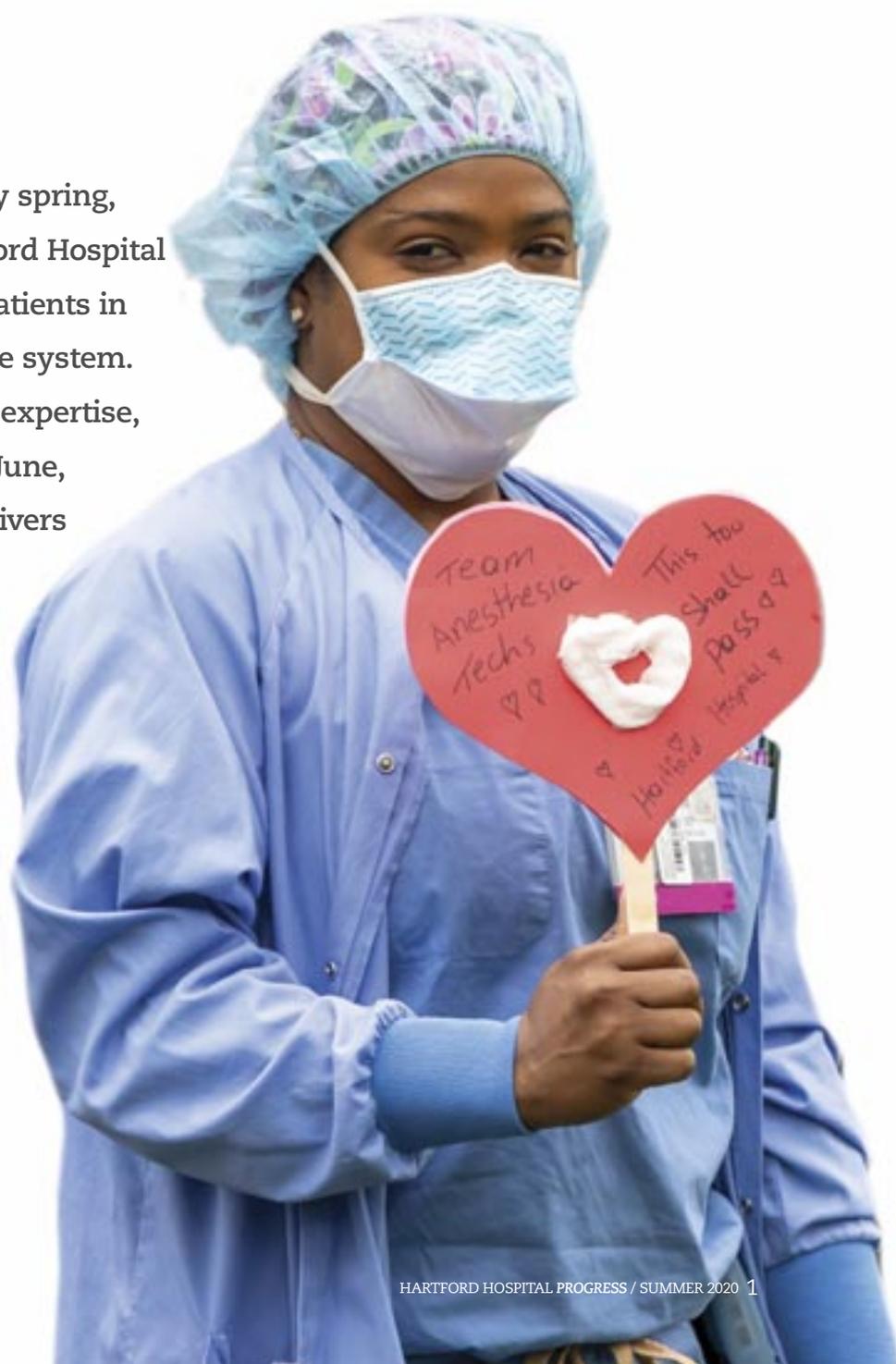


Safe Prepared Ready to Care for You

The pandemic has tested all of us. In early spring, as COVID-19 cases multiplied daily, Hartford Hospital became the center of care for COVID-19 patients in our region and for the Hartford HealthCare system. Our colleagues rose to the challenge with expertise, innovation, courage, and compassion. By June, through the tireless response of our caregivers and thanks to our community's caution, care, and sacrifices, we were seeing a steady decline in COVID-19 hospitalizations. Out of this crisis, says Jeffrey Flaks, president and CEO of Hartford HealthCare, an even better model for healthcare will emerge. "We don't desire to simply return to 'back to normal.' We seek care that is 'better than normal'— a health system that is more equitable, more convenient, more engaging, and more prepared."

