



Vol 16: No 2 Summer 2020

Heart to Heart

A publication from St. Tammany Health System



STRONG TOGETHER

How teamwork, compassion
and community support is
helping St. Tammany Health
System endure a pandemic

These are the Droids you're looking for p.4
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Gratefully Yours

Our CEO Joan Coffman lives her life in gratitude, so we are launching “Gratefully Yours,” a new column in *Heart to Heart* directly from her to you, our readers and neighbors.



STHS President and CEO Joan Coffman

In this issue, you will see stories that embody our mission to be the heartbeat of our community, caring for patients and families with excellence, compassion and teamwork ...

When I returned home in 2018 to join the team at St. Tammany Health System, the thought of facing a global pandemic only two years later never even crossed my mind.

Shortly after my arrival, STHS held an emergency management drill preparing our colleagues for an outbreak of infectious disease. I was impressed with the diligence of our teams participating in the exercise and sharing the lessons learned and opportunities for improvement.

I was grateful for these professionals who committed themselves directly to disaster response without hesitation, without fear, and with a great deal of expertise and compassion.

Ring in 2020, we began to hear about a new coronavirus spreading in other parts of the world with the first confirmed U.S. case in Washington state. After Mardi Gras, we followed procedures to heighten awareness of the newly named COVID-19. We conducted a blind drill at one of our primary care clinics. The team passed with flying colors, and thus began our escalation of modified operations to address the likelihood of future outbreaks.

We erected tents to triage patients outside our emergency departments. Our plant operations crews converted rooms to increase our negative pressure, isolation and critical care capacity. Our clinical teams began to plan for the long haul, adjusting staffing to make smartest use of all our resources.

Our first positive patient was confirmed by the state on March 13, and what rolled from there was nothing short of heroic. From brave environmental services professionals armed with new technology and the tried-and-true chemicals we know and trust, to the pulmonologists, respiratory therapists, nurses, techs and assistants on the COVID units, everyone stepped forward and gave of themselves.

I am so grateful to everyone here and beyond: churches, businesses, restaurants, elected officials, physicians, dentists, charities, neighbors, families and friends. You shared PPE, food, sewing skills, care and concern. Your generosity touched our hearts.

In this issue, you will see stories that embody our mission to be the heartbeat of our community, caring for patients and families with excellence, compassion and teamwork; stories of our post-COVID vision to strengthen the health of our community with compassion, innovation and partnership; and stories that clearly demonstrate our values: Teamwork, Trust, Compassion, Quality and Innovation.

Gratefully,



Joan Coffman, STHS President/CEO



Messages of support line walkways leading to employee entrances at St. Tammany Health System's main Covington campus. The messages were chalked anonymously at the height of the COVID-19 outbreak. (Photo by Tim San Filippo / STHS)



Dr. Patrick Torcson, chief medical officer at St. Tammany (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

‘We were prepared’

STHS’s COVID response has been shaped by experience, innovation, teamwork and preparation

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

They knew it was coming. Even before the COVID-19 coronavirus made the jump to U.S. shores, the healthcare team at St. Tammany Health System had started preparing for a potential outbreak. They might not have known how bad it ultimately would be—eventually being declared a full-on global pandemic—but they knew it was coming, and so they got ready for it. The resulting weeks would be difficult at times, but that early preparation—along with experience, innovation, teamwork and dedication—would ultimately be among the keys to STHS’s COVID-19 response. “I think back to the early days of the pandemic, and we were prepared,” said Dr. Patrick Torcson, chief medical officer at STHS. “We had PPE. Even when the very first patient came in, there were enough masks and we had the negative-pressure environment and everything we needed, so we weren’t caught off-guard by the first patient that was brought into our hospital.” Problems would arise, of course. That’s just how pandemics work. For starters, the hospital staff was burning through that store of personal protective equipment—gloves, gowns, masks, face shields—at an unsustainable pace. Testing kits weren’t always readily available. When tests were completed and sent out for processing, logjams at outside labs meant

an excruciating turnaround time. But while the days were often long and hard for the hospital’s frontline caretaking team, they’re used to putting out those sorts of daily fires. “I’m going to be quite honest with you: In (terms) of infection prevention and what you think about when you have a novel virus, it is just what we expected in a way,” STHS Director of Infection Prevention Leslie Kelt said. “With novel viruses—or a virus where we’re not quite sure what we have—we prepare in excess and we work from there. That’s what we do with every novel virus.” And so, while many will look back on the height of the COVID outbreak and think of the soul-sapping grind of self-isolation, Dr. Torcson looks back with pride at STHS’s response to the crisis. “As I reflect back on this whole experience, the story that needs to be told is that we were not caught off-guard,” Torcson said. “St. Tammany Health System was prepared when this pandemic arrived in our community and responded, and (we) were able to take care of patients—from the first one who walked through the door to the patients that are currently hospitalized —taking good care of them, providing state-of-the-art care, including infection prevention methods and taking care of our healthcare workers.”

