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Surgo Ventures Releases COVID Diaries Short Film Series to Show “the Human Side of the Data”

Stories of community vulnerability include a single mother in Texas with dirty drinking water, a father in the Mississippi Delta delivering food to hungry neighbors, and more

WASHINGTON, March 18, 2021—Just after the first anniversary of COVID-19 being declared a pandemic, Surgo Ventures today released a collection of 12 short films that show how the pandemic has wreaked havoc on vulnerable communities across the United States.

[The COVID Diaries series](#) brings a human perspective to the [data](#) Surgo has been collecting and sharing about community vulnerability during COVID-19. The films were produced by [Sareen Hairabedian](#), an award-winning filmmaker based in Washington, DC.

“Last April, we approached Sareen with an idea: What if we gave up artistic control, and asked people to document their own lives and stories about COVID in the way they wanted?” said Dr. Sema K. Sgaier, Co-Founder and CEO of Surgo Ventures and Adjunct Assistant Professor at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. “It was both thrilling and terrifying. But the results exceeded our expectations, helping us elevate the human side of the data and show what ‘vulnerability’ means in people’s own words.”

The COVID Diaries films series shares the stories of 12 families:

1. [Agrepina Gomez from Cameron County, TX - “One Good Thing About Lockdown is Learning New Skills: COVID Diaries, Part 1”](#)
2. [The Brooks family from Sullivan County, NY - “We Went into Panic Mode: COVID Diaries, Part 2”](#)
3. [Chantelle Yazzie-Martin from Dona Ana County, NM - “Take a Couple Deep Breaths for My Mental Health: COVID Diaries, Part 3”](#)
4. [Emmarie Flagg Anderson from Warren County, MS - “There is Strength in Family Unity: COVID Diaries, Part 4”](#)
5. [Ericka Murria from Wayne County, MI - “The Pandemic Cost Me 11 People in One Week: COVID Diaries, Part 5”](#)
6. [Sylvester Hoover, Kathryn Lucas and Dr. Mary Carol Miller from Leflore County, MS - “All I Hear is Code Blue Emergency Room: COVID Diaries, Part 6”](#)
7. [Naida Rutherford from Logan County, CO - “I saw 247 Prison Inmates with COVID Today: COVID Diaries, Part 7”](#)
8. [Sahar Khadjenoury from San Juan County, UT, Navajo Nation - “Putting Groceries in Their Cupboards: COVID Diaries, Part 8”](#)

9. [Sarah Feliz from Miami Dade County, FL - “Dying in the ICU During the Pandemic is Dying Alone: COVID Diaries, Part 9”](#)
10. [Sarah French from Perry County, AR - “Pandemic Rules Change as We Cross State Lines: COVID Diaries, Part 10”](#)
11. [Sareth Garcia from Hidalgo County, TX - “Without a Home Healthcare Provider Life Is So Difficult: COVID Diaries, Part 11”](#)
12. [Stacie DiDomenico from Rockland County, NY - “We’re Running Out of Places to Put the Bodies: COVID Diaries, Part 12”](#)

“Vulnerability” is a term Surgo defines as a community’s ability to weather a COVID-19 outbreak based on a number of structural, socioeconomic, and health-related factors. Vulnerability is such a critical factor to consider in response efforts that the CDC now features [Surgo’s COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index](#) as a resource for federal, state, and local responders.

Surgo has confirmed that people living in vulnerable communities in the United States have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. For example, since the pandemic began in 2020, people in vulnerable communities:

- **Are 45% more likely to have died from COVID-19** than those living in non-vulnerable communities
- **Are 26% more likely to have been diagnosed with COVID-19** than those living in non-vulnerable communities
- **Are 26% less likely to have been tested for COVID-19** than those living in non-vulnerable communities
- **Have been 32% more likely to live in a COVID-19 hotspot** than those living in non-vulnerable communities

Source: [The U.S. COVID-19 Community Vulnerability Index.](#)

For access to all the films, visit precisionforcovid.org/coviddiaries.

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About Surgo Ventures

Surgo Ventures is a nonprofit organization dedicated to solving health and social problems with precision. We do this by bringing together all the tools available from behavioral science, data science, and artificial intelligence to unlock solutions that will improve and save lives. We work globally: in the United States, the United Kingdom, and in low- and middle-income countries on issues like COVID-19, tuberculosis, maternal and child health, housing, and more. Visit us at www.surgoventures.org