

These healthcare heroes from AMITA Health are valiantly serving patients across the Chicago region.

- Mushtaq Mohammed, MD, Internist, has cared for COVID-19 patients throughout the pandemic, helping many to recover. Recognizing they can feel alone and abandoned, he spends extra time talking with them. Dr. Mohammed says a listening ear can help them recover physically and emotionally. He also involves patients' families from the start to build the trust vital for a successful recovery.
- Christie Hawkins and Shaundrea Oliver, Patient Care Technicians, are known as the "dynamic duo." They care for COVID-19 patients who struggle to breathe and may require intubation. During times of restricted visitation and strict isolation, they go the extra mile to make patients comfortable, whether it's providing an extra pillow or a word of encouragement. Hawkins and Oliver also go above and beyond to share updates with the patients' families.
- Kihe Kim, Infection Preventionist, has been on call 24/7 since the pandemic began. She never hesitates to work extra hours, provide guidance and support, and meet new challenges. Kim's colleagues appreciate her loyalty and dedication to patients and staff.
- Celeste Galizia, DO, Family Medicine Specialist, normally works as a family physician at the outpatient center. When COVID-19 hit, she was assigned to an outpatient respiratory center to care for COVID-19 patients. She gladly accepted the opportunity to contribute.
- Mary Brown, MSN, RN, Emergency Department Clinical Educator: COVID created a new set of education challenges, with policies, protocols and treatments changing rapidly, particularly during the early months of the pandemic. Brown has played a key role in implementing these changes and keeping staff up-to-date.
- Samantha Tasovac, Patient Care Technician, volunteered to work in the hospital's new recovery unit for COVID-19 patients recently discharged from acute care settings. Highly attentive to patients' needs, she always goes the extra mile. Tasovac says it's rewarding to watch debilitated patients gain the ability to walk again.
- Larry Jankelowitz, MD, ICU Medical Director: As a pulmonary/critical care physician, he has worked tirelessly since the beginning of the pandemic to care for COVID-19 patients—and non-COVID patients—in the hospital's ICU. Dr. Jankelowitz has led his group to help the hospital in any way they can, often times working to cover additional ICU beds that were opened up to handle the COVID-19 surge.

- Rosemarie Semar, MPH, RN, CIC, CPPS, CPHQ, Infection Prevention and Control Nurse: As a team of one she has been working 24/7 since the beginning of the pandemic. Semar ensures the entire hospital is providing the most up-to-date care to COVID-19 patients. She reviews and shares system policies, teaches staff the techniques needed to care for patients, and conducts contact tracing, among other responsibilities.
- Maria Koziara, Food & Nutrition Services, has made hundreds of cloth masks for the Food & Nutrition Services staff, housekeepers, clinicians and patients at St. Alexius. It's an extension of her lifelong desire to assist others, particularly when they are experiencing grief or hardship.
- Molly Keevil, RN, Nurse, volunteered to care for the hospital's first COVID-19 inpatient in March, and eventually worked in the COVID unit. She has helped customize daily care plans and facilitated FaceTime sessions between patients and their families. Keevil has also strategized to reduce COVID exposure for staff while ensuring high-quality, patient-centered care.
- Shane O'Brien, RN, Critical Care Nurse, has been a source of positivity for patients and colleagues while caring for critically ill COVID-19 cases. He collaborated with a local businesses to organize weekly parades past the hospital to cheer up COVID-19 ICU patients and staff. In his role as co-chair of the hospital's Clinical Leadership Council, O'Brien encourages colleagues to practice self-care and to keep a "glass half-full" mentality.
- Gladys Aguirre, DNP, RN, Nurse Manager, COVID Testing/Drive Through, oversees volunteers, grants, flu vaccinations and COVID-19 drive-through testing. Though creative problem solving, Aguirre has helped reduce ED burden by facilitating COVID testing of high-risk residents of senior living facilities.
- Christine Balintona, BSN, CIC, Infection Prevention and Control Manager, ensures that the facility and staff are well educated on COVID-19 safety measures, including proactive management of high-risk areas and social areas. She is a strong communicator, even in high-stress situations.
- Dana Clark, RN, MSN, Chief Nursing Officer, works vigorously to maintain staffing, resources and morale while ensuring managers manage their units effectively. A COVID-19 survivor herself, Clark has proactively modeled staffing, planned for projected needs and listened to staff to best manage patients' needs during the pandemic.
- Drew Freeman, DNP, CRNA, Regional Director of CRNA Services – Chicago NorthStar Anesthesia: With the entire anesthesia team, he rallied to help create a dedicated 24/7 intubation team, reducing the burden on the ICU, the ED care team and the rapid response team. Freeman helped create the model for difficult intubations and necessary high-risk aerosolization procedures at multiple AMITA Health locations.
- Celia Gonzalez, Community Food & Nutrition Program Manager, manages the Food Market for vulnerable Chicagoans. She's fully engaged in improving healthcare and access for all. This year, Gonzalez rose to the occasion with creative solutions like online ordering and delivery.
- Latasha Horton, Food and Nutrition, always goes above and beyond to assists staff in dining to promptly deliver food to patients. Horton closely collaborates with the nursing staff to ensure that patients are well taken care of.
- Jordan James, Supervisor, Security, brings over 20 years of experience and professionalism to his role. Always mindful and

