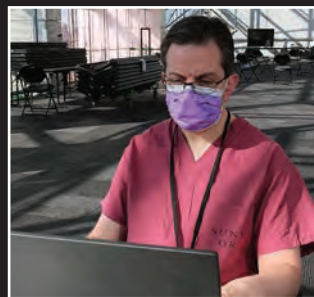
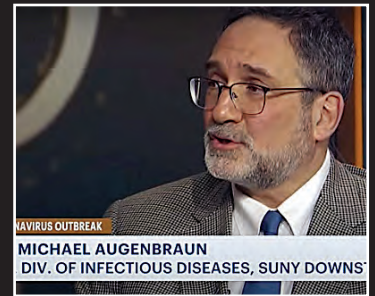
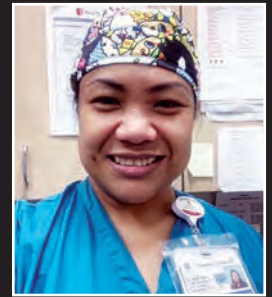
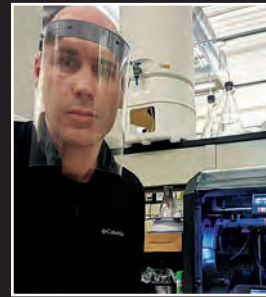


THE VOICE

uup
Special Issue:
Coronavirus



Heroes emerge

This issue is dedicated to our members, who serve with distinction.



THE VOICE

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The VOICE is the official publication of United University Professions (UUP), bargaining agent for the more than 37,000 academic and professional employees of the State University of New York.

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Check out the latest at www.uupinfo.org:

- New threats to intellectual property: Don't sign your rights away! Learn more at: <https://bit.ly/35n9Cfu>
- UUP posts photos of members in action during the pandemic. Check them out at: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/uupinfo/albums>
- Check out the comptroller's COVID-19 Financial Survival Toolkit for New Yorkers at: <https://bit.ly/2KTS00M>
- Not a member of your union yet? Join here: <https://uuphost.org/myuup/Membership/RegForm.php>

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LETTERS POLICY

The Voice welcomes timely letters about university and union issues, politics and other events relevant to UUP's concerns. All letters are subject to editing for length, accuracy and clarity. Please type or email your letters, limit them to 300 words, and include your name and daytime phone number for verification.

Unsigned letters will not be published. Email letters to UUP Director of Media and Publications Mike Lisi at mlisi@uupmail.org or send them to his attention at: *The Voice*, UUP, P.O. Box 15143, Albany, NY 12212-9954.

Correction

In the Spring 2020 issue, *The Voice* misidentified Ana Martinez of Old Westbury, right, who took part in a chapter-based rally Feb. 25.

The rally was one of several events held by chapters around the state to stress the need to Fund SUNY Now! Many held handwritten signs that said "Billionaires pay your taxes!" and "Fund \$UNY."

The Voice regrets the error.



Our day, our future

The Mohawk people, one of the six nations of the Iroquois Confederacy, lived in northern New York near where I live, and many still do. Their leaders had a rule that every decision must be made considering its effects seven generations in the future.

That's roughly 150 years. How many times do you think our leaders have made decisions considering the impact they could have 150 years in the future?

It's doubtful they ever have, at least from what I see from my home, which overlooks the Cobleskill Creek in the Schoharie Valley. The wildlife patterns have changed. The weather patterns have changed. In my 30-plus years here, I've seen manifestations of the climate crisis we are facing.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, and while the milestone was celebrated worldwide April 22, for many it was overshadowed by COVID-19. That's unfortunate. But to view these catastrophes separately is a mistake.

They are symptoms of the same problem—environmental degradation. These crises predominately impact the poor in communities of color. Clearly, we face a global crisis of environmental injustice.

TWIN THREATS

The roots of this injustice are deep and centuries old, and they spread as our industrialized society continues to exploit the Earth in pursuit of profits and our own comfort. While the population has more than doubled since the first Earth Day in 1970, the extinction of species, loss of wild lands and amount of carbon dioxide in our atmosphere have grown exponentially.

