

## Transcript: Bees Help Woman Get Through Pandemic

From VOA Learning English, this is the *Health & Lifestyle* report.

Everyday activities – how we work, how we study, how we play -- keep us connected not only to other people but also to ourselves. They keep us grounded. Without them, we may feel lost.

The coronavirus pandemic changed many of our daily activities.

In the United States, the health crisis started back in March. Today many Americans are still working from home and studying online. They are still keeping apart from friends and distant family members. Many fun activities no longer feel safe until people are protected from the virus.

But not all activities.

Today we meet a woman who is using a nature activity to stay grounded through the pandemic.

Marci LeFevre lives in the state of Maryland, close to Washington, D.C. I recently went to her home and spoke with her outside her house where she has two **beehives**. They provide shelter for about 120,000 bees.



Beekeeper Marcie LeFevre has been keeping bees since 2014. Here is a close up picture of her bees in their hive. (Image courtesy of Marcie LeFevre)

“So, what we’re going to do is we’re going to walk right through here ... through that path. And then we’re going to go right on, like, we can even stand behind the hive, this one right here on the corner.”

Spring is an important time for beekeepers. They must see if their bees survived the cold winter months. As temperatures rise, the insects **emerge** from the hives, looking for flowers.

But spring 2020 was not a normal spring.

Marcie LeFevre recalls that time as “bittersweet,” meaning it was both good and bad.

“With COVID, the COVID pandemic, this spring having that connection to nature became even more important. With spring’s arrival this bittersweet experience of being so **joyful** to see spring, but also a sense of loss for what we weren’t able to do. And a loss for, you know, some people who were losing family members.”

**Lifelong nature lover**

LeFevre describes herself as a lifelong nature lover. In 2014, she took her love of nature a step further. She decided to keep bees.



This is Marcie LeFevre's backyard and the parts to her beehives before she built them. (Image courtesy of Marcie LeFevre)

“I’ve grown up loving the outdoors. But I do believe that by being a beekeeper I’ve become even more **in tune** seasonally to what is **blooming**, based on just the behavior the bees.”

For Marcie LeFevre, her bees are great teachers. She says she learns something new each time she visits the beehives.

She watches her bees come back home covered in **pollen** from different flowers. The color of the pollen depends on what flowers are growing in her neighborhood.

“On the backs of their legs you can see these **brilliant** colors. You can actually see the colors. There have been an indigo, blues, brilliant oranges, greens, and you just wonder, ‘What are they getting into?’ I’d love to have a Go-Pro on a bee to see ...”



Beekeeper Marcie LeFevre enjoys watching her backyard bees. (Image courtesy of Marcie LeFevre)

The beekeeper says her bees ate well during the summer and are well fed. She knows this by the happy buzzing sound they make.

Through their buzzing, the bees tell her other things as well. One day while near the hives she heard a strange noise.

“And it was like a sound I’ve never heard before...it was like this ‘meep peep.’”

She thought it was a child crying. Then she realized the sound was coming from inside the beehives. It was a new queen bee emerging. Queens make this sound to announce themselves.

“Oh, it was just an **amazing** thing. And I think that, in some ways, really captures what I love about beekeeping is just being outside and forgetting about humanity and people and just being so **in tune** to the sounds of birds, bees, the behavior of the bees ...”

Seeing the constant **lifecycle** of the bees has given her a feeling of hope.

“Being affected by COVID, I think, made us all in some ways have to find a way to ground ourselves. And for me to come out a couple of times a week to look at the bees and see a **cycle of life** that -- as it does every spring -- that is kind of starting anew was hopeful.”

LeFevre says beekeeping has taught her something else -- the ability to look at the big picture.

“... and (it was) helpful to see that life was going on and will go on independent of what we as humans are doing. And I think that bigger picture just really helped me get through this spring -- to know that there are things that have moved through life -- even with bees. Bees get sick. Bees have bad years... diseases. And that over time things work out in the end.”

LeFevre says the pandemic has affected many things. But she thinks it has slowed life down a little -- long enough for people to stop and listen.

“You know, this is a gift for everybody -- to connect with nature because it finds a way when you least expect it to heal us and ask nothing in return. As long as I can keep bees...it’s a gift. And it’s a gift every season and I’m just happy to be able to share it. And the honey, of course. Yes! And the honey!”

And that’s the *Health & Lifestyle* report. I’m Anna Matteo.

*Anna Matteo reported this story for VOA Learning English. George Grow was the editor.*