caring, he has de-escalated many situations during the pandemic. He commands respect without having to exert physical force. James also helps to enforce visitor restrictions, which protect staff and other patients from COVID-19.

- Lydia McDermott, ICU Team Leader, has provided incredible support to ICU staff throughout the pandemic. McDermott is the “go-to” person for ICU physicians and residents, helping to calm the department in time of crisis. It is her mission to educate staff and relieve their burnout.
- Sarasamma Mohanan, Respiratory Therapist: Since many hospitals are understaffed with respiratory therapists, they’re tend to enter more COVID-19 patient rooms than anyone else. Mohanan manages ventilators, which is labor-intensive, and never complains. She always performs her duties, regardless of the patient demands, with great professionalism. Special note: Governor Pritzker recognized Mohanan in his Dec. 2 COVID-19 briefing.
- Kizito Ojiako, MD, FRCS (Eng), FCCP, Vituity Medical Director Critical Care Medicine, has led his team in developing the internal hospital-based and system-wide COVID-19 playbook. Dr. Ojiako has been an integral leader in working with the system pulmonology, thoracic and intensivist service line to optimize patient outcomes.
- Lindsey Rainwater, RN, BSN, Associate Health Nurse Lead, has handled an extraordinary volume of requests, including COVID-19 testing. She handles crisis situations with competency and evidence-based decision making.
- John Richter, Facilities Manager, has exceeded expectations in this role—which he only started during COVID-19. He has retrofitted rooms for negative pressure, created ante rooms outside of COVID units and met the challenges of a very complex two-facility campus. Richter is a trusted, responsible colleague who ensures the job is done right the first time.
- Phillip Schieffer, PharmD, JD, Pharmacy Manager, is an integral part of the care team, ensuring stock of all pharmaceuticals are sourced and providing consistent updates on drug supply for COVID-19 treatments, including paralytics. Schieffer is also organizing the hospital’s COVID-19 vaccine/bamlanivimab response.
- Katie Smith, RN, BSN, CEN, EMS Coordinator, monitors activities in the City of Chicago to proactively manage and prepare the emergency department. Always smiling and offering to help, Smith supports the hospital’s extraordinary paramedics working double shifts. She has also taken on the extra role of communicating with public health agencies.
- Nancy Spears, Environmental Services, is an integral team member in ensuring patient rooms are terminally cleaned in the ED. The entire care team praises her selflessness, sense of urgency and ability to balance the needs of the fourth busiest volume emergency room in the city.
- Dana Vais, MD, Medical Director of Infectious Disease Services: Her dedication has stood apart during the pandemic. She has been instrumental in helping the hospital and system develop its COVID-19 playbook. Dr. Vais has checked every negative airflow room in the ED, ICU and COVID units. She’s been called a “warrior” among the medical staff.

AMITA Health, headquartered in Lisle, is the largest health system in Illinois, with 19 hospitals and more than 230 care facilities.

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