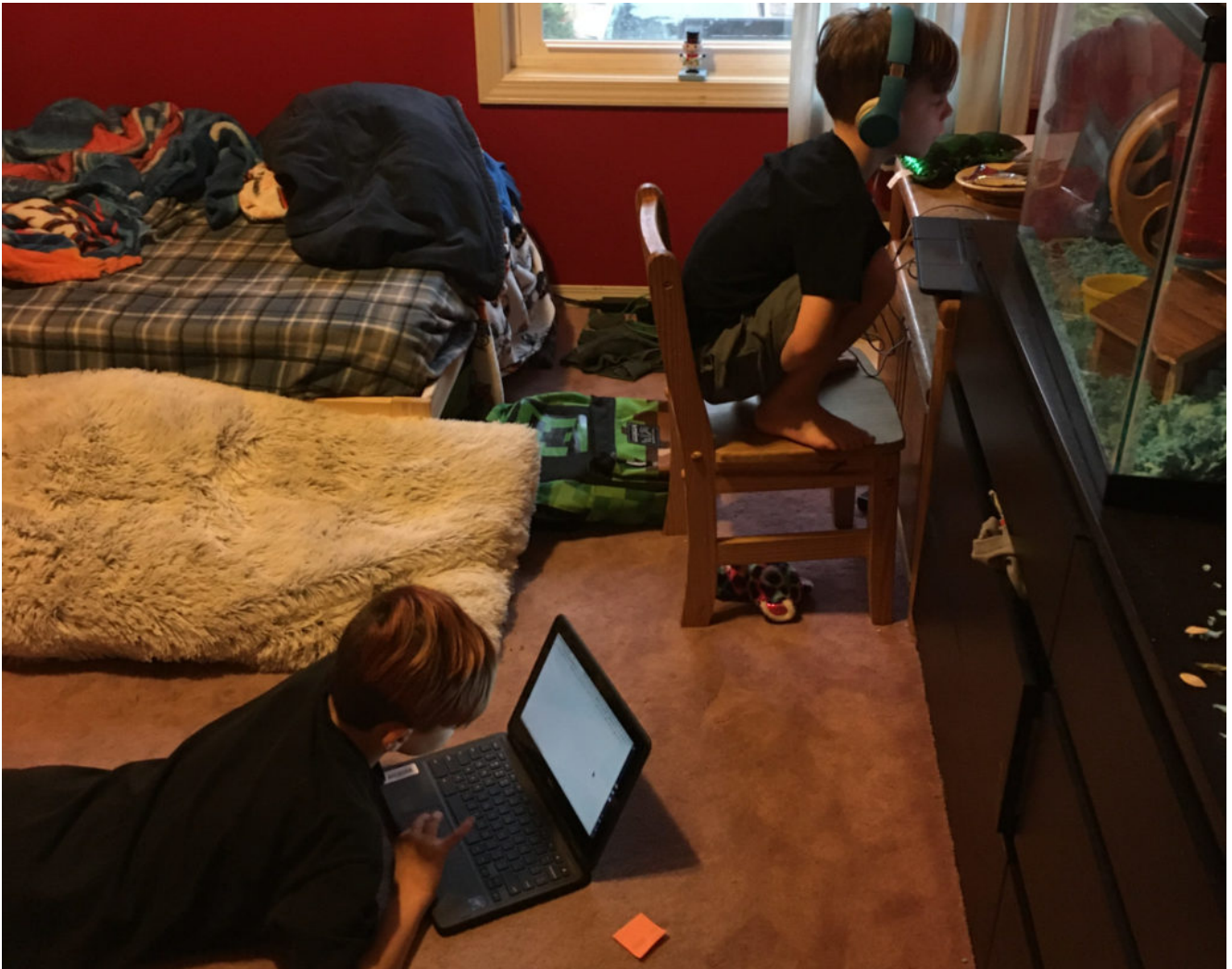


Student Parent Profile: Samantha Golden



Samantha Golden's sons have been attending online school while she studies in another room. *Photo courtesy of Samantha Golden.*

Nursing student Samantha Golden will receive her associate degree from Clark in June 2021, and then will transfer to WSU Vancouver to pursue her Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. She attends Clark full-time and supervises her three children and their online learning. Owen is in sixth grade at Wy'East Middle School; Cal is in second grade at Riverview Elementary; and daughter, Elliot, 4, attends preschool at Clark College Child and Family Studies (CFS). During COVID, the two youngest attend CFS. Her husband works full-time.

This story is part of a series of interviews with Clark College student parents about how they are balancing school, life, and work, during quarantine.

Q: What are the challenges of all of you being at home for months while also traversing online school?

SG: We're all here—together—all the time. I am not a teacher. I struggle with helping my kids learn these concepts that obviously seem easy to me. But I don't know how to teach them these concepts. We're all Zooming at the same time. Or I'm Zooming when they want to eat lunch. Some of my Zoom classes finish at 5 p.m., and then everyone is starved for dinner. It's tough.

Q: What are some logistics of all you working remotely at home?

SG: I usually work at the kitchen table. My kids each have a desk in their bedrooms, but if someone has a question and we're all in our own Zoom meetings, that question is not going to get answered. Or if someone has an assignment, but I have my own Zoom, it's hard to step away from my Zoom to be their home-school teacher.

Q: How are your children coping with doing school remotely?

SG: My sixth-grader, like many preteens, loves technology, loves being on the computer. But he is missing band and other extra-curricular activities. He's missed the transition from elementary to middle school. That's a milestone—but he'll get there one day. My second grader, on the other hand, really misses the social aspect of school—the interaction with other kids. Recess.

Q: How is your family faring without pre-COVID routines?

SG: We're all missing the routine of school, but we're building new ones. My two youngest children attend CFS Monday,

Wednesday, and Friday. The kids love it. We try to fit in routine as much as we possibly can, but also must be flexible too. With my nursing program, so much is up in the air. I must be flexible both as a parent and a student trying to traverse all of this.

Q: What is your advice to Clark students who are parenting young children?

SG: My best advice: Don't be so hard on yourself. This is an unprecedented time. Not only are you a parent, but also a homeschool parent and a college student. You're playing all these different roles that you didn't really choose for yourself. Give yourself credit and some slack. You can't be 100% in all these areas all the time. Maybe we're having cereal for dinner tonight. Maybe the living room is a mess. You think your kids are having an awful time, but my kids are loving this time at home. Yes, they miss their friends, but we're all together.

Q: What has been your biggest challenge through all of this?

SG: We've had so many days where things didn't go as planned. Now more than ever, you feel that you're failing as a parent. That's what hits me the most. It's not my Clark schoolwork, although that's very stressful. But I worry I'm not doing enough as a parent. Is my kid going to suffer later in school because I can't teach him long division or whatever the next thing is? I worry he's not learning anything. It's just cascading. The parent guilt is high, but the parent-teacher guilt is even more stressful.

Q: What kind of support would help Clark students who are parents?

SG: It would be nice to have a support group of students to share the reality of family life during COVID. A group to confess: "My kitchen is a disaster and we're having cereal for dinner. Anyone else?"