Through a radical retreat from environmental protections by the Trump Administration, more than 100,000 Americans die each year from illnesses caused by overuse of coal, natural gas, and oil. With our never-ending hunger for energy

and consumption, we are killing our world. The poorest communities are paying the steepest price.

At the same time, people die daily from the coronavirus. As I write this, more than 224,000 people have died of COVID-19 worldwide and more than 3 million cases have been confirmed. We know that the rates of mortality are highest in the cities and specifically in communities of color, where air pollution is the worst.

It's not just in the cities, though, as the rates of coronavirus infection and mortality are unacceptably high in Native American communities—especially in the West. The Navajo Nation has the third-highest per capita rate of COVID-19, after New York and New Jersey.

WHAT'S NEXT?

So, the question asked at the first Earth Day remains. How do we heal our Earth—or at least begin to? One thing is certain: We must come to terms with how we manipulate and exploit our natural world. Our actions have real effects on our lives through long-term illness, floods, fires and other natural disasters.

UUP has developed proposals for our campuses to lead the way in changing how energy is created and stored in our communities, while training the next generation of scientists to combat the climate crisis.

For years, UUP has pushed for an expansion of health care delivery systems in the poorest communities ravaged by COVID-19, especially Brooklyn. We've advocated tirelessly to expand public support for our academic medical centers, which provide necessary health care to hundreds of thousands of people and produce cutting-edge research to improve the health and security for all New Yorkers.

UUP has also called for reduced costs for medical education while expanding and diversifying the professional ranks



of healers in our state and nation.

We will need healing after the coronavirus is contained. But without addressing the greater issue of environmental justice, we set ourselves up for the next natural disaster.

For our nation to get beyond the simplistic, partisan responses to these crises, we must have an educated population that will make better choices for our future. That's why now is the time to expand funding for public higher education, not cut it.

An educated, motivated population will bring about the changes we need to address environmental injustice, especially in those communities where so much suffering is taking place.

Let's build SUNY. Let's build a just, healthy world. Let's protect the environment for our children, their children, and their children's children.

Seven generations into the future; 150 years. That is our task today and every day.

We are a part of this Earth, and we always will be.

Putting members first

UUP provides PPE and negotiates to meet member needs

BY MICHAEL LISI

On March 7, Gov. Andrew Cuomo declared a state of emergency in New York state in response to the coronavirus.

But the virus was already on UUP's radar, and UUP President Fred Kowal and the other union leaders had begun discussing the potential impact of coronavirus on SUNY, its students and patients—and, more importantly, what UUP would do to support and protect every one of its 37,000 members.

By March 20, SUNY campuses had been shuttered and thousands of UUP academics were teaching courses remotely. So were teachers at K-12 schools statewide. Bars, gyms, restaurants and all non-essential businesses were ordered closed and large gatherings were banned. Non-essential employees worked from home.

UUP's statewide office was closed March 18; since then, officers and UUP staff have been working from home.

And the new normal in New York—and across America—began.

"I am so proud of our members, who have answered the call and continue to do all they can to provide the best possible education for their students and unwavering support for SUNY," Kowal said. "It is difficult to find words to adequately describe my gratitude for our front-line providers, who put their lives on the line each day to care for COVID-19 patients."

"We reacted swiftly to protect our students and our members at our campuses and those on the front lines at SUNY's public hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse," he continued. "I believe we did the best we could do given the information we had, and we've tried to be nimble and react quickly as the virus escalated into a pandemic."

