



# Courage • Compassion • Community

The Strength and Experience of NorthShore During COVID-19





This tribute is in honor of our courageous NorthShore team members,  
community partners and patients and was partially funded by generous donations.

• created by •

Jon Hillenbrand  
&  
YOU

November, 2020

In this season of sharing gratitude, I continue to be inspired and thankful for the heroism of our NorthShore physicians, nurses, researchers and team members on the front lines of clinical care every day.

We never could have predicted the challenges that 2020 would bring: the abrupt challenge and uncertainty of COVID-19, a global recession and the painful reality and awakening of racial and social turmoil. In each instance, we moved quickly, leaned on one another and marshaled the resources of our entire system to protect our patients and support our team members.

Over the course of this journey, we've learned a lot about ourselves and the vital role we play across the communities we're privileged to serve. We embrace the opportunity to continue improving, while taking pride in our impact when it matters most.

When NorthShore became the first healthcare system in the state to develop an in-house COVID-19 test, we shared it with our patients as well as neighboring hospitals and the Illinois Department of Public Health. We converted one of our hospital campuses to exclusively support COVID-19, keeping patients and staff safe while delivering outcomes that exceeded state benchmarks.

While the pandemic posed difficult challenges for each of us, it also brought out the best in all of us. It strengthened the relationships NorthShore has with community leaders and partners through a robust network of mutual support. There's also been an incredible outpouring of appreciation and support from grateful patients and community members for our frontline clinical care teams, along with critical testing, research and relief efforts.

To make sure the best care remains local, we're pursuing innovative partnerships across our communities to improve the health, well-being and equity of care delivered across the populations we serve. The addition of Swedish Hospital into the NorthShore family affirms our commitment to meeting the needs of all we serve. This crucial safety-net provider now has even more resources to serve some of the most diverse neighborhoods in Chicago.

We look forward to welcoming Northwest Community Healthcare to NorthShore as we continue to grow and ensure that community-based healthcare remains vibrant and essential to the wellbeing of those we serve for decades to come.

We're all neighbors. Thanks to you, NorthShore can fulfill its promise to provide exceptional, innovative care that is community-connected, convenient and always prepared for what's next.

With gratitude,



**J.P. Gallagher**  
*President and Chief Executive Office*







## A Team of Heroes

Toward the end of 2019, a novel coronavirus was emerging in Wuhan, China, that doctors and scientists had never seen before.

NorthShore's leadership took an extremely proactive stance to ensure that the organization would be ready when the first cases arrived in our area. Clinical and administrative teams quickly came together to anticipate the needs of the community and meet the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic.

Chief Medical Officer Officer Lakshmi Halasyamani, MD, and Chief Operating Officer Sean O'Grady systemwide efforts focused on maintaining the health and safety of our patients and our team members.

NorthShore was the first health system in the state to develop and launch in-house testing in early March and was recognized by the Illinois Department of Public Health for this critical capability. Testing capacity grew quickly, and results were delivered within 24 hours, significantly faster than many other facilities.

Throughout the entire journey, NorthShore came together, relying on one another for ongoing support through a shared commitment to providing the best care for our patients and their families. As the journey continues, we have evolved into an even stronger, more compassionate team.



"We were in the middle of the pandemic with our highest inpatient COVID-19 patient volume in the ICUs and on the floors. The staff was incredibly tired but doing an amazing job caring for our patients. I then received an inquiry from a couple staff members asking if they could just sit with ICU COVID patients who were on ventilators and hold their hands and talk to them since family could not visit. They would do this on their own time as a way of giving back to our patients and their families. There were so many moments where I just marveled at the GOOD in our NorthShore team members and was moved to tears with pride that I get to work at such a wonderful organization. This is just one example of so many inspiring COVID moments. NorthShore Proud Forever!!"

**Doug Silverstein**  
*President, NorthShore Evanston Hospital*





"I was fortunate to witness firsthand the commitment and selflessness of colleagues throughout the organization.

Early in the COVID pandemic, NorthShore Blood Bank's leadership team recognized that obtaining blood products for our patients might become increasingly difficult. Blood drives across the country were being cancelled. An initial appeal for blood donations was made to employees and the response was overwhelming.

We were able to quickly find a larger area and train additional staff. We soon had hundreds of community members as well as employees coming in to donate. The kindness and the 'I just want to do something to help' sentiment expressed by all of our colleagues and community donors was heartwarming.

We then went on to collect convalescent plasma from recovered COVID patients. The Blood Bank team was inspired by the commitment these donors had to helping someone else."

**Jessica Mallek**  
Donor Programs Coordinator





“This has been like no other challenge in my career—and while difficult, it makes me proud to work with this team in the labs, and especially proud to be at NorthShore!”

**Karen Kaul, MD, PhD**

*Chair, Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine  
Duckworth Family Chair  
NorthShore University HealthSystem  
Clinical Professor of Pathology  
University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine*



“We’ve seen daily change since March, and I expect daily change for the foreseeable future. Staffing, workload variation, new clients, new tests, new protocols, new expectations from clients, reagent shortages, etc. Every day brings a new challenge.

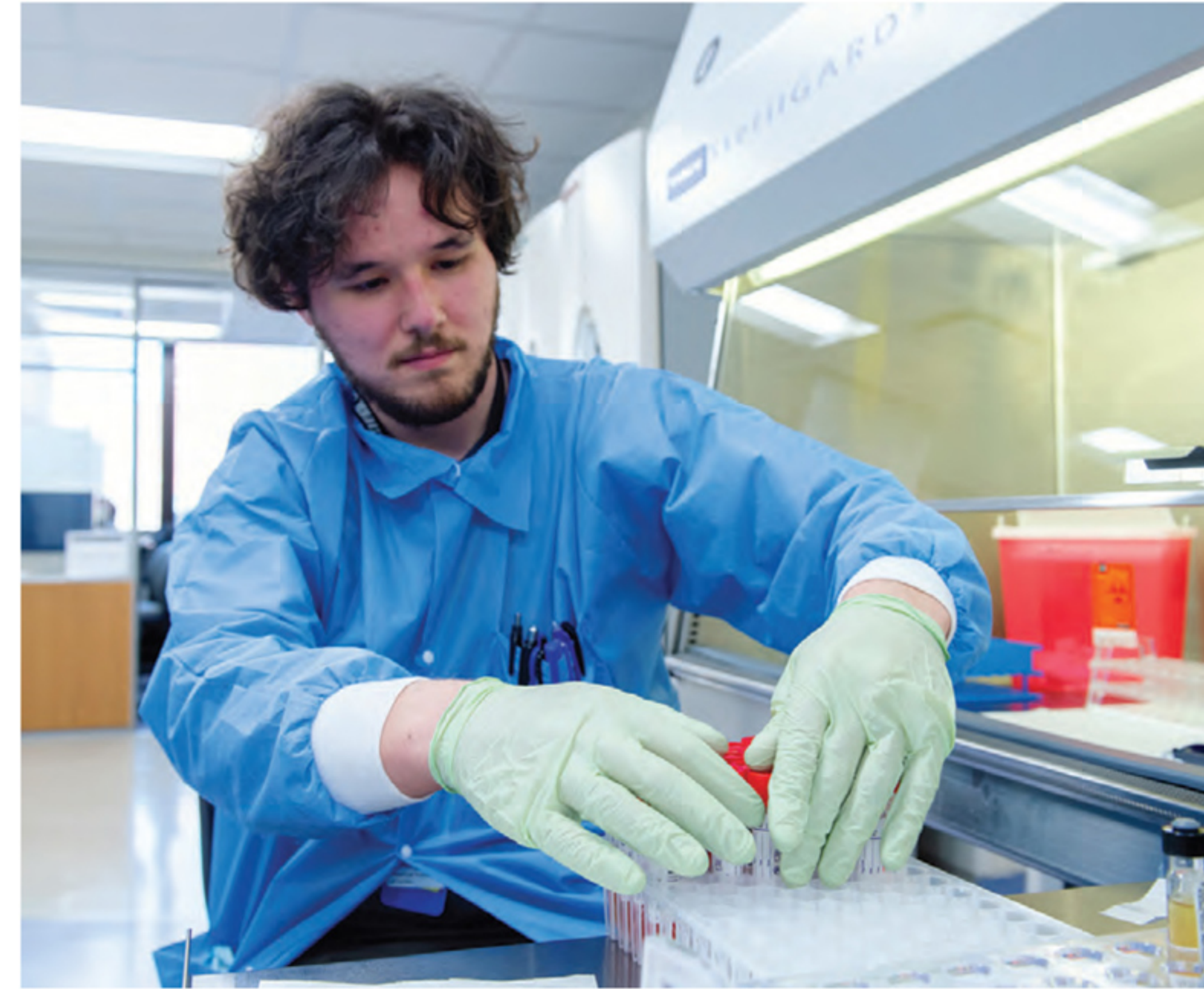
I’ve been very proud of our staff and the way they’ve managed this change. We haven’t been perfect, but all considered, I think we’ve been successful.

I’m very proud of the impact the lab has had in controlling the spread of this disease. We may be in the background most of the time, but there is no minimizing our impact now.”

**Robert Benirschke, PhD**

*Pathology*





## Meeting Urgent Demands

The rapid mobilization of NorthShore's Immediate Care COVID-19 "Super Sites" with drive-through testing offered the community unparalleled access to this critical diagnostic protocol seven days a week. Led by Emergency Medicine Physician and Immediate Care Medical Director Brigham Temple, MD, the Herculean transformation of the Immediate Care centers was truly a team effort.







"I'll share a personal story...of the heroic effort of the collaboration between the administrative and clinical teams..."

When we understood the gravity of the situation and what was ahead of us...we had to figure out a way to greatly expand the Immediate Care footprint in select locations. We had to convert four IC sites into COVID Super Sites, which meant moving Primary Care providers and offices to different locations to provide Immediate Care more exam rooms (almost a tenfold increase at some locations). The Immediate Care, Primary Care and Specialty Care administrative teams worked over the weekend to complete these moves and prepare the supplies and PPE necessary for Immediate Care for a Monday launch. At the same time, the Immediate Care clinical team quickly learned how to triage, evaluate, test and provide instructions to patients with COVID symptoms, exposure and/or infection (in a safe way). Primary Care clinical teams joined Immediate Care in the fight providing physicians, APPs, MAs, PSAs to take care of patients.

About a week later, it was clear that we needed to provide a self-triage tool for our patients and created the COVID eVisit in NorthShoreConnect. With collaboration from our amazing colleagues in HIT/Epic Training, we built version 1 of the COVID eVisit, which now is on version 18, going on 19. This eVisit allowed our patients to enter their symptoms and receive an immediate response with next steps (e.g., quarantine, monitor symptoms, come in for evaluation and/or testing) 24 hours a day, seven days a week at no charge.

A week after that, we launched the drive-through testing facility, again a collaborative team from across the Medical Group, HIT, Public Safety, Immediate Care, Infection Control and more, erecting two tents and an efficient process to provide COVID testing to our patients without leaving their cars.

So many details, workflows, algorithms, logistics, adjustments and movements we made in those first several weeks. The leadership teams worked tirelessly seven days per week for several weeks to get things up, running and stabilized."

**Tyler Bauer**  
Senior Vice President  
Clinical Operations







"I remember the feelings of fear and anxiety at the onset of COVID. Walking through the patient waiting areas in the Immediate Care Super Sites, it was tangible—people were scared. So much was changing so quickly. I was (and still am) impressed with the response from leadership throughout this time.

Despite so much being unknown, I felt confident that NorthShore was meeting the uncertainty calmly and appropriately. I wanted to help in any way I could. As the drive-through for COVID testing was implemented, I asked to join knowing it was one small way to contribute. While the drive-through itself has continued to change in response to increased need and other forces, the teamwork and camaraderie has remained constant. Rain or shine, we are there to make a scary process a little easier, and I feel better knowing I'm helping in some way."

