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My View: Why this year's celebration of Nurses Week has special meaning



Compassion, empathy, dedication and perseverance – all words to describe those called to a life in nursing. Nurses are the lifeblood of all health care systems, and at Valleywise Health, this is no exception.

We are living in exceptional times and nurses have not only stepped to the front line, they

have charged over it with tenacity and willingness to put themselves in harm's way. They are the first to suit up in PPE to enter into a patient room to treat and comfort patients in distress, and somehow still able to provide that human connection essential to recovery through face shields and masks. Nurses encounter the unexpected every day – and now more than ever, as visitors are restricted, our nurses become the communication link to families – and in some cases – become like family themselves.

May 6th marks the beginning of National Nurses Month and any other year, that would mean we would all gather for our traditional Nurses Week breakfast. But this year will look different as the battle with COVID-19 continues on in our medical centers. Instead our nurses, like any other day, will report for duty and work side by side with their District Medical Group physician and other clinical colleagues to treat the very sick, all with an easy smile and upbeat demeanor.

But nurses don't do what they do for accolades. They do it because they have compassion in their hearts and know, if not for them, who. As this pandemic has changed all of our lives in ways we could never have imagined, we have seen so much positivity come out of an otherwise dark situation. Communities and businesses have banded together to do whatever it takes to help one another, including our frontline nurses and healthcare heroes.

This outpouring of support does not go unnoticed and is a reminder to nurses that we are thinking of them. Just last week, homemade thank you cards were delivered by HandsOn Greater Phoenix and the emotion exhibited by our nursing staff as they read heartfelt notes scribbled by the hands of children and adults alike was heartwarming. A simple gesture, yes, but one that provides much needed connection to the 'outside world' that reminds them they are loved and appreciated.

Valleywise Health Foundation, our 501(c)(3) nonprofit partner, has rallied businesses, large and small, to provide needed supplies, meals, and donations. Safety goggles and face shields from Northrop Grumman, HYE-Tech Networks, and Dunn Edwards Paints. Pizza from Little Caesar's delivered to all our locations, and generous grants from Delta Dental of Arizona and Copperpoint Mutual Insurance for overall COVID-19 relief. And so many others who have provided masks, gloves, hand sanitizer and something as basic as spray bottles from ABC Ambulance, all to protect our nurses from harm. Businesses have pivoted operations to pitch in and shown us how to adapt and overcome, something I will take with me once this is over.

Although saying thank you just doesn't seem enough, take a moment out of your week to reach out to those nurses in your life who have displayed the professionalism and compassion required to protect and lead the caring of those in need and celebrate them. That simple thank you might just provide the lift they need to get through their day, and help them charge on and save lives along the way.

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