COVID-19 BY THE NUMBERS

Key COVID-19 figures from March 10 to June 30, 2020

58,095

The total number of COVID-positive cases in Louisiana

2,308

The total number of COVID-positive cases in all of St. Tammany Parish

678

The total number of COVID-positive cases in Washington Parish

6,960

The total number of COVID-19 tests performed at St. Tammany Health System facilities

895

The number of COVID-19-positive cases, inpatient and outpatient, treated at STHS

137

The number of COVID-19 inpatient cases discharged from the hospital

7

The total number of COVID-positive inpatients at STHS as of June 30

Visit STPH.org/ COVID-19 for the latest information on coronavirus in St. Tammany Parish.



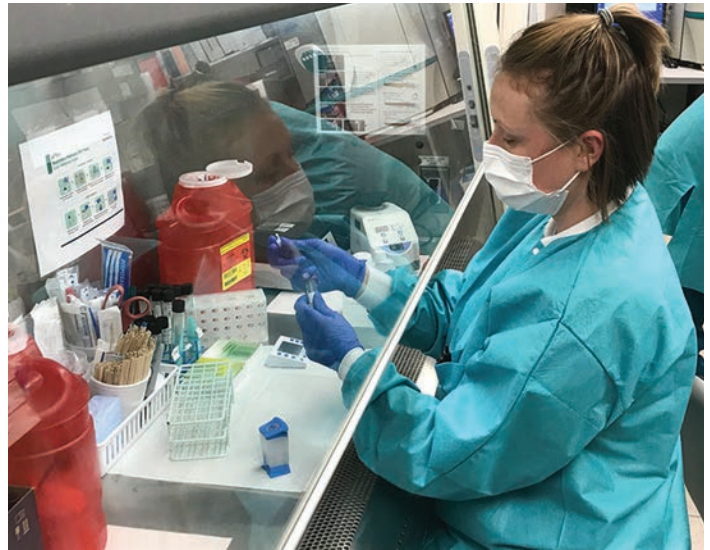
The Spirit of Innovation

COVID-19 prompts new ways of thinking at St. Tammany Health System

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG



St. Tammany Health System Environmental Services Director David Synakiewicz, right, and Environmental Services Supervisor Alvin Carter use a touchpad to give one of the hospital's new germ-killing robots its marching orders during a recent room-cleaning. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)



Andrea Stroo, a medical lab tech at St. Tammany Health System, processes a sample for COVID-19 testing in the laboratory at the health system's main Covington campus. (Photo by Mike Scott / STHS)

Germ-Zapping Robots

Yes, R2-D2 and C-3PO are more famous. But they've got nothing on The Twins, a pair of germ-zapping robots deployed April 3 to help in St. Tammany Health System's fight against the COVID-19 coronavirus.

These, it turns out, *are* the droids you're looking for—if you're interested in saving lives.

"Once we found out about the outbreak of COVID-19, we started really focusing on how we could take extra steps to create a safer environment for our patients and staff," STHS Environmental Services Director David Synakiewicz said. "We have been looking at this technology for a year or two years now."

And while St. Tammany Hospital Foundation already had been planning to buy the robots—formally Solaris Lytbots—with donated funds, that wasn't scheduled to happen until the hospital's new patient tower opens in late 2020.

"When this COVID-19 outbreak happened, administration thought it would be a good idea to go ahead and put a rush on that," Foundation Specialist Doug Walker said. "Because of the outstanding generosity of our donors we've been blessed to have, we had this money ready to go."

STH Foundation Board of Trustees followed that up in April with the gift of two smaller GermAway UV Mobile UVC Surface Sterilizers to clean small spaces such as bathrooms.

Like The Twins, it's only when one of them is rolled into place in a patient room—and after Environmental Services housekeepers are done scrubbing the room using traditional chemical cleaners—that the magic happens.

First the room is cleared of people. Then the Lytbot's cleaning

cycle is activated via remote control from outside the room. At that point, the robot's head flips open to reveal a high-power ultraviolet light disinfecting unit, which rotates 360 degrees while emitting pulses of germ-killing UV light.

The cycle lasts for only five minutes, at which point the Lytbot is repositioned, mattresses are flipped, the food-service table is opened and other, similar adjustments are made in the room before another five-minute cycle is initiated.