(continued on page 2)



COVID-19: Preparedness, Outreach, and the Future

How Incident Command Teams Shaped Response

The COVID-19 threat that gripped the world left most healthcare systems across the United States little time to prepare for a pandemic surge unprecedented in modern times.

How did Hartford Hospital and Hartford HealthCare manage it? Incident Command teams throughout the system learned, adapted, and strategized to create and implement plans for patient intake, drive-through testing, distribution of personal protective equipment, and much more. The challenge was providing the best possible care to patients while keeping staff and visitors safe.

A 25-member Hartford Hospital team, working together on emergency preparation for more than a year, traveled in March 2019 to Anniston, Alabama, to train at the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA's) Center for Domestic Preparedness. There they learned practices and techniques they adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"After the training at the Center for Domestic Preparedness, we continued to meet every Wednesday," said Nursing Director Maria Tackett. "We reviewed disaster responses and brought in speakers to discuss topics like supply-chain management, fire safety, and infection control."



From left, Corporator and Open Hearth Executive Director Marilyn Rossetti, Hartford HealthCare staff, Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin, and Hartford HealthCare President and CEO Jeffrey Flaks launch the mobile COVID-19 testing program in April.



(Below) Dave Fichandler (center), director of initiative integration at Hartford Hospital, says the Incident Command team's work during the pandemic is to "contain the situation, ensure safety, and manage capacity."

(Above) In mid-April, as COVID-19 cases at Hartford Hospital were rising to a peak of 213, Hartford HealthCare and the Connecticut National Guard set up a COVID-19 recovery center at the Connecticut Convention Center in Hartford. Fortunately, the site did not have to be used.

(Right) Social worker Clare Cryar was among staff members redeployed to help answer the thousands of calls to Hartford HealthCare's call center in Newington.

The team's drills were tested last October when a vintage aircraft crashed at Bradley International Airport, with multiple patients taken to Hartford Hospital.

"It was a real-life opportunity to put our skills to use," Tackett said. "We were in place and didn't miss a beat in our response. We were all familiar with each other when the situation unfolded."

The command staff rotates roles weekly. That movement within the team provides experience, training, and flexibility within the group. Some of the roles include incident commander, public information, safety officer, liaison who interacts with all responding agencies, operations section chief, planning, logistics, finance, and medical technical section chiefs. During the pandemic, the group has met formally twice a day.

"The objective is to manage the situation while making sure hospital activities continue smoothly," said Dave Fichandler, director of initiative integration.

Fichandler compiles the data distributed every day, which includes how many patients went home, how many passed away, the physical locations of patients in the hospital, and COVID-19 numbers in the hospital, system, and state.

"The daily playbook tells us things like how many ventilators are in use and the status of nursing homes, critical care beds and supply, and staffing needs," he said. "This information gives us a pulse for the day and allows us to track trends."

Emergency Manager Patrick LaBuff started at Hartford Hospital in March, walking straight into the Emergency Operations Center as a new colleague.

"The Incident Command Team at Hartford Hospital is extremely progressive and works very well together," he says. "We have well-established partnerships inside and out, within the system and external agencies."

For Maria Tackett, teamwork and mutual respect are what makes the group so successful. "Each person comes with their own strengths and expertise, and together there is a lot of synergy," she says. "We are a disciplined, focused team. We get along, always with our eyes on the objective and mission."



(Below) Standing in front of a temporary triage unit for COVID-19 patients are Audrey Scott (left), RN, assistant nurse manager, and Yajaira Diaz, unit leader supervisor. The unit opened the first week of April.



Mobile Testing Launched to Help Bridge Health Inequities

Understanding that services can only help those able to access them, Hartford HealthCare (HHC) launched mobile COVID-19 testing in May to reach traditionally underserved communities.

The unit made its first stop at the Open Hearth in downtown Hartford. More than 100 people living and working at the shelter dedicated to helping men experiencing homelessness were tested the first day.

