

Wash your hands. Wear your mask. Get your diploma?

When COVID-19 testing concluded for the day, the healthcare heroes at Edward-Elmhurst Health organized an informal graduation ceremony for their colleague Amelia Barone.

Barone, a mother of three, had just completed her Associate's Degree in Human Services while working as a patient services representative. When the College of DuPage commencement was canceled due to COVID-19, her coworkers resolved to celebrate her accomplishment, pandemic or not.

On April 10, the testing crew clapped and cheered as Barone "walked the stage" in the parking lot at the Edward-Elmhurst Corporate Center in Warrenville, the site of the system's COVID-19 testing. From balloons to refreshments, every detail was accounted for, including a gown and cap, specially outfitted with Barone's face mask and shield.

"I wanted to [bring] some joy especially during this time when everything is chaotic," said Margaret Wright, an advanced practice nurse at Edward-Elmhurst's walk-in clinics and one of Barone's coworkers. "I know how stressed she's been, so I just wanted to make her smile."

Michelle Vermeland, the site supervisor, presented Barone with a replica of her degree. Barone, a resident of Montgomery, admitted she was a little embarrassed to be the center of attention.

"I'm in shock that they all put this together," she said, "But also extremely honored to be part of such a great team."

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