From securing, purchasing and deliver-



ABE GERECHT

DERICK AGBONTAEN HELPS TO UNLOAD 25,000 ISOLATION GOWNS AND 5,000 PAIRS OF DISPOSABLE SURGICAL GLOVES FOR DOWNSTATE MEDICAL CENTER CHAPTER MEMBERS WORKING ON THE FRONTLINE OF THE CORONAVIRUS. THE UNION HAS PURCHASED MASKS, GLOVES AND GOWNS FOR ITS AT-RISK MEMBERS AT SUNY'S THREE PUBLIC HOSPITALS IN BROOKLYN, STONY BROOK AND SYRACUSE, AND THE HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER IN BUFFALO.

ing vital surgical gowns, masks gloves and hand sanitizer for essential employees and front-line providers at SUNY's teaching hospitals, to negotiating emergency measures to address employee needs, to hosting a series of online "tele-town halls" to communicate directly with members, UUP leaders have made many difficult decisions during the crisis, always considering the impact to members first.

NEGOTIATING FOR MEMBERS

As *The Voice* went to press, the governor ordered SUNY and CUNY to continue remote learning for the rest of the 2020 spring semester. That forced the state to extend the union-negotiated telecommuting program, an historic March 13 agreement that allows UUP-represented employees to work from home for up to five days a week.

The union also secured a one-year automatic tenure clock stop (with an opt-out allowance) for academics; a six-month stop for professionals; removal of the requirement for student-teacher evaluations in spring 2020 for future reappointment, tenure or promotion review; and no-cost tele-medicine and tele-counseling appointments for Empire Plan enrollees.

The union also reached agreement that the state's use of nonbargaining-unit work at the hospitals during COVID-19 will not affect UUP's exclusivity as the bargaining agent for its members.

Through labor-management channels at the state and campus levels, UUP is working to clarify the definition of essential employee status for bargaining unit members; address health and safety issues for members in direct contact with students and patients; and secure overtime pay for members re-designated as essential employees.

The union continues to negotiate with the state for hazard pay and bonuses for front-line hospital providers, information technology professionals and adjunct instructors. UUP is addressing threats to members' intellectual property rights connected to the expansion of online education.

"Guidance for these agreements came through weeks of conference calls and webinars with statewide officers, chapter presidents and vice presidents," said UUP Vice President for Academics Jamie Dangler. "Our coordinated state-level and chapter-level efforts have been directed to address member needs with SUNY

and the Governor's Office of Employee Relations."

At SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, Downstate Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud has strongly advocated for bonuses and hazard pay for residents, fellows and all front-line and essential workers. She's exchanged letters and held meetings with campus administrators and said she won't let up until she secures bonuses and hazard pay for her members.



BLACKMAN-STROUD

Kowal has spoken with the SUNY administration and Gov. Cuomo's staff about obtaining funding for bonuses and hazard pay. SUNY Downstate is a COVID-19-only hospital; the governor made the designation March 28.

"We are committed to fighting for and winning this well-deserved compensation or our members," Blackman-Stroud said.

SAVING LIVES

The union isn't just working behind the scenes.

Throughout April and early May, UUP sent an assortment of personal protective equipment to members at SUNY's teaching hospitals and Buffalo Health Sciences Center Chapter members who are essential employees and front-line providers

working in Buffalo.

It began April 9, when UUP issued a media release that the union had purchased 100,000 isolation gowns—essential protective medical equipment used to protect medical workers from infectious liquid and solid material—for front-line providers.

It took nearly a month for them to arrive from China; travel snafus and problems delayed delivery to an Alabama trucking company, which transported 25,000 of the gowns—along with 5,000 Nitrile medical gloves—to SUNY Downstate May 5.

Deliveries to the other hospitals were being coordinated as *The Voice* went to press.

A UUP staff member drove 50 gallons of hand sanitizer to Upstate Medical University in Syracuse April 28. On May 4, UUP sent 4,000 N95 respirator masks to SUNY Downstate and Stony Brook University Hospital; the hospitals received 2,000 masks each.

The union has also brought in thousands of free lunches for essential employees at SUNY's hospitals.

"These are our colleagues, our friends, our neighbors, our health care providers, and they are union members showing up every day, saving lives and fighting this virus," said Kowal. "Our members on the front lines are still working without

enough proper PPE. Securing this necessary gear for them was a natural and necessary next step."