Testing is critical to managing the spread of the virus and monitoring vulnerable groups. HHC augmented its nine fixed testing locations with mobile testing designed to reach nursing home residents, the homeless, and those without transportation to fixed testing sites.

Sarah Lewis, HHC's vice president of health equity, said, "We have seen some of the structural inequities in our system when it comes to health disparities, and persistent socioeconomic disparities are starting to be exacerbated because of the pandemic."

Knowing that the prevalence of COVID-19 in these underserved populations is high, she said, the mobile testing program was launched to bridge that gap. "We're keeping our eyes out for how certain members of our population who have not traditionally had access to health insurance or a regular medical care provider, and who may have certain chronic underlying conditions, are now at risk of suffering more greatly because of the ongoing pandemic," she said.

"While we can't solve the existing health disparities that preceded the outbreak of COVID-19, we can do something now to potentially lessen the impact on those who are already most vulnerable," Lewis said.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is supporting the expansion of the mobile testing program with a \$100,000 grant, and the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) has awarded a \$400,000 grant to support the program.

The units perform, on average, 300 tests a day. With its fixed sites, Hartford HealthCare can test 2,500 people a day, according to Ajay Kumar, MD, chief clinical officer for Hartford HealthCare. The mobile testing "is an additional resource for the state, with additional capacity to support the growing needs of the community," Kumar said.

Bringing care directly into the community is part of the model of healthcare HHC wants to embrace as its new normal once the COVID-19 pandemic recedes, Lewis said.

"We don't want to return to normal in some cases," she said, noting that there's a 15-year difference in life expectancy from the North End of Hartford to the South End.

"That means rethinking, redesigning, recalibrating the way we think about healthcare delivery.

"We want to keep stepping up, keep showing up, tell everyone that we see them, and we're here to protect, prevent, and work with you going forward to survive this health crisis."

(continued on page 4)

Any organization that helps underserved populations and is interested in having an HHC mobile unit schedule a stop can contact Sarah Lewis at sarah.lewis@hhchealthcare.org



At a mobile COVID-19 testing site at the Artists Collective on Albany Avenue in Hartford in June, (top) Sarah Lewis, vice president of health equity at Hartford HealthCare, speaks during a news conference; (center) a Hartford HealthCare staff member administers a COVID-19 test; (bottom) people practice social distancing while listening to remarks.

The Future Will be **'BETTER** than Normal'

As unprecedented as the COVID-19 pandemic has been, Hartford HealthCare President and CEO Jeffrey Flaks said it will guide the transformation of the healthcare industry.

"We're going to see a new industry emerge worldwide—new beds, new ways to clean rooms, new ways to enter rooms. Hospitals will be safer, offer greater quality, and be more prepared as a result of the lessons learned from this," Flaks said during a webinar in May titled "COVID-19 and Connecticut Healthcare Leaders: A View from Ground Zero." The Hartford Business Journal facilitated the event.

It has not been a smooth path, and all challenges are not behind Hartford HealthCare. Still, Flaks said, quick-thinking clinical teams, an ability to leverage staff and space across the system, and a focus on caring for the sick while protecting colleagues and the community from the virus have been impressive.

"This statewide partnership," he said, referring to work with other healthcare systems in the state, "shows the strength of the [hospital] safety net in Connecticut."

The long-term impact of COVID-19, Flaks continued, will be "huge." The system must recover from financial losses that he estimated in the hundreds of billions of dollars, but the real change will be the way healthcare is organized and offered.

"We don't want to return to normal. We want to be better than normal," he said.

Some practices that evolved during the pandemic will become more commonplace, such as the use of telehealth to connect providers with patients and the use of technology at the bedside to connect patients and families.

Visitor restrictions during the peak of the pandemic in the region resulted in closer and more meaningful relationships

After weeks of treatment for COVID-19 at Hartford Hospital, Jay Bialkowski, a hospital public safety officer, was reunited with his family. "I don't know how to thank everyone from the ER to the ICU to step down, everyone involved in my care—I thank you so much for basically saving my life. You never gave up and I appreciate that," he said.



between caregivers and patients. "The connections our teams have had with the patients are better than they've ever been," Flaks noted.

Responding to COVID-19 has also broadened the system's level of preparedness. "We will see all our institutions invest in better critical care capabilities and expand infectious disease focus," he said.

