

The healthcare heroes at Advocate Good Shepherd Hospital Health and Fitness Center in Barrington have pivoted from lifting weights to lifting spirits. When the fitness center closed to curb the spread of COVID-19, staff didn't just call it quits.

They stepped up to deliver meals and check in on inpatients who could no longer receive visitors via regular phone calls. Human connection, no matter the medium, goes a long way in helping patients feel less isolated. Patients appreciate the calls so much that many have started making special requests for jokes or celebrity gossip.

"By coming up with a creative way to connect our team to the patients we serve, the fitness staff is able to do what we do best, which is connect with people," said Jen Frey, fitness center director. "We are stronger together."

In addition to providing comfort, the phone calls are a useful tool for identifying patients' needs. Mid-conversation, patients might casually mention their light is too bright or they need a toothbrush. That information is passed on to the attending nurse.

Between phone calls, the healthcare heroes continue to post daily workouts online for all ages and ability levels. Jen Anderson, group exercise coordinator, believes the videos matter now more than ever.

"We have to keep our minds and bodies strong and healthy for ourselves and our community," Anderson said. "[The community knows] they can rely on us, and that matters to us."

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