"They kill up to 99% of harmful bacteria without chemicals or mercury," Synakiewicz said. "It's a great addition to our process of cleaning."

In-House Testing

Numbers tell stories, and in the case of St. Tammany Health System, the daily number of COVID-19 patients listed as "patients under investigation"—that is, those suspected of having the novel coronavirus but who are awaiting test results to confirm the diagnosis—tells a doozy.

On April 2, there were 20 "PUIs," as patients under investigation are known in medical shorthand. A day later, the number was 21. Subsequent days brought similar numbers: April 6 saw 24 PUIs. On April 7, the number was 20.

Then, midway through the month, something notable happened. On April 14, the hospital had only one PUI. Same with April 15 and 16. On April 17 and 18, there were none.

It's not that there were fewer COVID-19 patients coming in, though. Rather, in what is being described as a watershed moment in the fight against coronavirus at St. Tammany Health



“They kill up to 99% of harmful bacteria without chemicals or mercury. It’s a great addition to our process of cleaning.”

- David Synakiewicz, STHS Environmental Services director



A St. Tammany Health System colleague collects information at the health system’s Mandeville drive-through testing site for COVID-19 coronavirus on Tuesday, March 24, 2020. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

System, the hospital’s lab team had fast-tracked a plan to process COVID tests in-house and thus avoid the 7- to 10-day logjam at already-overtaxed outside labs.

“That,” said STHS Director of Emergency Services Bradley Leonhard, “was a game-changer.”

Given how contagious the disease is, the hospital’s care teams previously had to treat all PUIs as if they were COVID-positive until tests came back. That created a drain on personal protective equipment, to say nothing of manpower and bed space.

With in-house testing, that all changed literally overnight, providing results 45 to 90 minutes after a test is taken.

Getting to that point, however, was no small feat.

It required a full-court press from the lab team, which scrambled to order reagents, a key element in processing the collected specimens. They ordered calibration kits. They wrote up standard operating procedures and conducted the necessary training. They streamlined validation, accomplishing in five days what Lab Director Judy Garic said ordinarily takes a month or longer.

“It’s the biggest game-changer that I’ve seen in my career,” Garic said when asked to put the accomplishment into perspective. “To get this testing in our facility was an unbelievable feat that the lab achieved.”

Drive-Through Testing Site

It was just six days after St. Tammany Health System received its first COVID-positive patient in mid-March, and hospital leadership already saw a problem. It involved testing for the virus.

The idea was to test as many people as possible. But given how

highly contagious the disease is, having potentially infected people coming and going from STHS facilities was less than ideal.

The solution: a drive-through testing site, established at the health system’s Mandeville Diagnostic Center and which sees a team of nurses daily swabbing patients who don’t have to even get out of their car.

The first of its kind on the Northshore, and among the first of its kind in the state, the drive-through has been hailed by STHS leadership as an example of the sort of innovation, nimbleness and efficiency that has characterized the health system’s overall COVID-19 response.

In addition to keeping potentially infected people out of doctors’ waiting rooms, the drive-through program has proven convenient, winning praise from the hundreds of patients tested, said Dionne Williams, assistant vice president of St. Tammany Physicians Network and one of the organizers of the Mandeville drive-through operation.

“They are very grateful,” Williams said. “They are very grateful for us being here.”

She was talking shortly before the drive-through clinic opened for the day. Behind her, a line of vehicles had already begun forming fully an hour before the testing center opened.

By the time it opened, a dozen were already queued up—and about a dozen STHS employees from various offices were on-hand to keep things moving.

“It takes a team,” Williams said. “It’s interesting that we were able to kind of come up with the idea and within 48 hours really have a team ready to go.”



Mike Bergeron, shown with wife Lois, was the first COVID-positive patient admitted to St. Tammany Health System's main hospital campus. After 16 days in the ICU, he also became the first to be sent home. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

Faith, hope, love — and COVID-19

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

You can describe Mike Bergeron in a number of ways. The 67-year-old Mandeville resident is a businessman. He's a family man. He's a man of deep, unshakable faith.

In March, a couple of noteworthy new ways to describe him emerged.

First, Bergeron became patient zero at St. Tammany Health System, the patient with the first diagnosed case of the COVID-19 coronavirus at the Covington-based hospital.

Even more importantly, on March 26 he became the first COVID-positive patient to go home after being admitted to the hospital.

The struggle that played out in those 16 long days and nights in the hospital's critical-care unit is a story of determination on Bergeron's part and, by his own description, of medical heroism on the part of the STHS doctors and nurses who cared for him.