The more immediate future will see an increase in testing for COVID-19 and its antibodies and identifying people who may have come into contact with an infected person and subsequent collection of further information about these contacts.

"Tracing will be critical going forward because there are so many people who are asymptomatic," Flaks said. "It's not just administering the test. It's about how you care for the people who test positive and tracking."

Nationally, he predicted, stockpiles of personal protective equipment (PPE) will be created for future catastrophes.

"There will be so many improvements coming out of this emergency ... significant improvements in practices going forward," Flaks said.

"We'll be better."



On March 13 Hartford Hospital announced it was treating its first COVID-19 patient. On June 15 an overflow tent outside of the hospital was dismantled.



In response to the pandemic, Hartford Hospital suspended all volunteer activity. Pet Therapy volunteer team Jennifer DeGraaf and her dog Beau were missed at the Avon Cancer Center, so they took a walk around the outside of the building in April to visit with staff and patients from a distance.

COVID-19: Social Distancing a Game Changer for Fundraising Events

One side effect of social distancing directives to slow the spread of the coronavirus was the inability of Hartford Hospital's friends and donors to get together for the events that have traditionally filled the hospital's philanthropy calendar in the spring and summer.

Some Events Went Virtual

With the 146th Kentucky Derby rescheduled from May 2 to September 5, the Ron Foley Foundation moved its annual rite of spring, Ron's Run for the Roses at Folly Farm in Simsbury, to September 12. To recognize the traditional day of the event, which benefits pancreatic cancer research, the foundation held Ron's Run Reset, a virtual cocktail hour. The event featured the foundation's president, Barbara Foley; Jennifer Loughren, executive vice president; Tim Parker of New Country Motors, the event's top sponsor; and James Naughton, honorary chair of the Ron's Run. Meteorologist Joe Furey emceed. Over the hour, guests learned how to make the perfect mint julep. As the foundation looks to September, plans are to move away from the usual derby theme with a drive-in fundraiser, Park n' Picnic for Pancreatic Cancer, scheduled for September 12.

The Hartford Hospital Auxiliary reimagined its annual spring event Rx for Fun as Rx for Cheer – A Wine Tasting benefiting Hartford Hospital's COVID-19 response.

More than 100 virtual guests enjoyed an hour of conversation about wine and food with special guest Faith Middleton, founder of NPR's Food Schmooze; Chris Prospero, chef and owner of Metro Bis Restaurant in Simsbury; Mark Raymond, vice president of national sales for Carolina Wine Brands USA; and Alex Province, a Food Schmooze contributor. Rebecca Stewart, vice president of content strategy for Hartford HealthCare, hosted the livestream event, during which video stories about the hospital's remarkable response to the pandemic were shared.

Hartford Hospital Auxiliary's virtual wine tasting event, Rx for Cheer, raised nearly \$50,000 to benefit Hartford Hospital's COVID-19 response. Clockwise from top left are Chris Prospero, Faith Middleton, Alex Province, and Mark Raymond.



Some Events Were Rescheduled

The Connecticut Brain Tumor Alliance's (CTBTA's) annual Path of Hope, 5K Walk/Run was postponed to October 4. The event will take place in Elizabeth Park in West Hartford. CTBTA supports brain tumor patients and caregivers by helping with necessary living expenses like rent, groceries, transportation to treatment, and home healthcare. The organization also supports research. In May, Brain Tumor Awareness Month, CTBTA invited supporters to walk around their neighborhood, a favorite trail, or local park, and make a donation for every mile walked. A portion of the proceeds was earmarked to support doctors and nurses on the front lines treating COVID-19 at partner hospitals.

Organizers of the 4th Annual Driving for H.O.P.E Golf Tournament to benefit the John Hayes Fund for H.O.P.E moved their event from the spring to October 2. The tournament, which takes place at Tunxis Plantation Country Club in Farmington, supports families who have a loved one undergoing cancer treatment.

The Gworek & Dell Golf Tournament, which is traditionally an early to mid-June event at the Pequabuck Golf Club in Terryville, has been tentatively rescheduled to July 31. The event benefits the Heart Failure, VAD, and Heart Transplant Fund.

The Kidney Cup Classic at Oak Ridge Golf Club in Feeding Hills, Massachusetts, benefits the Transplant Program. It is tentatively rescheduled for August 15.