**Jessica Gonzales, MBA, RHIA**  
 Director, Medical Group Operations







## Serving the Community

Collaborative teams of NorthShore physicians, nurses and support staff worked tirelessly while maintaining a laser focus on patient and staff health and safety. A dedicated HEALTH9 hotline was established, and close to 75,000 calls were answered through September providing critical answers to questions as well as initial evaluations. We moved thousands of physician visits for conditions other than COVID-19 to electronic and video visits.

More than 55,000 e-visits have also been offered as NorthShore teams continue to demonstrate not only a commitment to the community, but true creativity and compassion in providing care. NorthShore Glenbrook Hospital was transformed into a dedicated COVID-19 hospital, complete with negative pressure environments and extensive precautions designed to keep our patients and team members safe. Team members from across the hospital and organization came together, stepping up to unforeseen challenges to make the transformation a reality in record time.

We strengthened existing relationships in the community and forged new partnerships to offer education and outreach around coronavirus prevention. These vital partnerships focused on lifesaving infection control messages and continue to serve as a testament to the power of coming together for the greater good.

And through it all, we continued to keep our patients with acute illnesses safe, performed urgent operations and delivered babies.





"I've been a nurse for many years. When I first started, HIV was new. Since then we've encountered SARS, MERS, anthrax, smallpox, monkeypox, vaccinia, avian flu, swine flu and Ebola among the more traditional diseases. COVID-19 feels different though for many reasons—not only because of its prevalence and persistence, but also due to the changes we have all made in our daily lives outside of work. I've been unfailingly impressed with how our staff has come together to care for our patients while making sure they and we are safe from one another. People came to work every day, every shift because they felt that we were doing all we could to protect them so they could work here and go home safely to their loved ones and communities. Our staff have been very engaged in creating safe practices that can be sustained over time. I am incredibly thankful that everyone in the ED not only has ideas on how we can improve upon what we do, but they are also very willing to share their thoughts. Thank goodness no one is shy down here! It keeps us together, and we'll need each other more than ever going forward because I don't see an end to COVID-19 in the near future."

**Joan Casey, RN**  
 Clinical Nurse Manager, Emergency Department  
 NorthShore Evanston Hospital





"I am so proud of the way the Glenbrook team adapted to the COVID situation. Every day, staff were taking care of sick COVID-positive patients who were isolated from their families and did all they could to keep them connected. I especially remember when we were able to reunite a husband and wife who were hospitalized in rooms next to each other but had been unable to see each other for two weeks. It was wonderful seeing them being discharged together."

**Jesse Peterson Hall, President**  
*NorthShore Glenbrook Hospital*







## Essential Teamwork

Undoubtedly, providing care in a pandemic challenged each and every member of the NorthShore team. But it also brought out the best in team members at all levels, across the organization. Clinicians and others stepped up to new and uncharted roles, embraced new challenges, and formed new and important alliances with one another.

Multidisciplinary teams came together to develop new systems like fit testing scores of team members for N95 masks, new workflows for transformed units, and new initiatives to improve efficiencies in testing and treatment. We also implemented intake screening at all locations, working to refine the processes over the months as new information on transmission came to light.



“What I believe and try to put in to action, despite what you may be feeling, in order to understand any operation you must be ‘boots on the ground running.’

While working the temperature screening and managing, you still must have gratitude, be gracious, genuine, kind and have patience. Gratitude in what you do knowing what I do is making a difference. It may go unnoticed, but I know that I am protecting others. Genuine in that I truly see everyone as a whole and their purpose for coming to the hospital during a very scary time, and not just a body coming and going. Kindness and patience go a long way. Despite the many times I had angry people in my face, I continued to do my best and do it right or at least to the best of my knowledge.”

**Jennifer Moy, RDH, MBA**

*Manager Dental Center, NorthShore Evanston Hospital*

*(Managed the COVID Support Team, NorthShore Evanston Hospital)*







“5 North Searle, Evanston Hospital, was the designated unit before anyone else for the COVID patients. These nurses were very engaged and ready to do anything that they needed to. They started seeing more and more patients with COVID and started to experience the worst part of it: the death of these patients. As you can imagine, this was very hard for the staff as the families were not allowed to visit for safety precautions. The staff were taking care of their patients without any family, and they needed to be both the caregiver and the family.

We had one patient who was 101 years old—that is correct, 101. It was very early in the pandemic when everything was shut down and no visitors were allowed. Our patient had many loved ones who wanted to visit but couldn’t. The nurses made every attempt to have Zoom calls with the patient’s family so that at least they could see her. The nurses also read many letters and prayers that the family wanted the patient to hear.

It was one day when our retired CNO was reading the obituaries, as she did every Sunday, and read about our patient who had passed away at our hospital. In the obituary, this is what it said: ‘We tried to have a Zoom family meeting but we had trouble with the technology, so it didn’t turn out well,’ the daughter stated. ‘But the nursing staff at Evanston Hospital was beyond amazing. They took such good care of her, holding up the phone so she could hear us, and reading her our letters and prayers. None of us could be there when she died, so my grandmother’s nurse, Alejandra, was like a guardian angel to all of us.’

This is what nursing is all about. This was the theme of COVID, giving your heart and soul to our patients and families in their most vulnerable times and when their loved ones and families could not be with them. It just highlights the essential act of human kindness at its finest. We love and thank our nurses who truly are the heroes of healthcare. Thank you for everything you stand for and are. We would be nowhere without you. We LOVE OUR NURSES :)”

**Nicole Fernandez, RN, MS, ONC**

*Senior Vice President of Nursing and Clinical Operations  
NorthShore Evanston Hospital*



“I wanted to say that working in Skokie ER, being over 60 I was afraid of COVID. I remember waking one night thinking that I might really die. But as I worked day by day, I became more secure in my work because my manager, Kate Serdar, who was in the ER daily for over 1 month, made sure that we had all the protective equipment needed. And thanks to NorthShore who had an awesome response and plan! I told patients and family who expressed concern about my safety, ‘That’s why I work at NorthShore. They are doing everything they can to protect their employees.’”

**Claire Lenihan, RN**

*Emergency Department, NorthShore Skokie Hospital*





"I have thought a lot about the past seven months at GB and at NorthShore. Perhaps it is a product of age (and I would hope wisdom), but I cannot help but reflect on how everything in life is somehow divinely planned and purposeful. The last thing I would have ever expected to do was to help lead a pavilion that was the system clinical site for a global pandemic. It feels like that came out of nowhere. How it happened, I truly believe, was for a purpose. The spirit, will, sense of teamwork and nimbleness of the GB team left no doubt in my mind that this was the place. We did and saw things we never thought we would, and the landscape seemed to change every few hours. In a way, we were somewhat of a self-contained world, definitely having support from our system and colleagues, but really dependent on each other to figure it out and make it happen on a daily operational basis. There was so much pride and unity around that. It was energizing. I don't think we ever thought about being scared, at least not for long. Things were moving too rapidly. Instead, we were able to deploy our creativity, spontaneity and passion. Many things were uncharted, especially in the early months. Things were changing by the minute, and we needed to take whatever we knew at that moment and say to ourselves, 'Let's just do it.'

There are a few things that have made me incredibly proud. #1) The unified response from our system was second to none. I could not feel more pride and contentment for being here and am eternally grateful I found my way back. #2) The resiliency and commitment from the entire GB team was second to none. There was nothing you could ask for that people would not do. Over time, we joked that we could flip and staff a unit into whenever it needed to be in under two hours! Someone even said that we could tell the staff that we were pitching a tent and setting up a department on the front lawn, and they would smile and say, 'OK, let's go!' #3) The unity felt around the common mission of helping, healing and saving our community was profound and like nothing I ever experienced in almost 33 years of nursing. #4) The support from the community was emotional, inspiring and proof of our interconnectedness. #5) Finally, to hear staff say they felt safer here than anywhere else, and how thankful they were to be at NorthShore, that's what it is all about.

In summary, NorthShore, Glenbrook and the COVID pandemic response... divinely planned and purposeful."

**Maria Knecht, RN, MSN, NE-BC**

*Vice President*

*Nursing and Clinical Operations*

*NorthShore Glenbrook Hospital*



"When we first made plans to add an additional treatment area to help manage the anticipated influx of patients seeking evaluation for Covid-19, we identified the ambulance bay as the perfect area to set up this NorthShore "field hospital" to keep patients with flu-like symptoms separate from other patients. This was to protect our patients and our staff.

After consulting with other ED colleagues in the area, and seeing what they were standing up, our first iteration was a mobile tent structure to evaluate patients in the ambulance bay. After a few days, it became obvious that we outgrew that capacity and needed more space.

NorthShore went above and beyond to stand up, literally overnight, a 40-bay Respiratory Evaluation Unit with individual treatment stalls and x-ray capability that allowed us to rapidly and safely evaluate a large number of patients during the initial Covid-19 surge, keeping the rest of the emergency department from getting overwhelmed.

This forward thinking set us up for success. Our team felt we were ready for anything because of the support we received. As a result, we were able to provide superior care for our patients."

**Ernest Wang, MD**

*Chief of Emergency Medicine*

*Alvin H. Baum Family Fund Chair*

*of Simulation and Innovation*









“My name is Tonya Fleming, and I work at Lake Shore PM&R/Vernon Hills. When the pandemic happened and the governor shut the entire city down, I thought to myself what’s going to happen? When I found out that the Physical Therapy department would remain open, I was a little nervous about it but then I realized I had to walk by faith and not by sight. I was more concerned with how I would commute back and forth to work, especially when Metra stopped operating for a while. I never missed a beat with coming to work every day and finally finding another Metra I could take it really took me out of my way but I made it work. I think I was more worried about losing my job if I didn’t make it to work. Getting off late at night going to the Metra and being approached by homeless men was very scary, especially when I’m the only one on the street. I have managed to try and think positive and taking this pandemic day by day, but it’s hard and a struggle but I do it. I just keep thinking that BETTER DAYS ARE COMING AND IT WON’T BE LIKE THIS ALWAYS. I just have to keep my head up and try to remain positive.”

**Tonya Fleming**  
*Lead PM&R, Vernon Hills*



“When I look back on my time spent calling patients with their COVID results, I’m struck by how it mirrors the pandemic itself. Much like the early stages of dealing with COVID brought incredible fear and uncertainty, so too did my first days of making calls. I would hope that I would only have negatives because those were always straightforward and easy. When calling patients who tested positive, at first I was very nervous and would think, ‘What if they ask me something I don’t have the answer to? How are they going to respond? Is this going to go poorly?’ Eventually, I came to settle into the new normal as we all have with the pandemic, and took it one call at a time, moment to moment. There are some calls that stick with me to this day: from the woman in her 60s with newly diagnosed cancer on top of a positive result that I spent 40 minutes on the phone with, to the man in his 80s whose wife was currently hospitalized and took the news better than I did (not that he ever knew the difference), to the expectant mothers whose partners or children had just tested positive, to entire families affected in such different ways—the virus truly knows no bounds and pushes people to the absolute limit. Delivering news to each of them was an experience that has forever touched my life and given me a window into people’s worlds that, while unexpected, I’ll always be grateful for and humbled by.”

**Elizabeth Thorn, PT, DPT, MHA**  
*Care Transformation Manager*



“This has truly been very challenging for me. Since the shutdown, I don’t see much of my family since my husband has COPD and I feel I need to keep him safe. Time away from family is tough since we are so close and I miss the little ones so much. At the same time, my son took a job as a flat bed cross-country truck driver. So with the shutdown came the empty nest syndrome.

During the protesting and riots downtown, we have 6 family members who serve on the Chicago Police Force and were working 12 hour mandatory days and being dispatched to a different location each day. The locations they were dispatched to put them in danger. My nephew was shot at twice, a near miss as he could hear the bullets as they passed his ear. And bruising on their legs from having bricks thrown at them. So not only did we have to hope they did not get COVID, but we were now faced with hoping they would come home alive. But their attitude was ‘This is what I do.’

I now have a few stories to tell in years to come about the COVID pandemic. Hard to believe what we have all gone through.

A big thank-you to NorthShore University HealthSystem for all your hard work at the hospitals and keeping us safe from this pandemic. I am very blessed to work here.