But if you ask him what one thing made the difference in his case—what he summoned from inside himself to beat a disease that continues to claim thousands of lives every day around the world—he doesn't hesitate before answering.

“They put themselves on the back-burner. They put their families on the back-burner. They put their personal well-being on the back-burner so they could take care of people like me.”

- Mike Bergeron, patient

“I first have to give credit to God,” he said. “I really, really do. I really believe in my heart of hearts that through prayer from members of our church and our family and folks around the country who were alerted and prayed for me, that a medical team was assembled

in St. Tammany that was off the charts in terms of their compassion, their focus, their readiness to serve, their self-sacrificing nature.

“We talked together. We prayed together. We read Scripture together,” he said. “In the course of (providing) world-class medical care, they were my contact with the outside world. They were my contact with humanity, because that isolation factor begins to wear on you a little bit. But I was excited every time they came into the room. I was stimulated. I felt good. I felt happy. It was an uplift. Those people are remarkable.

“They put themselves on the back-burner. They put their families on the back-burner. They put their personal well-being on the back-burner so they could take care of people like me. And, my goodness, did they. Oh, my goodness. What a blessing.”





“I have strong faith – and when we saw what the nurses did, oh, my gosh, your God comes back to you in so many ways through them.”

- Gail Martello Evans, COVID-19 survivor

COVID-19 survivors Ray Lubrano and Gail Martello Evans are photographed in their Covington-area living room on Tuesday, April 28, 2020. While Evans didn't require hospitalization for the virus, Lubrano was the second COVID-positive patient admitted to St. Tammany Health System and the first to be discharged after being put on a ventilator. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

‘The nurses are my angels’

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

Ray Lubrano was in bad shape, no two ways about it. His body was wracked by constant, violent coughing. He felt as if his lungs were filled with broken glass. He was so weary he couldn't stand.

Beyond the intense pain, though, the U.S. Navy veteran and retired roadmaster for the New Orleans Public Belt Railroad doesn't really remember much about his fight with the COVID-19 coronavirus, save for one key fact: With help from the healthcare heroes at St. Tammany Health System, he beat it.

“The nurses are my angels,” Lubrano said. “Doctors are great. Doctors do what they do. They're very smart people. But the nurses—you get that personal feeling.”

On March 27, Lubrano—who doesn't know where he picked up the virus—became one of the first COVID-positive patients admitted to St. Tammany Health System's Covington hospital. Nineteen days later, he would be the second to go home and the first at STHS to be discharged after being put on a ventilator.

While he was fighting for his life inside the hospital, his

fiancée, Gail Martello Evans—who also contracted coronavirus, though her case wouldn't require hospitalization—found herself eager for any updates on his condition she could get, since visitors weren't allowed, in keeping with CDC guidance.

“A lot of hospitals would only allow two calls,” Evans said. “(But) I could call them four, five times a day—2 o'clock in the morning, when I was just fretting. I would call and they'd pull up everything ...

“I can't tell you the gratitude (we have) for these nurses, these doctors. Dr. (Jennifer) Gonzalez would talk to me for 20, 25 minutes, just filling me in on everything. If I had any questions, she wouldn't hesitate to explain things to me. That doesn't usually happen.”

Both she and Lubrano still get choked up talking about the compassion the nurses at St. Tammany Health System have shown—and continue to show.

“We have so much faith,” Evans said. “Ray was a eucharistic minister. I have strong faith—and when we saw what the nurses did, oh, my gosh, your God comes back to you in so many ways through them.”



 **St. Tammany**SM
Pediatrics
We're Moving to Covington!

Coming to 71338 Highway 21, late summer 2020





'You've got to stay strong. You've got to keep a positive attitude,' said COVID-19 survivor Wesley Doyle, pictured with wife Dayna, when asked what advice he had for other COVID patients. (Photo by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

Heroes saving heroes

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

"You've got to trust us," Wesley Doyle remembers the nurses at St. Tammany Health System telling him that night in early April. "We're good at our job. Trust us."

But he was still scared. Terrified, even.

The veteran law enforcement officer and father of two had seen and done a lot in his 43 years. He had never, however, spent a night in the hospital before. And he had definitely never been on a ventilator, which is exactly what the doctors and nurses at St. Tammany were proposing to give his lungs a break to recover from the COVID-19 coronavirus that was attacking his body.

"I didn't really know what was going on at first," he said. "They're talking to me, but I'm not really hearing it. I'm not processing. But I realized it when—I can't remember her name, but she came in and said, 'Look, we're going to intubate you,' and I started shaking because I was scared to death."

He continued: "She was great. She held my hand. She knew I was scared."