Kowal and UUP leaders have worked with NYSUT to deliver thousands of surgical masks to members at SUNY Downstate, Stony Brook, Upstate, and doctors and medical professionals at community hospitals in Buffalo.

Working with UUP, NYSUT sent 100,000 masks in April to hospitals in New York City and Long Island; that includes 42,000 masks that were donated to UUP members at SUNY Downstate.

A PLACE TO STAY

Kowal and UUP leaders also took quick action when some essential hospital workers began asking about the possibility of opening dormitories on campus or securing lodging close to campus. Many of these members work multiple 12-hour shifts, sometimes over a two-week span; they feared they might infect their families if they were to return home each night.

The union located hotel rooms near the Upstate and Stony Brook hospitals and began booking rooms for any UUP member with essential status that requested one. So far, the union has purchased hotel stays for 18 members, 13 of them from

see MEMBERS FIRST, page 6

COVID-19 Resources Page

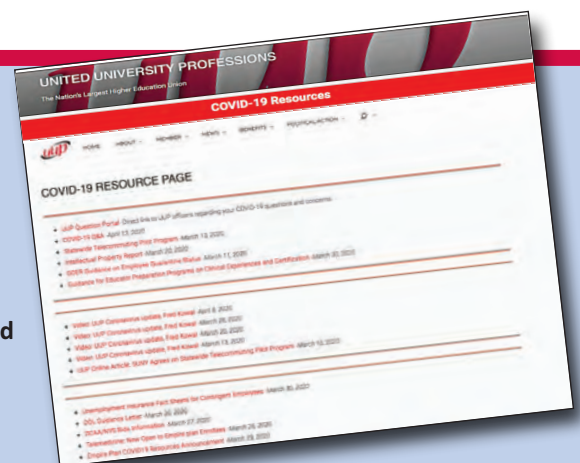
UUP has developed a COVID-19 Resources page to give members a place to get the latest information on dealing with the novel coronavirus.

Check it out at <https://uupinfo.org/resources/covid19/>.

The page includes a UUP Q&A that explains what UUP is doing to address employee issues related to the COVID-19 crisis, UUP fact sheets, and negotiated items such as the telecommuting pilot program, and other resources to assist members during the pandemic; health-related links recommended by the union's statewide Academic Medical Programs Committee; and policy and NYS-related links.

Also on the page is an electronic comment-and-question form to express concerns about COVID-19. UUP leaders will respond to questions as quickly as possible.

"Our goal is to ensure that our members have the most up-to-date and useful information as possible, in one easy-to-access place," said UUP President Fred Kowal. "And, more importantly, to let our members know that we're here to answer their questions and guide them through this very difficult time."



MEMBERS FIRST ...

continued from page 5

the Stony Brook HSC Chapter. The Downstate Chapter was able to get the administration to open dorm rooms on campus.

Upstate Medical University Chapter President Rich Veenstra said members have emailed him to thank him and UUP for the union's offer and support.

"A lot of our members are concerned with coming into contact with COVID-positive persons and bringing the virus home to their families," Veenstra said. "Sometimes, it's a family member or a spouse with some underlying condition, or they're caring for their parents, and they don't want to expose them."

Like labor unions across the state and the country, UUP has lost members to COVID-19. A tribute to those members appears in this issue of *The Voice*.

"Our hearts and our prayers go out to the families and friends of our fallen colleagues," said Kowal. "They will be missed and always remembered."

IN THE LOOP

Communicating with members, whether the news is good, bad, happy or sad, has taken on added importance during the pandemic.

UUP launched a two-week ad campaign, "We Are New York," May 5 that honors members giving their all and helping each other during the pandemic. The ad also called on viewers to tell Congress to send emergency mitigation funding to New York, the epicenter of the virus outbreak in America.

The ad aired on cable news channels in Brooklyn, New York City and Albany and Nassau counties, and on YouTube from May 5-11; it shifted to Facebook and Instagram for the following week, targeting members and New York congressional representatives (see related story, page 7).