The feeling of community, selflessness, generosity and a calling to a higher purpose was a hallmark of all of my interactions with my physician colleagues. It was humbling and inspiring.”

**Joni Veloria, Administration**  
*Health Information Technology*

“How has COVID been? It’s been interesting. But we’re all handling it very well. I think we are very equipped. I’m sure you’ve seen our COVID bay. I remember when it was a yellow tent. But now it’s a city.”

**Inna Slobodyan, RN**  
*Emergency Department, NorthShore Evanston Hospital*

“I take the correct precautions with every patient. And I feel like this is kind of what I do for a living. I know there are a lot of people who are worried about it. And I know family members are worried for me, but I guess I try not to think about it.”

**Anne Beck, RN**  
*Emergency Department, NorthShore Evanston Hospital*







## LABOR POOL:

### Core Team Involved in Staffing Labor Pool = 13

(RNs, administrators, front-line staff)

In the first month of operations

- 1,500 requests for resources were completed (i.e., 1,500 jobs needing to be filled were filled by someone who was downstaffed or available to perform the necessary duties)
- 90% of requests for needed resources were filled
- 110 RNs cross-trained to be able to function in areas/departments outside of normal job function (e.g., Procedural RN trained to function on med/surg unit)
- 70 team members cross-trained to function as a Patient Care Technician (PCT) on med/surg unit (e.g., Medical Assistants in the MG trained to perform inpatient duties)
- 650 physicians have worked 8,606 hours outside of their normal departments

"Forming the labor pool on March 16 with no real blueprint was pretty overwhelming. But, similar to dealing with COVID in general, learning and adapting on a daily basis is crucial. And having a team committed to doing what is right by the patients we serve and employees of NorthShore allowed us to be successful."

### Evan DeVoe

Director, Clinical Operations  
Labor Pool Manager

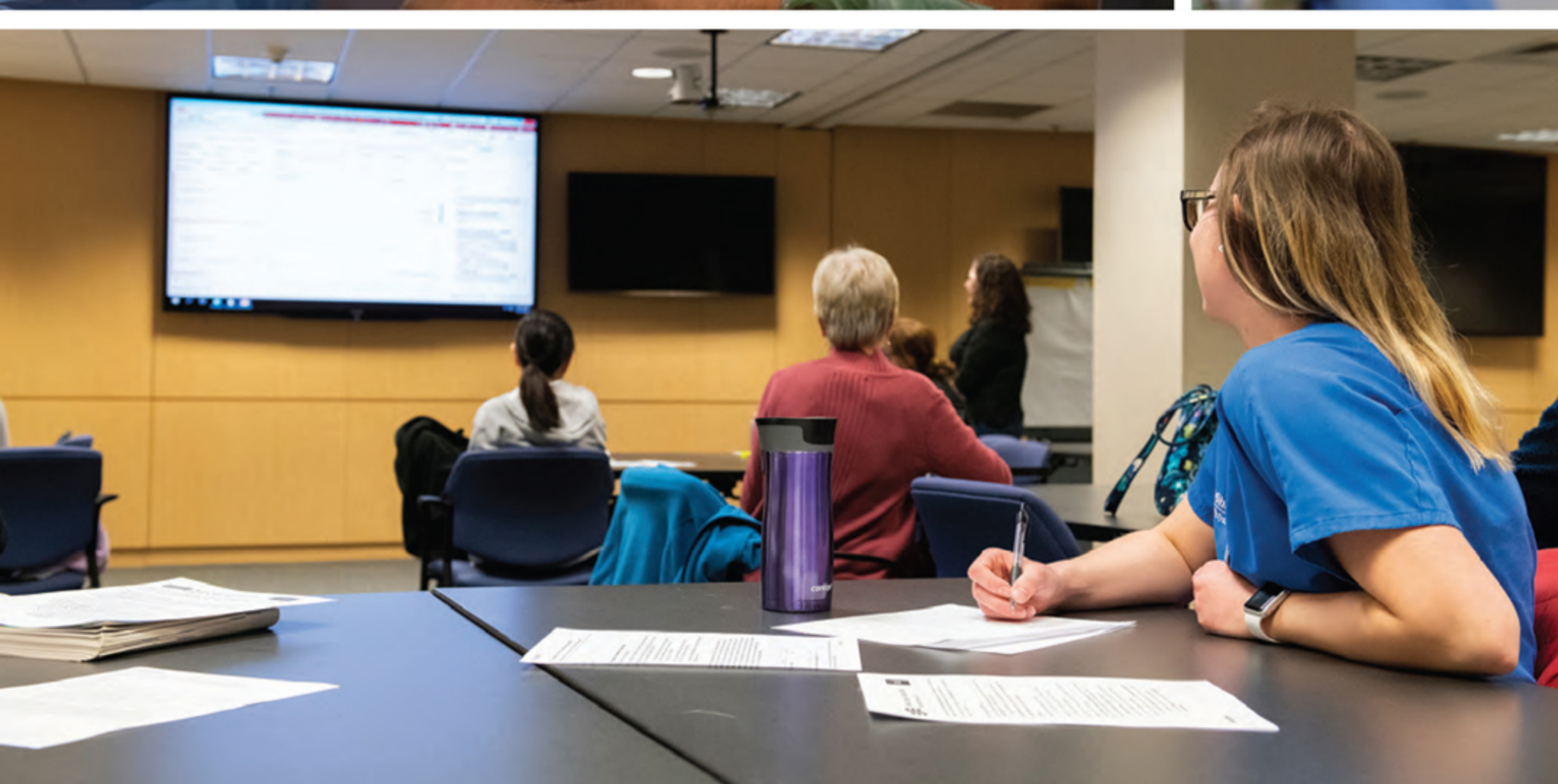
"My colleagues (the transformation management office team) and I were asked to be in charge of the Physician Labor Pool during the first phase of the pandemic. We did not know what we were in for, but we were preparing for upwards of 750 COVID positive patients to come through our doors. We were in charge of recruiting physicians to care for them.

The response was overwhelming and humbling. Most folks literally said 'wherever, whenever.'

They did not ask about pay, they did not ask about exposure, they just wanted to help in any way possible. We had people asking to be put on the COVID floors because they wanted to set an example for their team. We had physicians from the community showing up at our doors asking if they could be put to work. We had physicians who were not licensed in America but came to our doors asking what they could do because they wanted to give back to the country that had taken them in. We had physicians who had not taken care of an admitted acute respiratory patient in 30 years wanting to lend a hand."

### Christine Bloomfield, RN, MS, CNOR

Transformation Management Office Consultant





“The pandemic has had a tremendous impact on our organization and most importantly our people. Many of you have been tremendously affected personally through the loss of loved ones, and my heart goes out to you. And all of us have significantly changed the way we go about our daily lives here at the Hospital and in our homes and neighborhoods. We still don’t know what the new normal will be when it comes to COVID-19, but each day we come together and fight for patients and each other. I am so proud of how each of you and our entire organization has made a difference to so many.”

**Anthony Guaccio**  
*President and CEO*  
*Swedish Hospital*

“I have been a doctor for a long time but had not confronted a new disease since we learned about HIV more than 40 years ago. COVID-19 defied all of our norms as it was a disease that affected young and old, and while we cared for patients we were learning about the disease. Through this intense uncertainty, we gained the certainty of our collective commitment to create and deliver as much good as we could. In the whirlwind, there were so many moments of grace.”

**Lakshmi K. Halasyamani, MD, FACP, SFHM**  
*Chief Medical Officer*  
*Davis Family Chair*

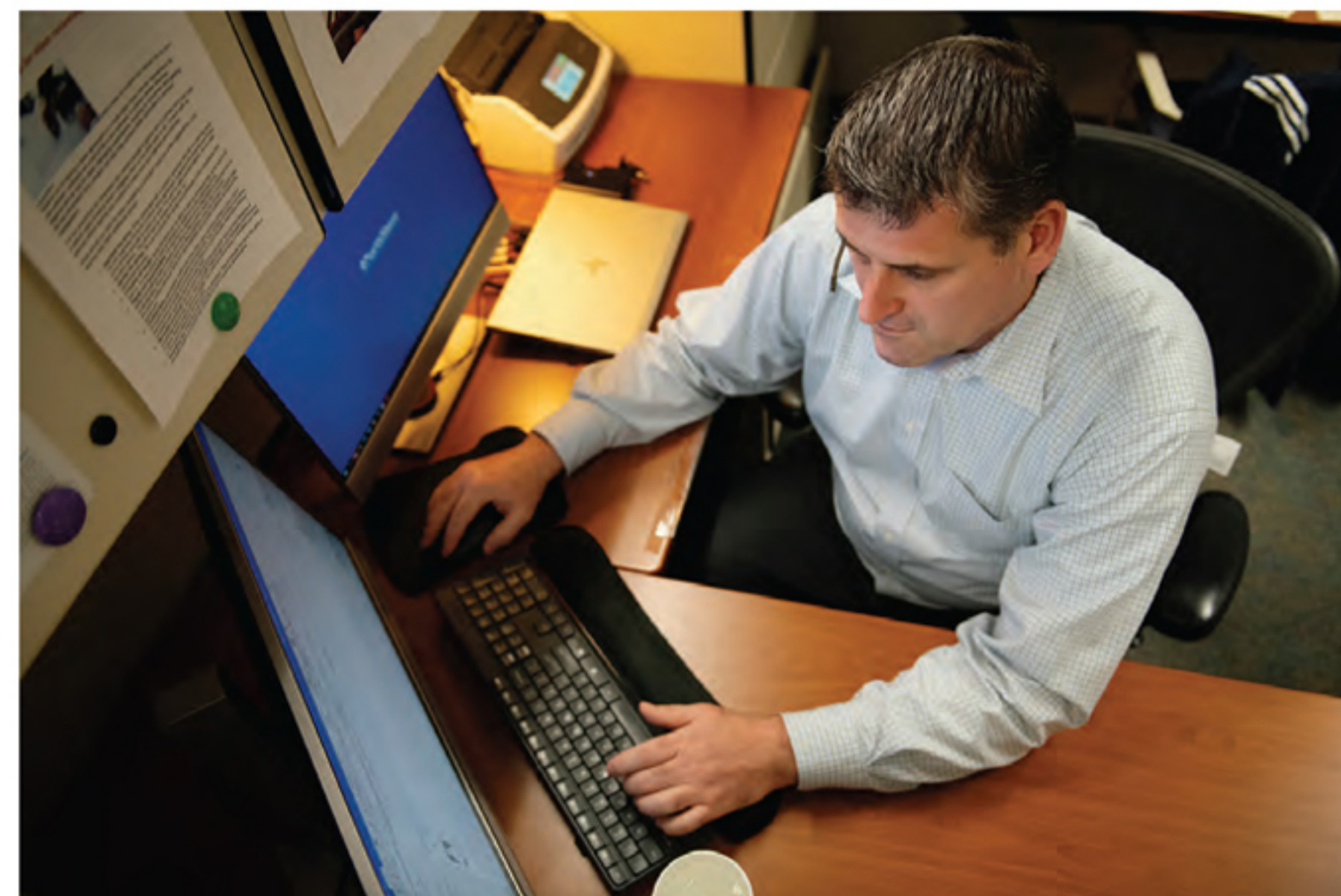


## Vast Support and Vital Stewardship

Purchasing, Supply Chain, and Environmental Health and Safety Services team members played extraordinary roles in ensuring that NorthShore's staff had appropriate personal protective equipment, adapting to daily changes and showing incredible resourcefulness.





