



**HERE'S YOUR CHANGE** Two weeks into the school closure, Wegmans' toilet paper shelves sit bare on March 27. Concerns about supply chain issues and availability of products resulted in shortages and buying limits of items including butter, bread and toilet paper. The 24-hour grocery store limited its hours to 7 a.m.-10 p.m., and introduced signs and decals on the floor to encourage and enforce social distancing. **photo by Rob O'Dell**

## THEY CALL IT HAZARD PAY

REPORTING BY ELIZABETH HOGREFE

As grocery shopping changes from a normal errand to a last resort to keep self-quarantining households functional, senior Peyton Spring's work as an Aldi cashier becomes far more intense

"I now make \$16.30 an hour. Hazard pay, they call it, for coming during the pandemic. Work has now become ground zero for watching the masses struggle. Everyone is quiet, because they don't know what to say or maybe they're afraid of opening their mouth when they come through my line; I don't know. I have to limit almost every item in the store so everyone can get food, but I feel like I'm taking food out of people's mouths. I'm tired of arguing about how many canned goods people are allowed to have.

"People call me rude — and other names I'd rather not repeat — under their breath. I feel their pain, but I do not know what to say to make the situation better. Yesterday a woman almost started to cry because we have no toilet paper. I couldn't tell her everything was going to be okay, because honestly, I do not know."

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# ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

As COVID-19 takes its toll on thousands of Americans, junior Kristen McIntosh takes a chance as she helps hundreds out at the now busier-than-ever Wegmans  
REPORTING BY RIA GUPTA

With 43 states under some form of lockdown, the COVID-19 outbreak meant non-essential workers were expected to stay home. However, with four months' experience as a cashier at Wegmans, an influx of customers panic-buying toilet paper, canned goods and other items called for an extra commitment from junior Kristen McIntosh. "Personally, I got a lot more hours working at Wegmans because I was out of school and they were getting really busy. The last week has been really crazy — every register is open and each one has a cashier and a bagger just because it's so busy."

To control the spread of the virus, new measures were taken to ensure safety for those on either side of the register. "There's a rule now that you have to stand at the red line. There's the register, a line that lines up with the back of it and a red line behind that. Customers stand at the farthest one until we clean the register and then come up to the end of the belt to load your stuff. Until we're done checking them out they don't come up so as to limit the time we're next to them."

As food and household item shortages occurred, interactions between customers and employees grew more tense, with some customers violating social distancing protocols. "I'll be cleaning the register and somebody will just start putting their stuff on the belt and be like, 'Oh I don't care, this is stupid.' There are also other people who are like, 'Why aren't you wearing gloves? Why aren't you wearing a mask?' I just try to put myself in their shoes: if somebody's being rude, I try to think of them instead of thinking of me. I want them to realize that we're doing the best we can and that it's a bad situation for everybody, so we're just trying to make the best of it."

As grocery workers around the country risked infection while at work, McIntosh acknowledged the risk and willingly played her part in helping out. "People haven't gone grocery shopping and still need a lot of stuff and don't have it, especially the older people. They can't really go out often, so if the older people are out grocery shopping, I feel like I should at least be there to help and just try to go in whenever I can. I know that I'm likely to get sick at work, but at the same time we've been really good about cleaning everything and making sure it's okay, so it's kind of 50-50."

With millions filing unemployment checks around the country, the scarcity of jobs only added to McIntosh's gratitude for her job still being secure. "I think it's good that the government is shutting down all the businesses, but at the same time, a lot of people are losing their jobs. It almost makes me feel like there are other people who could also be working instead of me, but I'm also grateful that I still have a job. I'm just going by what I've heard and it sounds like it's going to be a while before it gets normal. Since people aren't really allowed to go out anymore, I think business will start slowing down a lot more because people will just be coming in for the things they absolutely need, but other than that it'll be okay."