Other Events Were Canceled

The Young Leaders Advisory Council canceled its signature event Spring Into Action. While the btr Golf Tournament, created in memory of Andy Butterfield, was canceled, organizers made a donation to the Center for Education, Simulation and Innovation to support the staff during the response to COVID-19.

The 18 Hole Stroll for Pancreatic Cancer traditionally takes place during the Travelers Championship at TPC River Highlands in Cromwell. The 2020 tournament, which was held in June, was a TV-only event.

Family and friends who have been planning the Skip McDermott Memorial Golf Tournament for many years canceled this year's event mindful of longtime supporters

An Optimistic Outlook for Fall

The Hartford Hospital Auxiliary is saving September 14 for its 31st annual benefit golf tournament at the Hartford Golf Club in West Hartford. Proceeds from the tournament will support the hospital's COVID-19 response.

Organizers of Hartford HealthCare's participation in ZERO Prostate Cancer Run/Walk, which is traditionally a June event, are considering a virtual event in the fall. "We are hoping to resume the race in full force next year!" said Jan Ruderman, vice president, Hartford HealthCare Tallwood Urology & Kidney Institute.

With COVID-19 likely to continue to impact the region for some time, fundraisers and other events are subject to change. To stay up to date, check giving.hartfordhospital.org/upcoming-fundraisers.

COVID-19: Donors respond with food, masks, PPE, and a whole lot more

Food

As the coronavirus began to spread in the region and life-as-usual changed by the minute, one uplifting constant was the generosity of Hartford Hospital's friends and donors.

The public wasted no time to show its support and appreciation for the hospital's staff in ways large and small. Fortune 500 companies, civic organizations, and individuals gave needed goods, services, and tons of goodwill.

In early March, Luna Pizza and Hartford Baking Company were among the first to set up a GoFundMe page asking for donations "to help feed hardworking healthcare providers at the hospital." The effort surpassed the fundraising goal of \$5,000, rising more than \$6,800 and feeding hundreds.

The Hartford Hospital Auxiliary joined with J Restaurant/Bar in Hartford and Steve's Place in Newington to distribute meals twice a day to nursing units committed to the care of COVID-19 patients as well as to staff at the Center of Education, Simulation and Innovation (CESI) who manned the drive-through testing. Call Center staff members who tirelessly answered all incoming calls related to the crisis also

received meals.

The Young Leaders Advisory Council also collaborated with J Restaurant/Bar and Ascot Catering to support



Stop & Shop donated household goods and nonperishable food items that were distributed to Hartford Hospital staff in appreciation for their work during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Under the direction of Patricia Veronneau, (left) RN, director of surgery acute care patient and family transitions, many restaurants and eateries, including J Restaurant/Bar, Bear's Smokehouse, and Red Rock Tavern in Hartford helped to keep the hospital's front lines fed during the crisis.

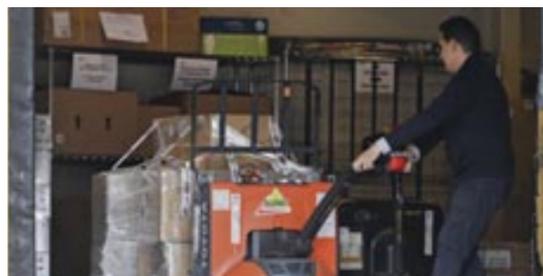
Hartford Hospital's frontline employees with meals. "This was our way to say thank you to them for the incredible service they provide and to help boost morale during this difficult time," said YLAC Chair Jack Soos. YLAC raised more than \$3,500 and provided nearly 400 meals to teams across Hartford Hospital, including the Employee/Occupational Health Call Center, the COVID-19 testing site, the Institute of Living CARES Program, and CESI.

PPE and More

Shortages of critical personal protective equipment (PPE) have proved challenging across the country during the pandemic. With the strength of the Hartford HealthCare system, Hartford Hospital took immediate steps to ensure staff had the PPE supplies necessary. "We were centralized, integrated, well-resourced, highly professionalized supply chain operation," said Hartford HealthCare President and CEO Jeffrey Flaks. "That when supplies were difficult to get, we stood up a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operation that was buying across the globe. That leveraged the strength and capabilities of Hartford HealthCare."