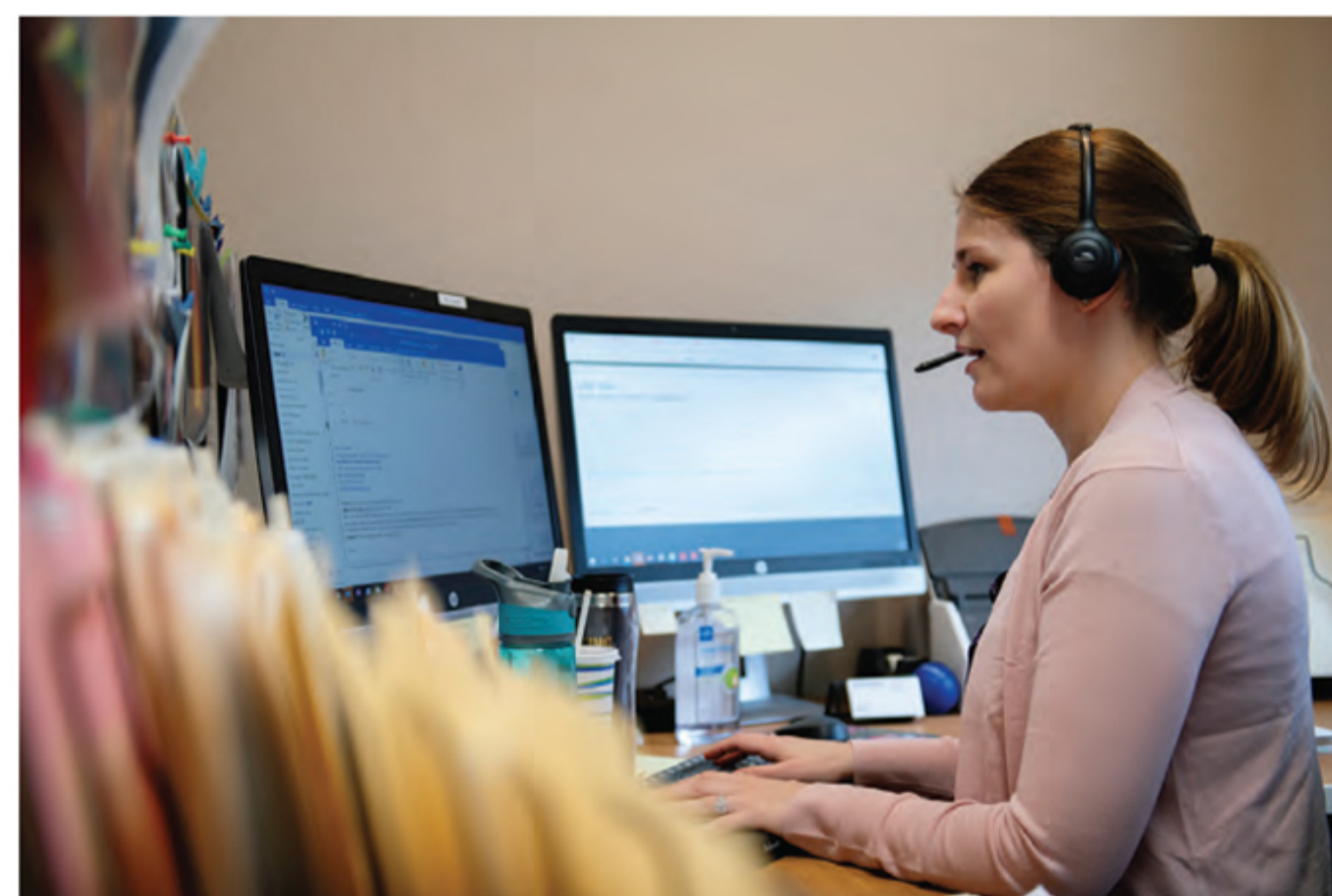


"During the COVID-19 Event, NorthShore team members assisted the Supply Chain team members on sourcing products from colleagues and friends. Even though our Supply Team Staff jumped early on getting the PPEs before supplies ran out, other sources would need to be identified

We contacted the White Sox, Cubs, Bears, Blackhawks, barber shops, tattoo parlors, veterinarian shops, car dealerships and many more locations looking for excess PPEs. The surrounding communities generously stepped up by making isolation masks, face shields and mask holders as well as donating PPE supplies to NorthShore.

We all worked together, NorthShore and the communities as one united front to battle this terrible Pandemic-COVID-19. Working together helped supply our first responders at every NorthShore site with the necessary PPEs to perform their amazing lifesaving procedures. We are so grateful for the team support effort of everyone involved."

**Frank Bauer**  
*AVP, Corporate Purchasing, Supply Chain Procurement*







## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

As the pandemic raged, the Black Lives Matter movement also grew in response to countless atrocities. NorthShore recognizes the undeniable truth that racism is a public health crisis and joined other Chicago area healthcare organizations in proclaiming that Black Lives Matter. Our teams stand united as front-line staff against racism, injustice and inaction.

NorthShore continues to work more intentionally to create a diverse, inclusive and just culture throughout our organization. Words matter, but actions matter more. We are committed to creating an organization that is a force for good.





“During the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, our NorthShore team members have been hard at work, working countless hours, facing fear and exhaustion, focused on living out our mission and vision. Many days, the burden has been great and in our intense drive toward our goal, it is important to take a moment to remember who we are, what matters, and why we are here doing what we are doing.

Early in the pandemic, I was invited to share a ‘Good Thought’ with our team on our daily and weekly calls. The good thought was a moment to recognize our humanity, to honor the work being done and the lives we serve. It was a moment to allow ourselves to feel the weight of what we are engaged in but to remember that we carry that weight together.

My good thoughts have taken many forms: I have told stories, read poems, quoted speeches and even played music. I have shared my personal struggles as well as my hope and gratitude. I have encouraged taking care of each other and reminded about self-care. I think I have made some people laugh and others cry. I hope that in some small way I have given our amazing team members permission to feel and grieve and celebrate and be inspired, because I believe we can come out better on the other side of this. The following is a reflection I shared early on in the pandemic as one of my “Good Thoughts”:

I believe we will be better on the other side of this

I believe that we are learning about ourselves and about each other

I believe our call to serve is becoming real in new and profound ways

I believe we will be inspired and fueled by the gift of being servants

I believe we will face uncertainty and fear, but we will not face it alone

In this time of crisis, we are compelled to reflect on what really matters

In this time of crisis, I believe we will show the world what compassion and love can do and we will change the world for the better

I already see better in myself and others

I believe that we will be better on the other side of this.”

**Nancy Schindler, MD, MHPE**

*Vice Chairman of Education Department of Surgery*

*E. Stephen Kurtides, MD, Chair of Medical Education*

*Chief Patient Experience and Provider Engagement Office*

*Clinical Professor of Surgery*

*University of Chicago, Pritzker School of Medicine*



## Working for the Greater Good

The power of the individual has been reinforced by the strength of the team. Together, we are NorthShore. Individual strengths, vulnerabilities, skills and experience melded together for a strong and compassionate response.

Our community saw our strength and responded with their own compassion and gratitude. We welcomed a tremendous outpouring of financial contributions, handwritten thank-you notes, donations of food for weary staff members and more.

We strengthened existing relationships in the community and forged new partnerships to offer education and outreach around coronavirus prevention. These vital partnerships focused on lifesaving infection control messages and continue to serve as a testament to the power of coming together for the greater good.



“The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic required the entire NorthShore system to very quickly come together to best serve our community in an historic time of need, building on existing expertise and learning new skills. The NorthShore Foundation team pivoted to meet the emergent needs of our front-line care providers and behind-the-scenes professionals, and the patients depending on them. The incredible outpouring of support from donors, including grateful patients, NorthShore team members, vendor partners and local businesses was both humbling and rewarding—with giving to COVID-19 response and research ongoing. For 3,000 donors to raise over \$3.2 million in monetary and in-kind giving in such a short space of time is unprecedented at NorthShore. Without a doubt, the PPE, food donations, specialized environmental equipment, free COVID-19 Care Kits, and other essential supplies and services made possible through philanthropy preserved and improved lives.

We are so very grateful to every member of the NorthShore donor family.”

**Murray Ancell**  
*Executive Director*  
*NorthShore Foundation*

- 3,000 donors
- \$3.2 million raised
- \$251,768 raised for COVID-19 Care Kits
- Over 700 COVID-19 Care Kits delivered



Carmen Cuomo of Elmhurst was exceptionally grateful when her mother Paulita Rivera (who tested positive for COVID-19) received a care kit delivered directly to her home. The kit included a pulse oximeter, masks, sanitizer and safety guidelines. Carmen said they were desperate for supplies and scared, and Paulita’s doctor told Carmen to find a pulse oximeter to see whether or not to bring her mother to the Emergency Room. Carmen tried to find one but couldn’t find an , and then because of the riots, a lot of the stores around her were closed or boarded up. Then the COVID Care Package arrived at her door from NorthShore. Paulita said she had no idea it would arrive and had never asked for it. Carmen was able to track her mother’s illness while sheltering at home. Paulita repeated over and over how grateful she was for that care package and for NorthShore coming to her aid without even being asked.

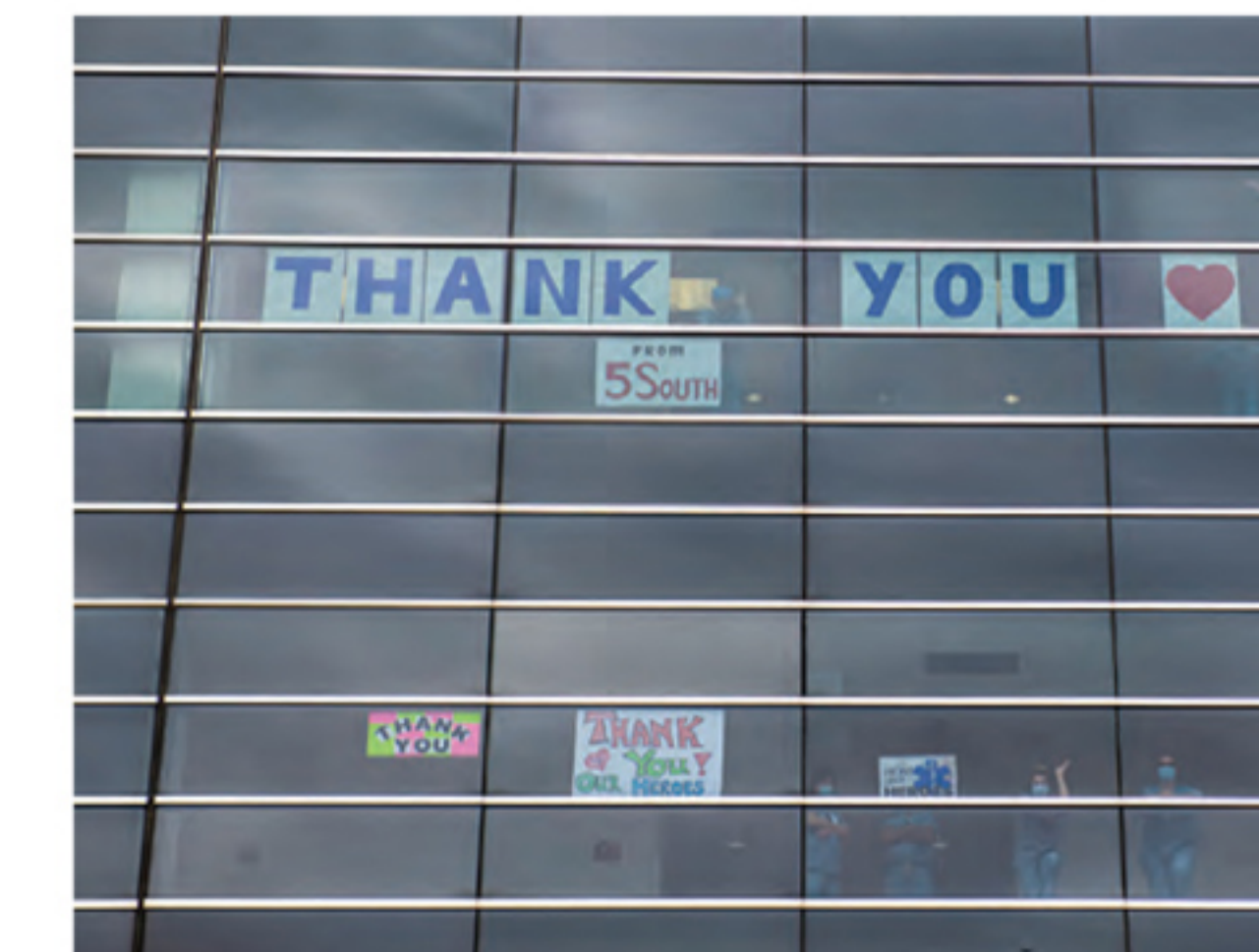




“Our communities’ first responders reached out to NorthShore wanting to honor and pay tribute to NorthShore’s front-line healthcare workers. They did so with a parade of fire trucks and police cars blaring their sirens and holding signs of appreciation. Hundreds of our colleagues were able to witness this show of support. I could tell by seeing their faces and talking with many of them that this show of support was heart felt—and maybe for the first time during the pandemic it made them feel like the heroes that they truly are. The show of support for our first responders and NorthShore front-line healthcare workers was a strong demonstration that we are all in this together.”

