Celebrating Our People

It’s the time of year, Nurses Week and Hospital Week, when we recognize each of you for your amazing work—on the front lines and behind-the-scenes. I hope you enjoy this special issue of ONE—in honor of YOU.

—STEVE LEFFLER, MD
PRESIDENT, UVM MEDICAL CENTER
We Honor Each Other

Scores of colleagues have contributed words and images recognizing the skill, passion and dedication of their team members. We are sharing only a fraction of these expressions of gratitude and depictions of determination and resilience. And, as part of our coverage, we want to recognize those employees who themselves have contracted the virus. Their experiences remind us of how personal this crisis is.

Some comments have been edited for length, clarity and editorial style.

“These are superheroes from HealthNet, the ED and the OR, who have swabbed over 2,600 members of our community.”

—Michael Conti

“We care, so we only share virtual hugs”

—Patty Ede, RN

Top Left: Swab Squad | Top Right: University of Vermont Primary Care Pediatrics | Bottom Left: Cath lab: STEMI team | Bottom Middle: Tracie Douglas, Mammography Supervisor | Bottom Right: Baird 7
We Honor Each Other (continued)

“Heroes walk into the unknown with the bravest faces, despite their own fear and anxiety. Finding humor wherever they can to lift each other’s spirits.”
—Kristin Baker, RN

“Behind the closed door and the face masks, we are still here and ready to care for patients.”
—Bethany Palmer, RN

“Teamwork at the Employee Health COVID-19 Triage Line. Thank you for supporting our employees’ well-being.”
—Evelyn Sikorski

Top Left: PICU night shift | Top Middle: Brook McGinn, Breast Imaging Liaison | Top Right: Elizabeth Baillargeon, Mammography Technician | Bottom Left: Baird 3 | Bottom Middle: Staff in Renal Dialysis, Joy Drive
We Honor Each Other (continued)

“Almost overnight, we were tasked to transform health care to use telehealth at all our hospitals and clinics in the Network. We went from 150 users using telehealth to over 2,000 in less than two weeks. This endeavor truly represents the power of our UVM Health Network teams working to make incredible change for our patients!”

—Todd Young

“Here, we don’t have just co-workers, we have a family. We know that whatever storm approaches us, we can and will get through it together!”

—Devin Lumbra

“Socially distanced and ready to serve. Thank you, Team Pharmacy!”

—Maria Civalier, PharmD
Recognition from our Board of Trustees

Dear UVM Medical Center Employees,

This organization is in the middle of perhaps the most challenging time in our history. The impacts are both personal and professional. Amidst these most difficult times, I want to share the Board’s gratitude for all that you are doing in service to our patients. As a small token of our appreciation, my fellow board members and I are personally donating free coffee, tea and iced coffee during Hospital Week, May 10–16 at our cafeteria sites. That includes the Fanny Allen Dunbar Cafe, the Harvest Café, the Baird 3 Cafeteria, and the Coffee Kiosk on ACC Level 2. Thank you for all you are doing for our patients and the community. We are thinking of you.

Sincerely,
Pat Donehower, RN, MSN
Chair of the UVMMC Board of Trustees

Top row, left to right: Pat Donehower, RN, MSN, Hal Colston
Bottom row, left to right: Aly Richards & her family, John Evans, PhD
RECOGNITION FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Top row, left to right: Glen Wright, Joe Hagan, MD, Virginia Hood, MD, Tom Little
Bottom row, left to right: Debbie Winters, Nadia Mitchell, Martin LeWinter, MD, Jesse Bridges
RECOGNITION FROM OUR BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Top row, left to right: Anne Doremus, Jim Foster, Rosemary Dale, EdD, APRN
Bottom row, left to right: Rick Page, MD, Kerin Stackpole, Mike D'Amico, MD

Thank you to the healthcare heroes at UVMMC!!

Thank you for all you do!
Gratitude and Love from Our Community

Community members expressed their gratitude to all our staff for their courage, commitment and care through our #ThanksHealthHeroes project. Here are just a few of the more than 389 (and counting) comments and images that have been posted here.