He would end up spending two weeks in the hospital, fighting for his life. With help from the care team at STHS—and what Doyle describes as their immense, unflagging compassion—he

"They put up with me like superstars. They were great. Don't know their names. I'd love to meet them. Because they saved my life."

- Wesley Doyle, patient

would win that fight.

Even weeks after being discharged, he said he still felt like he had been hit by a truck, but he had the energy to smile when mentioning the doctors, nurses, aides, lab techs and everyone else who had a hand in his recovery.

"They put up with me like superstars," he said. "They were great. Don't know their names. I'd love to meet them. Because they saved my life. There's no other way to put it and there's nothing that I can say—it sounds so corny and so cliché—there's nothing I can say to show my appreciation for what they did."

"They were right. I just had to trust them. They knew what they were doing, and they did it."

Hear our COVID-19 survivors' stories in their own words.

 [YouTube /sttammanyhealthsystem](https://www.youtube.com/sttammanyhealthsystem)



Now What?

What does the future hold for COVID-19?

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG



Graphic by Mike Scott / STHS

Truth be told, there are still a lot of unanswered questions about COVID-19, but many of them are rooted in the same three simple words: What happens next?

Will we be able to continue the downward rate of infections and be done with COVID-19 by this fall?

If we do beat it, will it come back?

And we're still going to get a football season, right?

The answer to all of those questions is the same: Maybe.

That's because one of the tricky things about the COVID-19 coronavirus is that it's so new, experts are learning more about it every day. Consequently, the priority for frontline healthcare providers isn't necessarily to try to divine what's going to happen next, according to Dr. Patrick Torcson, chief medical officer at St. Tammany Health System.

Rather, it's preparation.

"I think we are not going to make any specific predictions, but we are planning and preparing for any possible scenario," Torcson said.

There's always the possibility, Torcson said, that COVID-19 might burn itself out like other pandemic viruses—including SARS, MERS and Ebola—and no longer be a major public health

concern. But, then again, there's also a possibility it could make a comeback once schools start up again in September and tailgaters start gathering outside Tiger Stadium and in Champion Square—if either of those are allowed to happen.

It's the job of the healthcare team at St. Tammany Health System to make sure they are prepared either way. The good news is that process is well underway, Torcson said. Consequently, even if the virus does surge, COVID and non-COVID patients alike can rest assured STHS will be safe, clean and ready for it.

"We are the safety net and we are the front line for taking care of patients that do become infected with COVID-19," Torcson said, "so we are going to stay vigilant and stay prepared, and I think that all that preparation and planning has made this a stronger and more highly performing organization than we were even before the pandemic."

He continued: "I think, again, because of what we learned about COVID-19, we're safer in many respects than we were before the pandemic in terms of knowing how to isolate, test and different infection control measures. So, for patients that need care, you can feel safe about coming to our hospital."

"We are going to stay vigilant and stay prepared, and I think that all that preparation and planning has made this a stronger and more highly performing organization than we were even before the pandemic."

- Patrick Torcson MD, chief medical officer at STHS

STRONG TOGETHER

Every hero needs a sidekick, but St. Tammany Health System's team of frontline healthcare heroes has more than just one. They have sidekicks all over the parish. There are the myriad restaurants that have helped feed the troops. There are the schoolchildren whose love and artwork lifted nurses' spirits. There are the mask makers, the sign painters and the gift givers from throughout the community. Together, they made one thing clear during the coronavirus outbreak of spring 2020: It might take a village to raise a child, but it takes a whole parish to take on a pandemic.



Representatives of the Louisiana Organ Procurement Agency present a sign of thanks to STHS team members.



Instead of holding his Crawfish and Roses Foundation's annual springtime crawfish cook-off, Madisonville-area OB/GYN Dr. Gary Agena this year organized a crawfish boil for STHS staff.



Handwritten messages of support adorn lunches donated to the STHS staff by Acquistapace's Covington Supermarket.



Representatives of the STHS Food Services team and STH Foundation accept a truckload of healthy snacks from the Al Copeland and In Jesus Name foundations.



STHS Critical Care RN Supervisor Jennifer Corcoran adds to the dozens of photos and messages of support from the community taped up in what has become known as 'Inspiration Hall' outside the hospital's ICU-CCU unit.





A banner cheers on local healthcare workers outside a home on 15th Avenue in Covington.



STHS healthcare workers show off a banner sent to them by students at Ponchartrain Elementary School in Mandeville.



Volunteers with Oxlot 9 restaurant in Covington unload meals headed for STHS frontline healthcare workers.



Margaret French, right, of Zea's Rotisserie & Bar hands off some of the meals the Covington restaurant donated to feed STHS healthcare workers.