**Mark Schroeder**

*Manager  
Community Relations  
NorthShore Evanston and Skokie Hospitals*

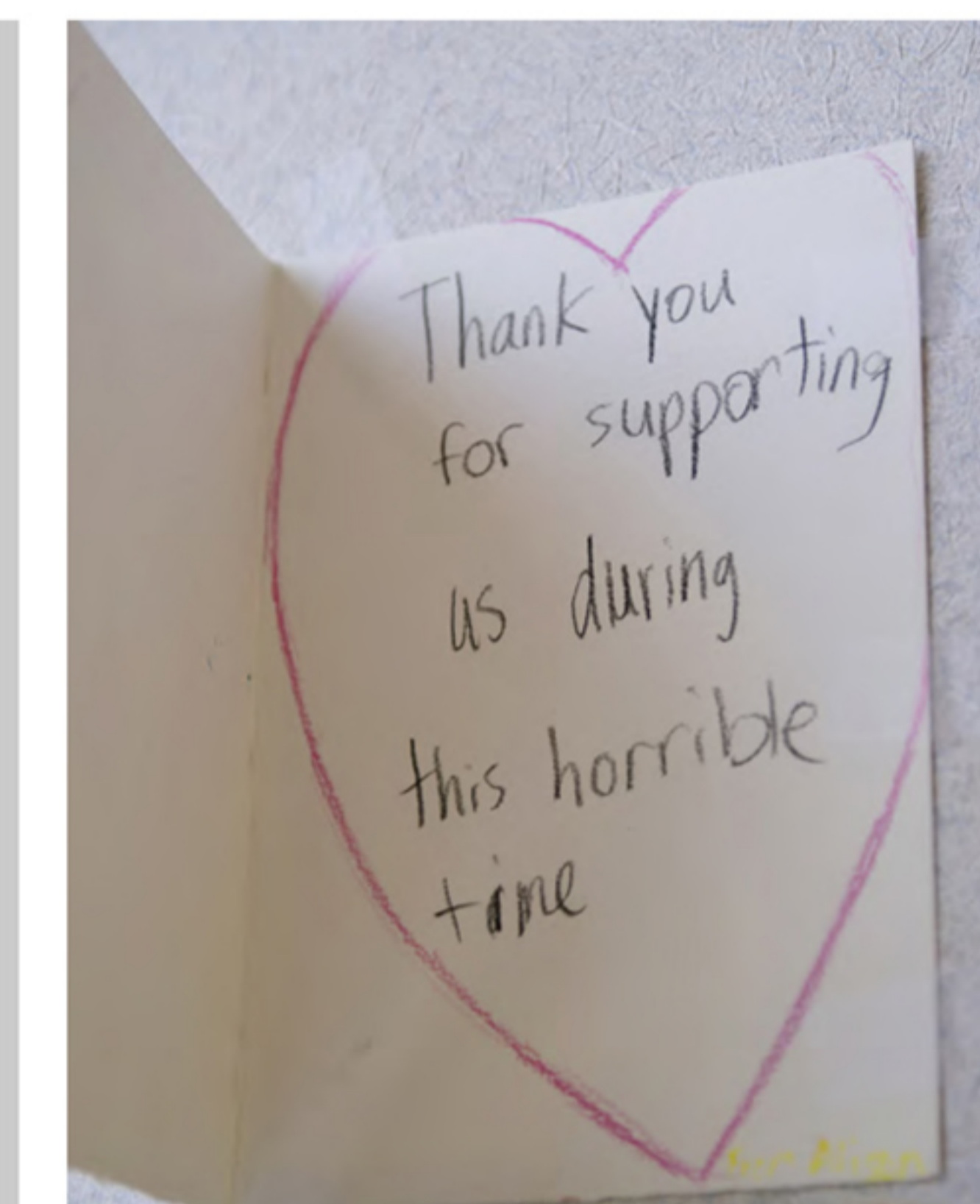
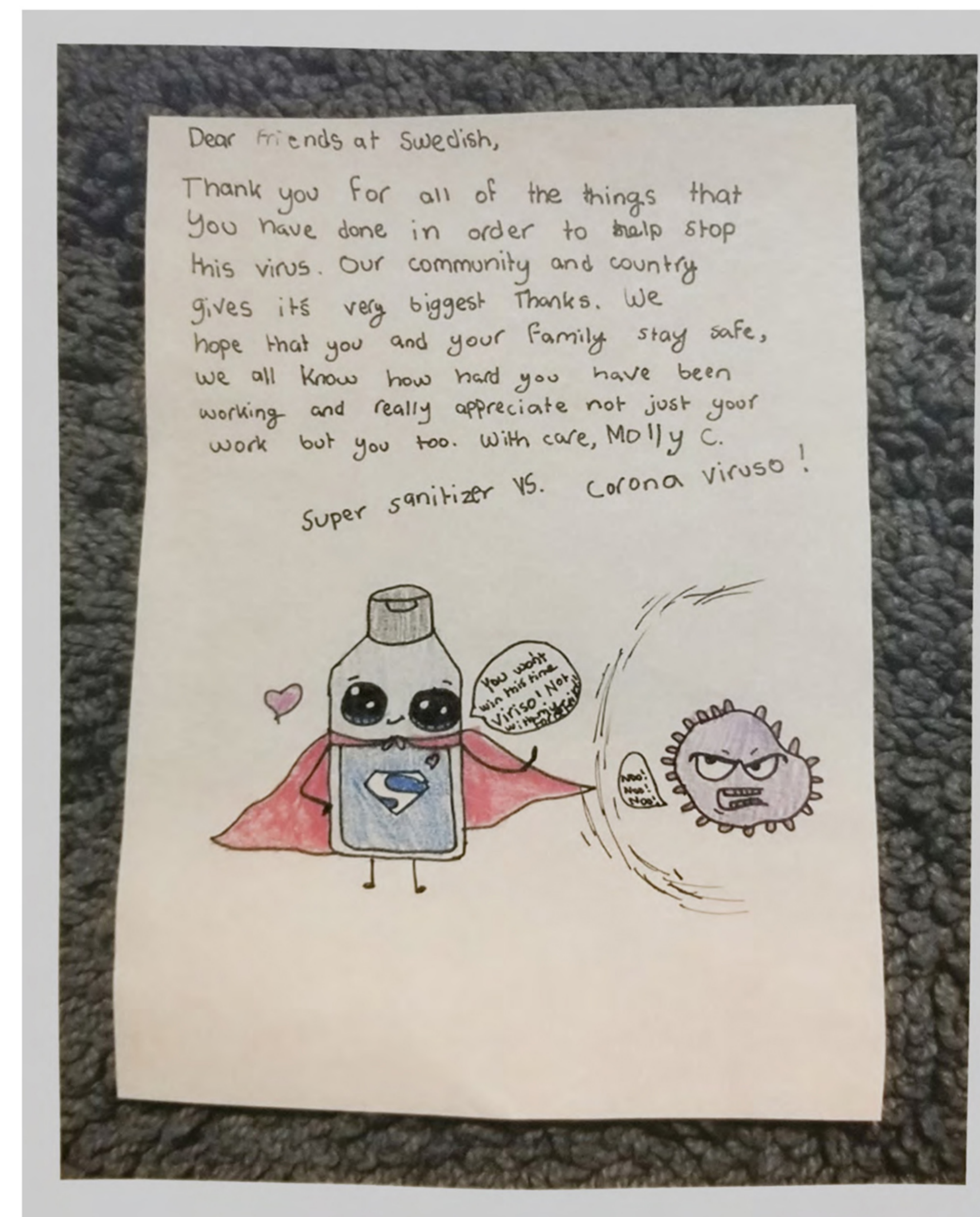




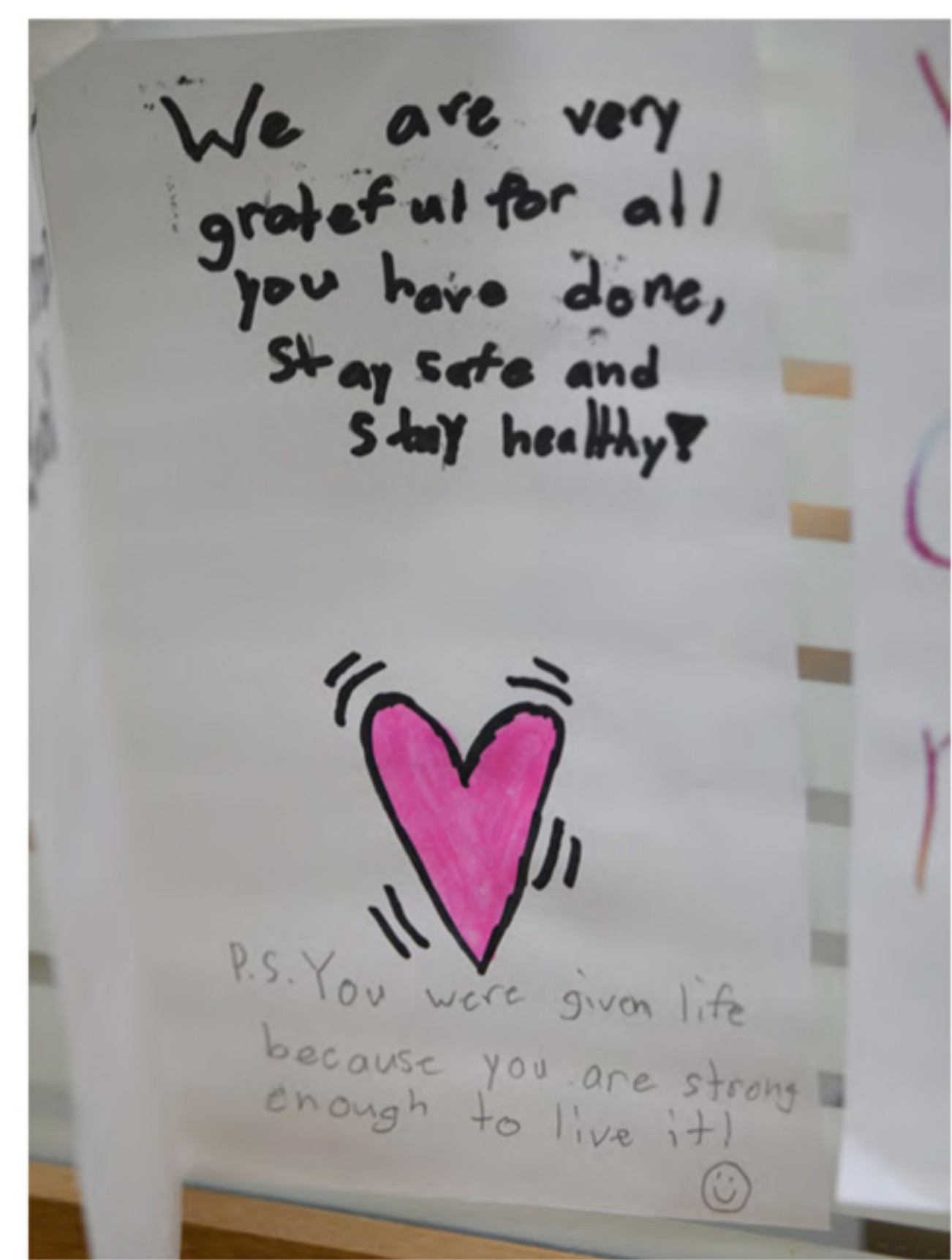


Due to the outpouring of generosity from the community, NorthShore received numerous donations, including:

- Over 76,000 meals and snacks across all hospitals and immediate care facilities plus 14,000 meals donated to cancer patients through Swedish Hospital
- More than 78,000 pieces of PPE including N95 masks, surgical masks, handmade masks, face shields, gloves, shoe covers, caps and thermometers as well as many gallons of hand sanitizer
- Over 100,000 soothing facial masks and hundreds of tubes of hand cream
- More than 50,000 Keurig pods, 4,000 bags of Double Good popcorn (which were shared with Swedish) and more than 6,000 snack bars
- 2,000+ clothing donations through Swedish Hospital
- Gifts of food, care kits and drawings from local elementary, middle and high schools, boy and girl scout troops as well as churches and temples
- Meditation tools, gift bags of loungewear, hundreds of books and bowling parties at Pinstripes
- More than 200 flowers, flowering plants and even a tree
- Art donation of Chicago artist Matthew Hoffman's work titled "we're all in this together" given to NorthShore Glenbrook Hospital







Smile

THANK YOU  
 Dear First responders & Hospital workers,  
 When I think of all of you who save lives  
 as your daily job. It makes me want to be a  
 better person... try harder, be nicer, do something.  
 I feel that writing these letters is taking me  
 a little step closer to my goal and I am  
 positive that you are all also having a impact  
 on other people to like you have on me. Thank you!

