

Illinoisans are on an emotional roller coaster amid the COVID-19 crisis. “When you are on a roller coaster, you want to be sitting next to someone you trust,” said Maureen Kahn, RN, MHA, MSN, president and CEO of Blessing Health System.

As the largest medical center in a 100-mile radius, Blessing Health System serves west central Illinoisans on the banks of the Mississippi River. As part of its commitment to the community, staff began planning for COVID-19—before the World Health Organization declared a pandemic.

For months Blessing has been adding airborne isolation rooms and building up its supply of personal protective equipment.

Mary Frances Barthel, MD, chief quality and safety officer for Blessing Hospital, explained their emergency preparedness plans anticipated the arrival of COVID-19 in the Quincy region.

“We are ready to deploy a number of strategies that have been in place for months,” Dr. Barthel said.

Those strategies include:

- A 24-hour hotline launched on March 13;
- Screening centers opened on March 16;
- Visitor restrictions implemented on March 16; and
- Telehealth offerings expanded on March 21.

Blessing’s response to COVID-19 is part of its longstanding service to the communities it serves. The hospital was founded in 1875 when local residents donated the land for a hospital to serve the poor.

“The one constant on which we can rely is true human connection,” Kahn said, “and the commitment we share to improve the health of our communities.”

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