The New Orleans Saints - Who Dat Nation Facebook fan group, represented by Michael Turner (left) and Stephanie Williams, teamed up with Slidell-area Subway franchisees Stefanie and Reggie Lapouble to feed the staff at STHS.



Members of the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office show their support for STHS staffers during a shift change at the Covington hospital.

Cooking Up Family Fun

BY JULIE FORTENBERRY RDN, JFORTENBERRY@STPH.ORG

This past spring, parents around the world found themselves doing their best to navigate the COVID-prompted “shelter in place” concept of school and life, but now—with the spring of COVID stretching into the summer of COVID—it’s worth remembering that there are skills you can teach your kids that don’t require a textbook or an online classroom.

All you need is your family kitchen.

One of the best gifts you can give your child is to teach him or her that healthy eating takes planning and preparation. It is important to know about food and to learn how to handle and to prepare it. Think of it as a life skill, no less important than any other—and maybe more so, as it will enable your children to take control of their health as they get older.

Not only will it help foster an appreciation for healthy meals and the work that goes into the preparation, but your child is more likely to try new foods when helping to prepare the meal as well.

As an added bonus, the time you spend together in the kitchen will also strengthen your relationship as a family. This is especially true if you remember to make it fun. Consider making it a challenge, doing a themed dinner night or making a meal for one of your child’s favorite characters.

Here are two very basic, kid-friendly recipes that can encourage your children to start in the kitchen. Just getting familiar and comfortable with food prep is the base of a strong and positive future of cooking.

Have fun!



BERRY GOOD SMOOTHIES

Serves 2

Ingredients:

2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries, blackberries or strawberries
1 cup plain Greek yogurt
2 tablespoons almond butter
1/2 cup of milk of choice

Allow children to select the fruit, wash it and gather other ingredients. Teach your kids how to safely use the blender. Have them place all ingredients in the blender, secure the lid and blend until smooth. These are great frozen as quick breakfast or snack options during the week.



ENGLISH MUFFIN PIZZAS

Ingredients:

English muffins of choice
Pizza sauce
Mozzarella cheese
Thinly sliced chicken
Any favorite vegetables

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Have your child put pre-sliced English muffins face up on a cookie sheet. Spoon some pizza sauce on each half of the muffins. Top with sliced chicken, any vegetables and then add the cheese. Bake for about 5 minutes or until the cheese melts and bubbles slightly.

Julie Fortenberry is a registered dietician at St. Tammany Health System.



Left: The new 160,000-square-foot patient tower going up at St. Tammany Health System's main Covington campus is still on schedule for a late 2020 opening.

Above: The glassed-in administration reception area.

(Photos by Tim San Fillippo / STHS)

Lessons Learned

New patient wing being completed with COVID in mind

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

When you get down to it, there's never really a good time to experience a pandemic. But if you're a hospital and you've got to experience one anyway, it doesn't hurt for it to arrive as you're building the four-story centerpiece of a \$100 million, three-year expansion.

That's the case with St. Tammany Health System and its new 160,000-square-foot patient tower, which has been going up over the past several months at the main hospital campus in Covington. When completed, it will add 70 private patient rooms to the hospital – but that's not all.

"It's also going to incorporate many of the lessons we learned from COVID-19," said Sharon Toups, the chief operating officer at STHS.

For example, the new expansion will see STHS doubling-down on its use of UV light to kill germs, which it has been doing in patient areas since March with four newly acquired germ-zapping robots. While those robots, provided by the St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, will continue to work their magic hospital-wide, the bathroom of every new patient room will also be equipped with its own built-in UV light.

To address the challenges of communicating with patients who must be kept in isolation—such as, for example, COVID-19 patients—every room will also be equipped with an iPad so patients can interface with their healthcare providers and with family members without the risk of potential exposure.

That goes hand-in-hand with the hospital's new room design, which is already in use in some parts of the facility.

"With the glass doors in the new rooms, the nurses and the physicians are able to visualize and communicate with the patients

without wasting PPE by going into the room unnecessarily," Toups said. "I think our room design has proven to be extremely successful dealing with COVID, and all of the beds in the new tower will adhere to that new design."

Given how important negative pressure proved to be in isolating COVID-positive patients, the outbreak also has prompted the hospital to reflect on how it can easily convert more beds to negative pressure in the case of a future pandemic.

"I think our room design has proven to be extremely successful dealing with COVID, and all of the beds in the new tower will adhere to that new design."

- Sharon Toups, COO of STHS

Similarly, Toups said, a bulk of the new wing's beds will be easily convertible for critical care use in the event of a patient surge.