Stanley Black & Decker and Foxwoods Resort Casino immediately stepped up to help secure large donations of PPE. NEFCO Corporation of East Hartford donated pallets of the N95 masks to Hartford Hospital as COVID-19 cases began to increase. Hartford Steam Boiler also gave much appreciated N95 masks as the surge continued. As Scott Casserino and Michael Smith, the owners of Architectural Building Systems of Hartford, told The Hartford Courant, donating 1,920 N95 masks to the hospital was an easy decision. Casserino, whose sister is a nurse, said he knows how hard she works and how devoted she is to taking care of patients.

The Auxiliary also committed resources to the safety of Hartford Hospital caregivers. As a result of extraordinary precautions, the nursing staff found it necessary to purchase more scrubs at an increased personal expense. To ease the financial burden for the 3,000 nurses and 500 patient care assistants in direct patient care areas, the Auxiliary committed \$100,000 to the Nurses Uniform Initiative, presenting the funds to the nursing staff during Nurses Week (May 6-12).



A Hartford Hospital employee moves a pallet of N95 masks donated by NEFCO of East Hartford.



Necessary visitor restrictions meant that the last point of contact for many patients and their families was the drop-off at the hospital or the ambulance driving away. Isolation was just one of the many consequences patients suffered. Generous donations of tablets allowed caregivers to help families maintain human connections, offering some relief from the tide of heartache during the height of the infections.

(Left) Members of the Employee Health team were among hospital staff who received donations of food through the efforts of the Young Leaders Advisory Council.

Mask Makers

In addition to donations of coveted N95 masks, Hartford Hospital received thousands of hand-sewn face covers from donors ranging from well-oiled, high-volume sewing networks to families with heartfelt connections to the hospital.

As they dropped off another batch of masks in June, Carol and Ken Morotto of Newington, who had delivered more than 700 masks in the region, said they have a longstanding connection to Hartford Hospital. "We were born here. Our doctors are all here. Everything is here," Carol Morotto said.

Ken Morotto, a veteran, said, "We started out with the American Legion ... a lot of old veterans who want to get out but can't get out because they don't have any masks." Their effort to supply people in need of masks then grew to neighbors and family.

"I'm happy to do my part," said Carol Morotto, who has been sewing as long as she can remember. "If we can get rid of [COVID-19] by wearing masks, I'm going to do it. ... Every couple of weeks, we drop them off here. We drop them off at Charlotte [Hungerford Hospital]. We drop them off at the Veterans Home in Newington."



In photo on far left is the mask-making team Ken and Carol Morotto. Hartford Hospital employee Juan Gonzalez wears a mask donated by Unitarian Universalist Society: East in Manchester. Hartford Hospital has received thousands of hand-crafted masks from hundreds of generous donors.



YOU

can support Hartford Hospital's response to the pandemic. To learn how you can help, visit [giving.hartfordhospital.org/appreciate](https://www.hartfordhospital.org/appreciate).

COVID-19 Fund

Hundreds of donors responded with monetary gifts to the COVID-19 Fund. Their donations have helped to supply new scrubs for nurses, ensure excellent staffing levels on the front lines, operate mobile testing sites, and provide PPE and other support for the staff.

Through a gift to the fund, the Hartford Hospital Auxiliary has assisted with safe housing for staff treating COVID-19 patients, particularly those whose family members are at a higher risk.

In addition to supporting COVID-19 mobile testing, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving awarded a grant to assist telehealth efforts for patients in the Institute of Living's Child and Adolescent program.

The outpouring of community support has encouraged the hospital's staff through the darkest days of the pandemic. While COVID-19 will be with us for months to come, donations continue to lift spirits and let staff members know they are not alone.

As Hartford Hospital President Bimal Patel said, "Together as a hospital, health system, and community, I know we are prepared to face even more challenges in the weeks and months ahead."

At a stand they set up at the end of their driveway, the Todd brothers—Cooper (right) and Parker (left)—exchanged their hand-painted rocks for gifts to Hartford Hospital. They raised more than \$300 that they donated to support their uncle, Kevin Mahoney, and his colleagues at the hospital.



WFSB news anchor Dennis House (right) presents a check supporting Hartford Hospital's COVID-19 response to Cheryl Ficara, RN, regional vice president, Patient Care Services.



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Do you have questions about the coronavirus? Visit hartfordhealthcare.org/health-wellness/coronavirus.