Nora, 6th Grade - Skokie School





## Grateful Patients

Dear Cory,

On behalf of our family, we wanted to express our thanks for the care and attention you provided our mother in her final hours. We understand you stayed with her until the priest arrived to administer last rites, and it was so very much appreciated, since we could not be with her. You are one of these “everyday heroes” we hear about in the health community. Bless you for your compassion and kindness.

Stay Well,

**S. and P.**

Glenbrook Doctors, Nurses and Staff,

On behalf of our family, I want to express our thanks for the care you provided to our father. Thank you to all the doctors and nurses involved during his hours at Glenbrook on Friday, April 2020. Thank you for the extra step of asking my name and my sister’s name so they could be mentioned to him in his final hours

Our prayers are with you all as you work through the unimaginable day after day.

With much appreciation,

**K.**

Dear Evanston Hospital Staff,

My name is Eliza Grayson, and I am writing to you to express my gratitude. I am so very grateful for all of the work that you put into helping people. You risk your lives every day to help save others. I am not just writing as me, but as all of the 10-year olds and people around the world who appreciate you so much. When I see an ambulance driving down Central Street, I think of the people who are in there, risking their health to help other people. I thank you for working so hard to stop this pandemic.

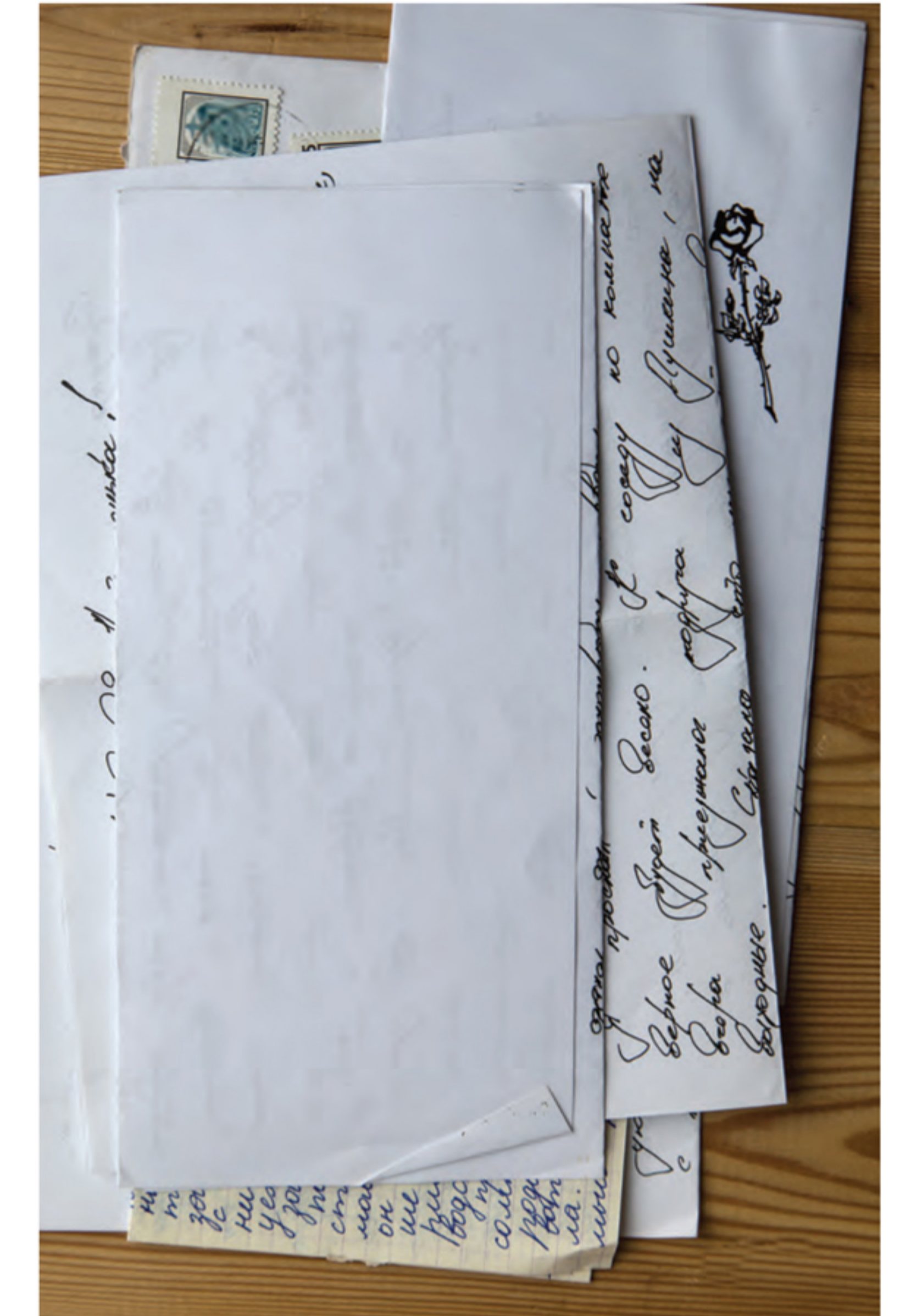
During this outbreak, you have been working SO hard. But even before this virus, you work hard, you have saved so many people’s lives. So many people all around the globe have been getting sick. Do you know what percentage of Americans get COVID-19? Well, I don’t. But do you know why not every vulnerable person has gotten sick and died?

Because of you. Every first responder works their butts off every day. I am so grateful our town has you.

Sincerely,

**Eliza Grayson**

Age 10





June 26, 2020

I am writing to thank you for the amazing care that my husband, A., received during his treatment for COVID-19 at Evanston Hospital.

He started having COVID symptoms at home on May 5, 2020. As a result of low oxygen levels, he was taken to NorthShore Evanston Hospital on May 12, 2020, where he was transferred to Glenbrook Hospital. He deteriorated quickly, and two days later his oxygen levels decreased dramatically and he was placed on a ventilator. However, the ventilator alone was not enough and his condition sadly went quickly downhill until he was fighting for his life. He was extremely fortunate that he was a suitable candidate for ECMO and that the machine and a cardio-thoracic surgeon were available immediately. He was transferred back to Evanston Hospital within hours of the decision being made to put him on ECMO on May 19, 2020. His condition was very tenuous, and on May 30, 2020, a second ECMO cannula was inserted, after which he stabilized somewhat. He was successfully decannulated from the ECMO on June 22, 2020, after 35 days. He remained intubated when he transferred to Holy Family Medical Center on July 9, 2020, after an ICU stay of 55 days.

On behalf of his entire family, we cannot say "thank you" enough for the amazing care he received at Evanston Hospital. There are many things that impressed us about his care and about the way the ICU functions. The medical care of the ICU staff, nurses and ancillary staff were all amazing. As a new disease, the doctors had very little data and experience to work with when treating a COVID patient on ECMO, but they were unfazed. They used every resource the hospital had to offer and brought him back from the brink several times. Moreover, they believed in my husband's ability to survive and continually gave him unparalleled round-the-clock care so as to notice any small improvements or problems and deal with them immediately.

In addition, we cannot say enough about the fantastic communication procedures. Specifically, I want to personally thank all of the doctors and nurse practitioners who took the time to call daily and give me thorough, complete updates on my husband's progress. Especially during the hardest days, I often had 30- or 45- minute conversations with the attending doctors, including Dr. Greenberg, Dr. Dodick, Dr. Katz, Dr. Wylicenko and Dr. Tokarezyk, as they went through every aspect of my husband's care and patiently answered all of my questions and concerns. They also waited for me to conference in my sister-in-law, an internal medicine doctor in Dallas, so that she could join the calls. You made me feel like a partner in my husband's care and confident in the work of the team approach.

I am a mother of 4 young children, alone in Chicago without family support here—and was terrified of what might happen.

His was not a simple case, and we really appreciated the effort of the entire team of medical and nursing staff. There were a myriad of complications—and whether it was dealing with infections, blood clots, or trying to find the correct "medical cocktail" of drugs to improve his condition, we were so impressed with the way his care was handled. This was not an easy time and still fairly early days of dealing with COVID patients.

The other thing that made all the difference in the world was the Zoom meetings. The entire family had an opportunity to see him and get an update from the nurses. This was so important, especially since no one was able at that time to visit in person. We would like to emphasize what a difference this made and how this simple use of technology really helped all of us stay positive and strong. Those conversations meant the world to me.

I can't thank you all enough for your work and dedication. The medical team at Evanston saved my husband's life and saw him through a very scary and aggressive illness. We are so glad that we went to Evanston when he got sick—I truly believe that we received unparalleled care at a top-notch facility. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts!