Despite the myriad construction complications caused by COVID-19—from staffing issues to change orders to difficulty obtaining some materials from overseas markets—contractor Milton J. Womack Construction has still managed to keep things on track for a Dec. 1 opening.

"They never skipped a beat, really," said Toups, who also praised Womack's numerous subcontractors. "Had it been another contractor, it could have slowed down the project. It's really been a blessing that the project has stayed on target and on track for the same time frame given the circumstances."

A HEARTFELT THANKS

Ordinarily, St. Tammany Hospital Foundation takes time every spring to honor the donors and friends who supported the hospital through the foundation in the previous year.

This, however, has not been an ordinary year.

Due to restrictions put in place to help our community fight the COVID-19 pandemic, a physical event wasn't possible this year. However, the STH Foundation Board of Trustees and staff are producing a special video of gratitude honoring our 2019 donors and highlighting the impact made with their generosity.

Watch for it on our website, STHFoundation.org, —and please accept our most sincere thanks for all you do to further the work of St. Tammany Health System.



ST. TAMMANY HOSPITAL
FOUNDATION



The Southern Hotel, all dressed up for St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's 2019 Gala.

THE GALA 2020

WHAT: St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's signature fundraising event, which this year celebrates fairy tales with the theme "Step into the Woods." Proceeds benefit St. Tammany Cancer Center, a partnership of St. Tammany Health System, Ochsner Health and Mary Bird Perkins.

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 1

WHERE: Southern Hotel,
428 E. Boston St., Covington

ATTIRE: Black tie or theme-inspired

TICKETS: \$150 each, available through thegalanorthshore.org. Sponsorships are also available; call St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's Melanie Rudolph at 985-898-4141 for details.

A Special Kind of Magic

You are cordially invited to a fairy-tale evening

BY MIKE SCOTT, MSCOTT@STPH.ORG

Once upon a time, in a land not so far away, a lavish ball was held in the hopes of vanquishing the most evil of forces and creating a world of happily-ever-afters.

Ten years later, that ball—rebranded in 2018 as THE Gala—shines as an annual highlight of the Northshore's fall calendar, a party with a purpose combining glitz, glamour, whimsy and altruism, all in support of world-class healthcare offered by the St. Tammany Cancer Center in Covington.

This year's event, following a whimsical black-tie affair themed "Step into the Woods" and set for Oct. 1, will continue the tradition—and perhaps even raise the bar—according to Melanie Rudolph of St. Tammany Hospital Foundation.

"THE Gala has quickly become a signature soirée on the Northshore that you won't want to miss," Rudolph said. "Featuring delicious food and beverage by Oxlot 9 and a premier setting at the Southern Hotel, it is the perfect night out in support of the patients and families at St. Tammany Cancer Center, where nationally recognized healthcare leaders—St. Tammany Health System, Mary Bird Perkins and Ochsner Health—are doing the most to beat cancer in our community."

As it has been from the beginning, a decade ago, HUB International is the event's title

sponsor, with St. Tammany Hospital Foundation serving as host. Featured sponsors include St. Tammany Health System, Ochsner Health, Mary Bird Perkins, Humana, United Healthcare and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana.

In addition to food and an open premium bar, the meticulously themed event—which will welcome attendees into a dreamlike enchanted forest setting populated by familiar characters from their favorite stories—will include live music, a silent auction, a live auction and more.

Dress code is black tie or fairy-tale-inspired.

On top of all the storybook fun comes the satisfaction that the whole shindig is for a good cause, raising nearly \$200,000 for local cancer care in each of the past two years.

"During this unprecedented time, the patients and families at St. Tammany Cancer Center need our support now more than ever," Rudolph said. "Many patients are facing barriers to care, including access to nutritious meals, transportation to treatments, activities to maintain a clear mind and limit stress while undergoing treatments and more.

"Of course, we can't just sprinkle pixie dust and make all those issues go away," she continued. "But we know that our donors, and their proven generosity, will work their own special sort of magic at this year's Gala."

Giving back in the age of coronavirus

COVID-19 can't stop St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's mission

BY NICOLE SUHRE, ST. TAMMANY HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

We keep calling it “the new normal,” but really there isn't much that feels normal about life in the age of COVID-19.

At St. Tammany Hospital Foundation, however, at least one thing hasn't changed.

We're still dedicated to sustaining the healing work of our healthcare heroes at St. Tammany Health System, and we're still dedicated to fortifying the hospital's promise to provide world-class healthcare close to home.

We've just had to figure out the most effective way to do it in a world of social distancing protocols and stay-at-home orders.

For starters, that meant the postponement of our annual Get Lucky! Golf Tournament from late April to Aug. 27. (The foundation's fall events are still on the calendar—for now.)

