in California Campus Compact’s Community Engagement Student Fellowship (CESF) program, a four-month initiative specifically designed to support student leaders advancing service, service-learning and community engagement. When he accepted the scholarship opportunity, his assignment along with classmate Natalie Avina was to prep a communications plan on increasing student voter turnout for the next fall. The core goal of their project is to increase student turnout for the upcoming election; however, their efforts had to pivot due to the pandemic. Yet, they persevered.

“It was frustrating when everything was moved online because so many events, projects and outreach just became impossible instantly,” said Carfano, a clinical psychology and human biology double major from Sixth College. “However, Natalie and I were given an opportunity to make a change at this school and we weren’t going to roll back the project because the pandemic made planning inconvenient. This just incentivized us to think outside the box.”

The students have since met with the Registrar of Voters, come up with engaging online competitions and contacted school administration to keep this project alive. “Although these new challenges have been very difficult, this change has given me the opportunity to practice my adaptability,” Carfano said. “It’s still been a fun and unique opportunity to learn.” Among the



*Ben Carfano is working with online platforms to increase student turnout for the upcoming election.*

campaign's strategies is sharing information with students via the undergraduate college's social media accounts.

Carfano and Avina are referring students to the [TurboVote.org](https://www.turbovote.org) website and mobile app which provides users with information on how to register to vote, get a ballot, as well as other tools to learn about national and local elections.

### **Second-year Olivia Bryan: growing professionally and academically while enjoying quality family time**

Back home with her family in



*Olivia Bryan is enjoying spending quality family time at her home in Woodland, Calif.*

Woodland, Calif., second-year international relations and economics double major of Eleanor Roosevelt College Olivia Bryan has been using her time in quarantine to pursue academic and occupational goals while taking the time to appreciate being around her family. She's been working remotely as an arts organization intern at ArtPower, improving her design skills and developing her own projects to share with ArtPower's audience.

"I'm usually motivated by productivity," said Bryan. "My favorite way to stay busy during this pandemic is putting my full efforts into my coursework." She has also been fitting in the occasional workout, whether it's a run or a strength circuit, which is helpful in keeping a positive and healthy mindset amid schoolwork and the COVID-19 crisis. "This pandemic has made me realize that being productive isn't the only important thing to focus on," she said. "Spending time with family I normally don't get to see while I'm away at school is something I should be appreciative of during these trying times."

## Third-year Harry Zhu puts assisted-living visits on hold, delivers face masks instead



*Harry Zhu is helping the senior community in his home in Northern California by delivering facemasks.*

Harry Zhu of the UC San Diego men's rowing team has been engaging with seniors in assisted living since he was in middle school. "It all started with one of my teachers," Zhu, a political science major from Warren College explained. "She asked me to go to senior homes for monthly visits to perform my talents for the seniors and to talk with them and to share my energy with them. "We have volunteer performers who come and perform for the seniors for an hour or two, like a talent show." He continued, "We go to

multiple senior homes. Sometimes they invite us for special occasions like Chinese New Year, Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas. I was getting worried in February. We cancelled all of our visits in February and only did one visit during all of March. When it exploded in America in late March, we had already cancelled all our April and May visits." Despite the cancelled visits, Zhu decided not to allow the coronavirus to keep him from helping the senior community. He turned to an alternative: delivering face masks. "The staff at the senior homes were very thankful," Zhu recalled. "They were very in need of the masks, and these masks could possibly save someone's life." Zhu shared that he is glad to have the opportunity to continue serving the community while his monthly senior home visits are on hold. As for Zhu, he has been at home with his family in Torrance since learning that UC San Diego's winter finals would be moved online. Although he misses working out as a student-athlete at UC San Diego, Zhu appreciates the convenience of taking online classes from home. "Essential workers are risking their lives for us and I feel really glad that I'm protected by the heroes on the front lines who are saving our lives," he said. "I'm staying at home for them."