“On behalf of the whole Vermont Senate, thank you. Thank you doctors, nurses, techs, environmental services crew, support staff, administrators and everyone else.”
—Tim Ashe

“I was totally amazed at the professionalism shown by all. More so, the human touch of caring! Thank you all!”
—James Brown

“Thank you nurses for all you are doing to keep us safe.”
—Rory Callahan

“Send love to our healthcare workers!”
—Joann Davis
Gratitude and Love from Our Community (continued)

“No words can express the true gratitude that I know that I feel. May our prayers be answered for all of us to remain safe and healthy. Thank you and your families.”
—Mary Chapman

“We are in awe of your sense of duty, your caring and compassion, your resilience and your bravery. In this war, you are the heroes, and we will never forget.”
—Elaine Boudah

“We’re grateful for everyone who is helping out!”
—Aya Yousey-Hindes

“Thank you for all that you do and keeping Vermont Strong”
—Lorie Russell

“Think Positive”
—Chelsea Witt

“We’re keeping our asses home and following directives while reflecting on our gratitude for the tireless work you do to save lives. Thank you!”
—Lynn Hayward-Bisbee

“My daughter and son-in-law entered on 4/7/20 to have their son who was born at 12:03 am on 4/8/20. I was present through a video for the entire birth. All the staff have been extraordinary throughout their stay. I cannot be more grateful. They have not only done what they always do but to do it in the middle of this pandemic seamlessly putting my daughter and her family’s needs first. They truly are heroes.”
—Linda Bruno

“You remind us every day why we are on this earth, and that we are all part of one human family. Thank you for all that you sacrifice and for all that you do.”
—Alice Barbera

Top Left: Submitted by Ben Yousey-Hindes | Top Middle: Submitted by Elaine Boudah | Top Right: Submitted by Lynn Hayward-Bisbee | Bottom Left: Submitted by Lori Russell | Bottom Right: Submitted by Linda Bruno
Lucky  By Rosemerry Wahtola Trommer

There are days when we know we are lucky—
when we go for a walk and find, beneath dead leaves,
yellow petals. When an envelope brings a surprise check.
When a loved one calls to say they will visit. When
our name is pulled from a hat.

And then there are days our luck is less clear.
When the commercial world as we know it collapses.
When the schools and restaurants and whole towns are closed.
When our paycheck is gone and we can’t pay
next month’s rent. When loved ones’ lives are threatened.
Yes then, it’s much harder to say we are lucky.

But. Every day, every day for the last week,
every day when I wake, I think to myself,
This, this is the day to make a difference.
This is the day to bring your best self to the world.
This is the day to shine and work and forgive.

Every cell in me is wildly alive. Every moment
feels like a gift. Every minute feels like an invitation
to show up more open, more vulnerable, more brave
than I ever dreamed I could be. And gosh,
if that isn’t lucky, (isn’t a grace, gift, or opportunity)
I don’t know what is.
On the Front Lines in New York City

As a patient attendant, an LNA, a medical assistant and a member of our critical care transport team, Andrew Kehl watched what nurses did, observed them as they provided direct patient care…and quietly made the decision to become a nurse himself.

Today, that perspective is the filter through which he views an entirely new experience: caring for COVID-19 patients at the temporary federal medical station set up at the Javits Center in New York City.

As he pursued his dream of entering critical care nursing, Andrew embraced learning, starting with getting his associate’s degree at Vermont Technical College and ultimately earning a Doctorate in Nursing Practice at the UVM College of Nursing and Health Sciences. In 2013, he joined our Medical ICU as an RN.

At first, he says, he didn’t know what he was getting himself into with the MICU. But over the years he’s really found a comfort level with the demands of the work. He appreciates the autonomy that he has, and, in spite of the fact that the MICU team sees more than its share of patients in dire situations, he feels deeply the rewards of those personal moments where he can help a patient and their family understand their circumstances. “Just helping them get through the roughest part of their hospital stay, I feel like I can really make a difference in someone’s life.”

And while he was training to become a nurse, he was also quietly and steadily pursuing another interest: serving in the Army Reserves. In 2017 he was commissioned as an Officer in the Nursing Corp, a commitment that consisted of two weekends per month and two full weeks a year.

In March of this year, his unit was told they would be sent to New York City to support the national COVID-19 response efforts.

The temporary facility can hold up to 2000 patients, but while Andrew has been there, they’ve never had more than 500. The patients are varied: this was supposed to be their last stop before being discharged, but Andrew has cared for patients who are intubated, patients who are walking and talking, and some on minimal oxygen.

He has been struck by what he describes as the disproportionate burden on the poor who have contracted the virus. They have fewer options for where they can be discharged and a more fragile support system at home. A big challenge has been communicating with the large number of Hispanic patients. “Inevitably,” he says, “some important nuances of communication get lost in translation.”

The work has been intense. Dressed in full PPE for his 12-hour shifts, he spends his off-hours sleeping in his room at The Hampton Inn on 39th Street.

He hasn’t had much time for sightseeing. And as much as he’s taken solace in being able to help, he says, “we also know we’re needed back home.” That emotional tug-of-war has been a drain for his colleagues at the Javits Center as well.

In the end, though, for Andrew—whether he’s at the Javits Center or in the MICU—what it all comes down to is the team. “Sharing the problem-solving, parsing the logistics, supporting each other...that’s what it’s all about. Here in New York City and back in Vermont, I’m very grateful to work with a team who is willing to step it up and get it done.”

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