Early on, we also established a Disaster Relief Fund to provide unrestricted support for St. Tammany Health System as it navigates the pandemic. Fueled by significant support from private donors, businesses and grantors, the fund has made an immediate impact.

For example, STH Foundation Board of Trustees in April gifted the hospital with two GermAway cleaning robots. They serve as complements to a pair of larger Solaris UV Lytbot cleaning robots purchased with donated funds at the outset of the COVID outbreak. (*Read more about the robots on page 4.*)

Meanwhile, our team worked out a plan to position ourselves as ambassadors between the hospital and the community, acting as a conduit for the outpouring of support.

Since the hospital's first confirmed COVID-19 case in mid-March, the foundation has facilitated more than \$60,000 in in-kind donations, ranging from donations of personal protective equipment to meals for our indefatigable colleagues, as well

With the arrival of COVID-19 in our community, it's clear that our work supporting the health system is as important as it has ever been.

as significant financial contributions, including grants from Northshore Community Foundation for antibody testing and LWCC for a permanent recharge room for employees.

Additionally, we established a Sustaining St. Tammany Fund to provide a way for people to say “thank you” to healthcare workers and to support local businesses by purchasing gift cards from local establishments then donating them for distribution to hospital workers.

Through the foundation's Healing Arts Initiative, artist Bernard Mattox agreed to extend his solo exhibition by two months in order to keep the artwork up for STHS staff. In addition, the Healing Arts Committee produced a virtual exhibition featuring works of art from the foundation's permanent collection that colleagues can access electronically anytime in order to calm, inspire and rejuvenate their spirit.

Our work continues in numerous other ways. In fact, with the arrival of COVID-19 in our community, it's clear that our work supporting the hospital is as important as it has ever been.

And so is yours.

Members of the community who want to help are encouraged to make a monetary donation; donate supplies, PPE and meals; or make a thank-you note for healthcare workers. Visit STHFoundation.org/SupportSTHS to learn more about how you can help.



Through St. Tammany Hospital Foundation's Healing Arts Initiative, artist Bernard Mattox agreed to extend his solo exhibition by two months in order to keep the artwork up for STHS staff during the COVID-19 outbreak.



MISSION

We are the heartbeat of our community, caring for our patients and their families with excellence, compassion and teamwork.

VISION

We will strengthen the health of our community with compassion, innovation and partnership.

VALUES

Teamwork. Trust. Compassion. Quality. Innovation.

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STHS complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. STPH does not exclude people or treat them differently because of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex. STPH provides free aids and services to people with disabilities to communicate effectively with us. If you need these services, contact the Patient Relations Department at 985-898-4669.



MISSION

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization established to sustain the healing work of the physicians and staff of St. Tammany Health System.

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St. Tammany Health System | 985-898-4000 | stph.org
St. Tammany Hospital Foundation | 985-898-4171 | STHFoundation.org
1202 S.Tyler St., Covington, LA 70433



Upcoming Events

St. Tammany Hospital Foundation hosts events in support of its philanthropic goals for St. Tammany Health System. Below, find a short sample of upcoming noteworthy events. Please check STHFoundation.org and the foundation Facebook page for additional opportunities to support the foundation and health system.

Get Lucky! Golf Tournament

What: The ninth annual golf tourney, presented by Refreshment Solutions, to support the John “Pizzie” Romano inpatient infusion suite at St. Tammany Health System

When: 8:30 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 27

Where: Money Hill Golf and Country Club, Abita Springs

Details: STHFoundation.org/golf

THE Gala

What: St. Tammany Hospital Foundation’s signature annual fundraising event to support St. Tammany Cancer Center patients and their families

When: 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 1

Where: Southern Hotel, Covington

Details: thegalanorthshore.org

Monster Mash

What: The annual all-ages fall festival – featuring music, food, crafts, inflatables and trick-or-treating – to benefit St. Tammany Health System’s Parenting Center

When: 10 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 17

Where: Bogue Falaya Park, Covington

Details: STPH.org/MonsterMash

Angels of Light

What: The annual lighting of a holiday tree covered in “Tribute Angels” to honor special people, living or deceased, with proceeds benefiting St. Tammany Health System’s hospice program

When: 5:30 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10

Where: Front lobby of the STPH main hospital campus in Covington

Details: STHFoundation.org/Angels

On the Move

What: The relocation of St. Tammany Health System Pediatrics Clinic from Madisonville to the Covington area, just south of the main hospital campus

When: Summer 2020

Where: 71338 Hwy. 21 in Covington

Details: STPH.org/pediatrics