Sincerely,

**D. (wife of A.) and the entire family**



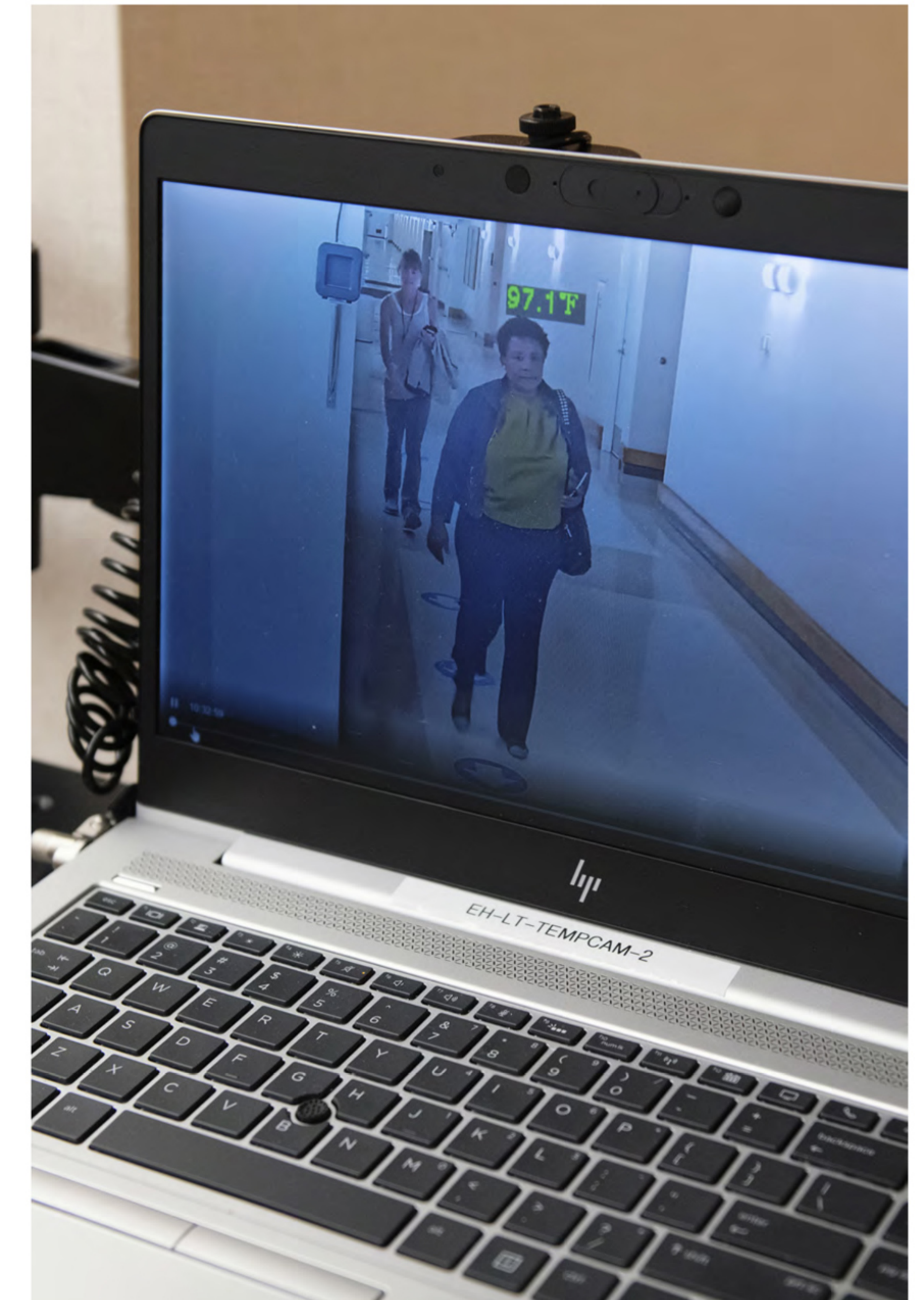




## The New Normal

As coronavirus infection rates began to decline, NorthShore followed state regulations and embarked on a thoughtful and strategic return to nonemergency services and elective procedures.

New challenges are the new normal. NorthShore continues to pioneer advanced treatments and conduct promising research. Our teams are steadfast in our mission to provide the best possible care to the community we are privileged to serve.







## NORTHSHORE TEAM MEMBERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

“My initial reaction when I walked into the COVID ICU was what I called surreal. To see all the patients and know each one of them was fighting this disease, made me want to do whatever was necessary to contribute to caring for them. From the first day, all the nurses were amazing and the camaraderie showed each and every day. As the Nurses, other PCT’S, Doctors, Respiratory Therapists and myself worked hard to try and save as many patients as possible, many days it just did not happen. Watching as these patients suffered and died was hard on all of us. Especially when the family was either on Zoom at the time of death or physically in the room. I held many hands of the dying and their loved ones hands as well.

The comfort from all of my co-workers was a relief. When I went home every day after my shift, I would hug my mother and sister and tell them I loved them. This experience will stay with me forever, and I just hope I was able to give some comfort to the patients and their loved ones.

**Tiffany Earnest, MA, EMT-P, PCT**  
*NorthShore Glenbrook Hospital, ICU*

“I want to express how wonderful it is to work with such a dedicated group of nurses and nursing support individuals. You are the heart and soul of Swedish Hospital. Our nursing staff provides compassionate care to every patient as though they are a member of your family. Your dedication is unbreakable and admired by all of us.”

**Kathy Donofrio, DNP, MBA, RN, NEA-BC**  
*Chief Nursing Office*  
*Swedish Hospital*

“This was such a beautiful example of community support—everybody was blown away. They were smiling and obviously enjoyed what they were doing. They were very thoughtful, placing each rose just so. Highland Park is always generous in helping others; people pull together here, and it makes me proud to be part of this community.”

**Hania Fuschetto, MS**  
*Manager*  
*Community Relations for NorthShore Glenbrook and Highland Park Hospitals*  
*(After roses were left on all the HPH cars in the parking lot)*







May 4, 2020

From: Eileen Yasukawa  
To: Doug Silverstein, Nicole Fernandez,  
Mary Kay Banks, Carole Smith, Ernest Wang,  
Mary Alvarado

Hi All,

Officer B. from the Cook County Sheriff's Department called to personally say thank you to Evanston Hospital for saving his life when he arrived here with a fever of 104 and his body unable to maintain its oxygen. Almost 64 years to the day on which he was born at Evanston Hospital, he returned to Evanston Hospital after he had tested positive for COVID-19 and was getting worse.

He said everyone on every level from the Emergency Department to the ICU to 5 N Searle were the most professional, compassionate and caring people he has ever encountered.

Respectfully submitted,

**Eileen Yasukawa**

*Assistant to Mary Alvarado, VP Clinical Operations  
Office of the President*

"I have been impressed with how our staff and administration collectively banded together to rapidly retool the Immediate Care Centers into COVID Super Sites, while also taking excellent care of our patients at our non-COVID sites. I am indebted to the clinical and administrative team for their leadership and courage during a historic time of uncertainty and fear. Every day, they put on their PPE to care for our patients with the highest standards and utmost compassion. For me personally, this experience has expanded my abilities to adapt to change. I am grateful to my family for their support during the long days and nights when the pandemic first appeared. There is much more work ahead of us, but I know we will get through this challenging time."

**Brigham Temple, MD**

*Director of Emergency Preparedness*

"I'd like to share the amazing story of how the Interventional Services teams came together to create and operationalize plans to manage our patient care during this time. When we received word late Saturday afternoon on March 14th that all elective procedures were ceasing, we immediately reached out to our GI, IR and Cardiology physicians and asked that they begin reviewing their schedules and to let us know which patients needed the scheduled procedure or testing urgently or emergently based on the criteria defined for us that morning by the Clinical Chairmen. Sunday morning saw GI, IR and Cardiology departmental and physician leadership meet to create the plan for how we would put the processes in place to care for our urgent and emergent patients and to notify those whose procedures and testing needed to be postponed. We all agreed on the plan and then dispersed to divide and conquer and call our patients. Ultimately, during this time of no elective procedures and testing, we postponed 3,000+ GI procedures, 150+ Cath/EP procedures, 160+ IR procedures and 2,000+ CV Imaging studies.

Similarly, when word came late Friday, April 24th, that we could start risk stratifying our patients and begin opening our schedules to those not able to continue waiting, all were back in the next morning beginning the complex, but oh, so wonderful work of reopening our labs to our patients. And just yesterday, September 14th, we finished the process of calling all patients to reschedule—a Herculean effort for the team due to the sheer volume of patients.

Through all of this, I have been humbled and awed by the strength, compassion, wisdom and hard work of our leaders, colleagues and teams—but not surprised. I have always been a proud NorthShorian, but being proud of who we are and what we do each and every day has taken on a new meaning."

**Karen Ilag, RN, BSN, MNA**

*GI Lab, NorthShore Evanston Hospital*







"In April, I was in the ICU at Evanston photographing nurses comforting patients, one of which was on a ventilator and barely responsive. Seeing the nurses holding her hand and talking to her while seamlessly watching her vitals and administering care like a practiced ballet was a career-defining and life changing moment that I'll hold in my mind for the rest of my life. Being here to capture these moments has been a privilege I hope to repay to those who have sacrificed so much."

**Jon Hillenbrand**  
*Team Lead, Media Production  
Marketing and Corporate Communications*

"Probably the most interesting thing from my perspective is...early on in the pandemic, Eric and I were often on "speed dial" to create educational videos showing the quickly evolving mask/PAPR and personal protective equipment guidelines to support our clinical colleagues. The requests would come in at all hours of the day and some over the weekends. We would frequently be on-site later that day or the next day to shoot videos. While Eric was editing, I would create the voice-over audio. Since I have a 2-year-old at home and I am working remotely, my car became my recording studio. Two or three times, I was even sitting in my car between 10pm and 1am recording so that I didn't wake anyone."

**Jeff Zakem**  
*Manager, Learning Technology  
Learning and Development*

"I've had clients in the past that considered their whims as 'emergencies.' This was, for me, the first time that an 'emergency video shoot & edit' was an actual emergency. We worked around the hectic schedules of nursing and physician staff who were awesome to deal with. They, like us, wanted to get the most up-to-date and accurate information out to their colleagues as quickly as possible even as they were learning the latest protection guidelines themselves. The constantly evolving messages mandated frequent message changes—all for the good of keeping our front-line staff as safe as possible. It was kind of a rush!"

**Eric Oldham**  
*E-Learning Instructional Designer  
Learning and Development*

"Although it was an unusual time for us to have to adjust to new workflows and what needed to be done during the COVID outbreak, it was a good experience to have been a fit tester. I appreciated getting to know the various employees from the system. We made friendships, and I had an enjoyable time bonding over this COVID experience. I have a greater appreciation for my fellow GI Lab family and OR staff that were fit testers with me. Being able to fit test staff to see that they received properly fitted N95 masks was fulfilling. Each donning and doffing of PPE helped me in my own practice when taking care of COVID patients. Thanks for the experience."

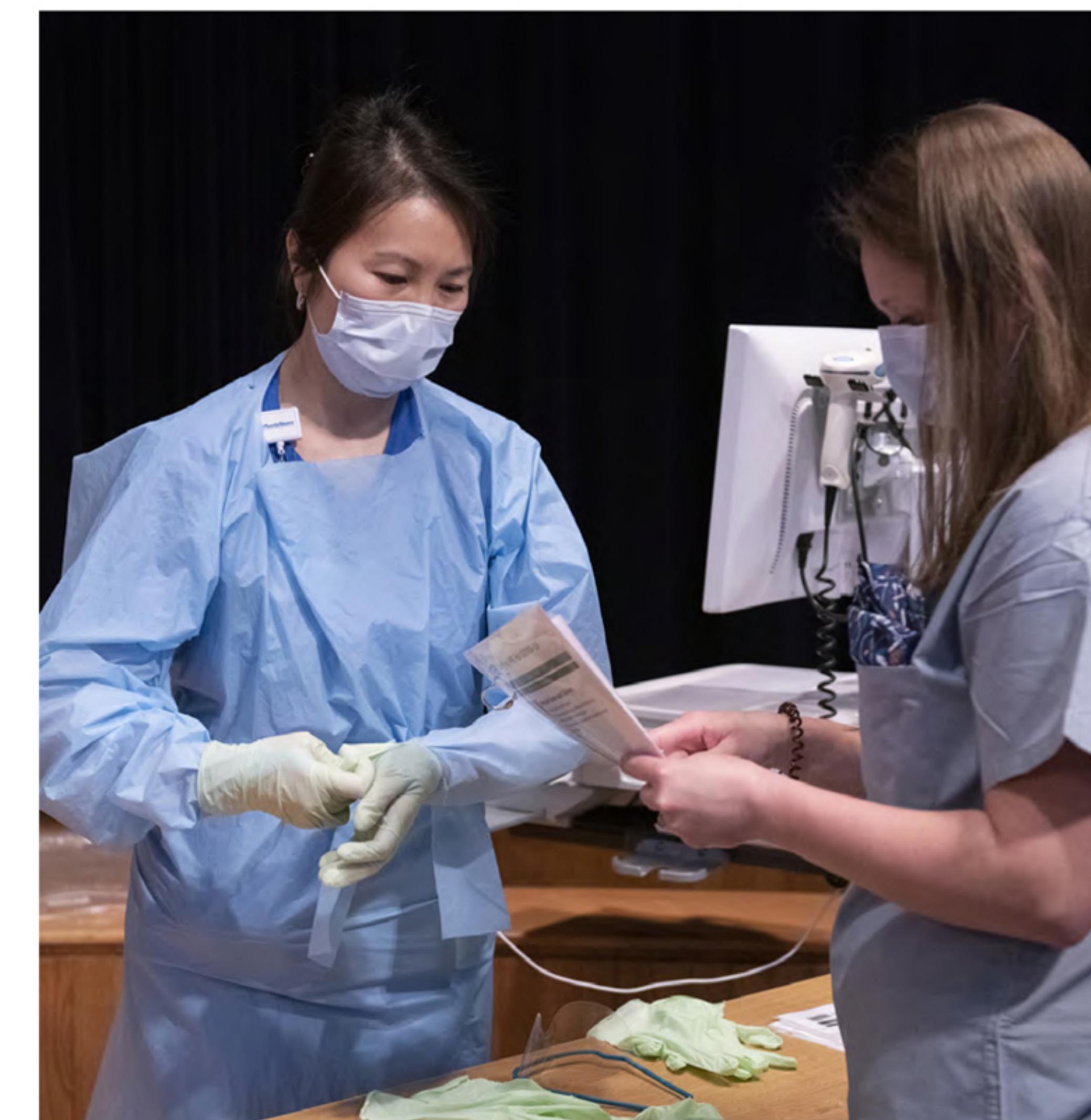
**Mary Luk, RN**  
*GI Department, NorthShore Evanston Hospital*

"Having cancer at any time is a life-changing event. Having it during a pandemic is so much more scary and complicated. Fear of delays in treatment, not being able to see your doctor and nurses, not being able to hug and be close. Kudos to the patients and staff for adapting, persevering and meeting the challenge to carry on during COVID. Even a dark cloud like COVID has a silver lining. Due to having to rework our standard processes with the COVID restrictions, we've expedited and innovated new ways to manage care and connect to our patients, such as telehealth, drive-through options and virtual teaching."

