

The first day at the hospital can be intimidating for any healthcare volunteer, let alone starting the day after your community's first positive case of COVID-19. That's what happened for one healthcare hero, Sandy Hall, a volunteer at Memorial Medical Center in Springfield.

COVID-19 has impacted every part of healthcare, including volunteer services. Throughout Memorial Health, volunteers range in age from 16-97. But the average age is 66, meaning many volunteers are at higher risk for severe illness if infected.

In addition to health concerns, Memorial Health leaders worried about social isolation among volunteers and larger issues with daily hospital operations. It was a difficult, but necessary, decision to suspend most volunteer services.

It didn't take long, though, for the volunteers to spring into action. Volunteers at lower risk of harm from COVID-19 offered to pick up shifts, helped rearrange processes and took on other tasks.

On Hall's first day of training on March 16, she said, "Put me anywhere for as long as you need. I just want to help."

Other volunteers began sewing face masks from home, writing notes of encouragement to Memorial colleagues and making calls to ensure nobody was lonely or having a hard time during the stay-at-home order.

All 1,300 system volunteers are healthcare heroes. To them, Memorial Health says, "Thank you!"

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