**Linda Green, MSN, BSN**  
*Director, NorthShore Kellogg Cancer Center, NorthShore Evanston Hospital*

"I recall working continuous 18-hour days, accommodating an extraordinary number of media requests—reporters wanting the latest news from our front-line COVID heroes and experts. This, in addition to the staggering amount of daily communications we created for internal and external audiences—media statements, letters, memos, policies, talking points, FAQs—you name it, we wrote it. Through this challenging and unprecedented time, what I'm most proud of is working for an organization that came together as one cohesive family—every team member showing an unwavering commitment and dedication to their work while adapting to rapidly changing protocols; supporting each other through highs and lows; and most importantly, ensuring our patients received the absolute best compassionate care."

**Jim Anthony**  
*Senior Director, Public Relations*





“APPs play a vital role in the care and management of patients and certainly share the vision and goals of NorthShore’s core mission statement, which is ‘to preserve and improve human life.’

There are likely 106 places to look up the definition of collaboration: Webster’s, Wikipedia or others depending on your era. Yet nothing can define what we saw. True collaboration. Mid-March 2020 the first COVID-19 patient rolled in to the ICU. This patient was out on the medical floor and as we learned all too well with COVID patients, they deteriorate on a dime. This transfer to the ICU was a well-orchestrated machine, planned for weeks and weeks before in mock transfers. Everyone ‘was ready’—frightened, but ready. The energy...well, it was nearly visible...well beyond palpable. The patient rolled in, and was settled, treatments administered as if the teams had been doing this for years. And so it began...

There were a lot of changes over the following weeks and changes that occurred at lightning speed. One of which was being informed...you need 10–15 more APPs to help in the COVID ICU. Predictive models stated the possibility of 200 critical care admissions per day at the peak. If this happens, all hands would be needed on deck. Let’s get help and get help now. Let’s get people trained and as comfortable as possible. Let’s get them to GB ICU.

I called my APP leadership colleagues.

They asked what I needed. I said 10 FTE...to start. I requested the Cardiovascular Service PAs to help staff the ICUs at EH and HP since most of the senior Critical Care Service (CCS) NPs were going to be at GB. Then I needed APPs in the GB ICU. Yes, I need them to run toward the fire. Silence. Crickets. About 5.5 seconds later, they all sprang into action. By the next day, I had 11.5 FTE. WHAT? Are you kidding me? I might have heard angels humming! OK, let’s get them scheduled. Soon, we had three ICUs staffed. Admittedly, in the first week or two we were overstaffed at all three sites purposefully. I needed people comfortable with the PPE, CCS quality measures and managing a vent, among other things. We had to

prepare for the worst and hope for the best. These providers literally had a crash course on how to manage the sickest patients admitted to the corporation. Hours were long. It was hot wearing the PPE. Workflows changed often. The APPs were physically drained, intellectually exhausted and emotionally spent, yet NEVER complained. I kept an open phone policy. We met often as an entire team—COVID and non-COVID providers alike or on one-on-ones. Whatever was needed. The CVS PAs helped us keep EH and HP ICU running smoothly. The NCC APPs helped us staff GB in ways we never could have before. There were questions answered, and fears calmed—well, at least most of them. No one went hungry and there was laughter, plenty of laughter, and tears, plenty of tears, and hugs, and group meditations led by one of our CCS APNs who is also a Shaman, and even a Zoom Bingo game. The intensivists covered the unit on Saturday evening so any APP who wanted to attend Zoom Bingo could. It was memorable and solidified the amazing relationships made.

Many of us have worked together for years. Some we didn’t know at all. Yet everyone contributed 110%. The CCS APN team could not have done this without the support of our colleagues.

No one ever said 11 deaths in 7 days would not be gut wrenching. It was. But they had each other. And that’s all that mattered.

So, collaboration like no other...well, that’s an understatement. Coming together to provide patient centered care...well, that doesn’t cut it either. If I could award each and every one of these clinicians the President’s award...I would. Because they exemplify what it means to be an employee of NSUHS. They make evidence-based patient care and management a priority. And they supported this organization in ways no one ever imagined. They are the most sincere, thoughtful, caring providers I have ever had the pleasure to work with in my 35-year hospital career. I am so proud of these providers. I am sure you are, too.

**Jacque Steuer, ACNP**

*Manager, Critical Care Services APN Team*



“I volunteered to work in the COVID unit or ‘Glenbrook Aggregate Unit (GAU)’ in Glenbrook Hospital. At first, it is scary to work with COVID patients because you have no clear picture of what is going on with this virus, but the protocols are also always changing every single time. Every time the protocol changes, your anxiety just keeps building up and up. But despite the anxieties and apprehensions, all the hard work paid off. I can finally say that we have a good understanding of this virus, and we have a better chance in spreading awareness of this virus.

Now aside from the understanding of the COVID-19, I also get the chance to experience acute/critical nursing, which for me is an eye-opener that we never really get the chance to witness in some other floors. To emphasize this, I get to witness how everyone is treated equally on the team regardless if you are a doctor, nurse, PCT or EVS. All of the healthcare teams work together to promote competent, safe, quality and optimal care to the populations we serve. And for me, that is a beautiful thing to behold—helping one another for the greater good outcome.

All in all, I am thankful for this experience especially in meeting with amazing healthcare workers during this unprecedented time. This experience for sure will be passed on from generation to generation. :)”

**Kenneth Restor, RN, MSN, FNP-C**

*5 North, Glenbrook Hospital*





“It is rare that a picture can capture the full spectrum of emotions during the COVID crisis. At first glance, one may see three nurse anesthetists, deployed to the COVID ICU, sharing in a moment of connection in a time when proximity is forbidden. But this picture captures a bond that only some are fortunate enough to experience.

At the beginning of this year, I was doing my normal job in the operating room as a nurse anesthetist, delivering anesthesia to all manner of patients. I loved the challenge of providing anesthesia for those needing emergency heart surgery, the joy in making a kid feel at ease after a rough encounter with the monkey bars, and the purpose in helping a breast cancer patient tackle her first of many surgeries. I loved my job, life was great and I didn't even know how good I had it. Then COVID hit and all of our worlds changed. I was given a 4-hour orientation and deployed to the COVID ICU. My mind went through every emotion. I was angry that as a doctorally-prepared nurse anesthetist I was being put back into the role of a bedside nurse. I was confident that my previous ICU experience, some 13 years ago, would come back quickly and I could do the job. I also felt immense dedication to the nursing profession and to my ICU roots. Every nurse anesthetist has ICU experience before beginning their extensive anesthesia training. My journey from ICU nurse to nurse anesthetist was full of amazing mentors, life lessons, critical thinking and a special bond with my co-workers. With all of that under my belt, I thought, “I can handle this”...but then fear began to seep in as the reality of the situation began to sink in.

That fear seemed manageable...until my first day in the COVID ICU. It was worse than I could have ever imagined, and I quickly realized that I was fearing all of the wrong things. I feared contaminating myself and my family, but I had adequate PPE and although I was washing my hands raw, I could manage it. I feared not being able to keep up with the ICU protocols, checklists, flowsheets and care plans that hadn't been part of my daily workflow for over a decade, but I could manage it. Except these patients are sick, beyond sick, the sickest, so sick that, despite our best efforts, we can't manage it. Nothing is working. Ventilators can't keep up with the demands of stiff, infected, damaged lungs. Intravenous infusions on pumps from floor to ceiling, sometimes taking up 2 IV poles keep basic body functions barely alive. Skin breaks down because placing patients on their stomachs for 16 hours a day is the only way to keep them alive, and we don't dare move them for fear of killing them. Dialysis machines work around the clock to make up for the failed kidneys. Alarms go off constantly, patients crash all around me, there is noise everywhere. We can't manage it, I can't manage it, nothing is working.

Then there is a haunting silence created by the low hum of my respirator hood, constantly supplying me with filtered fresh air while also conveniently drowning out the chaos that is all around me. It is in these moments that a strange sort of reflection occurs in my head. This is what my previous experience had prepared me for; this is what nurses do! We spring to action when a patient is crashing. We heal the broken. We step up when help is needed. We console the suffering and ease the pain. As a nurse anesthetist, I could get a family and patient to trust me with their life in a 10-minute pre-operative interview. Surely I could update a wife over the phone on the status of her dying husband. But it took away a piece of me. As a nurse anesthetist, I dealt with high stress situations with ease. Surely I could handle the stress of the COVID ICU. But it took away a piece of me. As a nurse anesthetist, I held the hand of patients who woke up to the

devastating news that their cancer was worse than expected. Surely I could hold the hand of a patient as he dies alone and I watch his family crumble over Zoom. But it took away a piece of me. As piece after piece was pulled away, it became harder and harder. Crying inside a respirator hood when I can't touch my face is challenging, but dealing with the true gravity of what was happening around me was enough to break a person. Doubt creeps in...maybe I can't manage this.

And then I look around. My fellow nurse anesthetists are all around me, deployed to battle in the ICU just like me. I begin to lean on them, talk to them, grieve with them and try to heal... together. What I see in this picture is three nurse anesthetists drawing strength from their fellow warrior, sharing tears with their teammate, consoling a near broken human, and willing each other to move forward and put those broken pieces back together. I see someone who hates that COVID ICU but loves their ICU comrades. I see the power of a collective force and the positive impact that can be made in a tragedy. What I see in this picture are three people who are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to make a difference in a crisis. Although we may not all work in a COVID ICU, we are all dealing with situations that make us angry, fearful, stressed and sad. Find opportunities to make a difference in a crisis. And if you find yourself broken into pieces, look around. You just might find some fellow warriors to lean on and help you heal.

**Julia Feczko, DNP, CRNA**  
*Staff Nurse Anesthetist*









## Ready for Whatever Comes Next

NorthShore has a strong legacy of serving the community. Throughout the pandemic, our teams were able to leverage our existing strengths to better serve patients, families and one another. We continually adapted, responded and pivoted when necessary. We formed stronger teams internally, and we built even stronger partnerships with those in the community. Our ability to deliver innovative care continues to grow. We look ahead with great anticipation as we continue to come together with compassion and gratitude.

This book is dedicated to the brave individuals, teams and community of NorthShore, to the people we've lost, and to the patients and families we are so privileged to serve.











# Courage • Compassion • Community

The Strength and Experience of NorthShore During COVID-19