Kowal taped the first of a series of coronavirus-themed videos for members in late March. The videos, which he recorded at home on his phone, provided UUP news and updates, as well as explanations on how actions taken by the governor or SUNY may impact members.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DOWNSTATE MEDICAL CENTER CHAPTER

DOWNSTATE MEDICAL CENTER CHAPTER MEMBERS SHOW THEIR UNION PRIDE AFTER RECEIVING 2,000 FACE MASKS PURCHASED BY UUP FOR FRONT-LINE HOSPITAL WORKERS.

He also recorded a pair of audio commentaries about the union's response to the coronavirus that aired over Albany public radio station WAMC in April and May.

UUP launched a coronavirus newsletter, *UUPconnect: Coronavirus*, in late March. The newsletter, sent weekly to more than 24,000 members and UUP supporters, includes a wide variety of union-themed, coronavirus-related news for members.

The union's social media presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, and UUP's website are being employed to inform members, showcase members making a difference, and distribute new information of interest to members.

Two pages are dedicated to COVID-19-related news on the union's website, at www.uupinfo.org. One of the pages, "COVID-19 Resources," is a list of helpful links for members.

The second, "UUP Solidarity-Hospitals," contains the latest news about SUNY's hospitals, and stories about several chapter members who have made



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE STONY BROOK HSC CHAPTER

STONY BROOK HSC CHAPTER VP BRUCE KUBE, LEFT, AND MIKE SNOW, CO-OWNER OF DARN YARN COMPANY, GIVE THE THUMBS UP TO UUP FOR PURCHASING MEDICAL MASKS.

a positive impact in their communities during the pandemic; some of these stories are featured in this issue of *The Voice*. The page also has a portal where members can share their experiences with statewide officers.

"We will serve and protect our members through this pandemic and after it," said Kowal. "Every decision we make is made with our members foremost in mind."

Ad thanks members, urges Congress to fund NY state

BY MICHAEL LISI

UUP has released a new ad that honors the members on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic and calls on Congress to send emergency funds to help New York and other states hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

The 30-second ad, titled “We Are New York,” aired from May 5-May 11 on cable news stations in New York City, Brooklyn, and Albany and Nassau counties, and on YouTube in Albany, Buffalo, Syracuse, New York City and Nassau County. It was followed by a one-week social media campaign on Facebook and Instagram. The ad can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/35nlZIt>.

“This ad is a public thank you to thousands of our members on the front lines at SUNY’s public teaching hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse, as well as at hospitals in Buffalo,” said UUP President Fred Kowal. “Other UUP members have been busy making face masks and shields, leading food giveaways and helping colleagues and friends whose jobs have evaporated due to the virus.”

FEDERAL FUNDS NEEDED

“At the same time, it’s a call-out to our congressional representatives to push for federal dollars for New York, which has been decimated financially by its necessary response to the pandemic,” he said. “New York needs an infusion of federal



UUP PLACED ADS ON CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, NY-1 TV, NY-12 TV, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram, urging members of Congress to give New York state the resources to rebuild.

Check out the ad at <https://bit.ly/35nlZIt>

Send an e-letter to lawmakers at <https://bit.ly/2SqHumG>

funds to keep essential services, such as police and fire protections and our hospitals, and all of our campuses functioning.”

The ad dovetails with UUP’s e-letter/phone campaign, which urges UUP members and supporters to tell New York’s congressional delegation to push for funding for New York in forthcoming coronavirus mitigation packages. Send a letter at <https://bit.ly/2SqHumG>

New York is the epicenter of coronavirus in America. As *The Voice* went to press, more than 21,000 people have died, and the state has more than 337,000 confirmed cases, most of them downstate. The state is projecting a \$243 billion loss over the course of the pandemic, according to an April report from the state’s budget office. On April 19, the governor raised the specter of a 50 percent funding cut for public education, including SUNY. SUNY’s budget

was cut by more than half during the Great Recession; most of those cuts were never restored.

The ad shows UUP health care workers at SUNY’s hospitals, instructors leading remote learning classes, and members leading efforts to bring communities together “to face this crisis head on.”

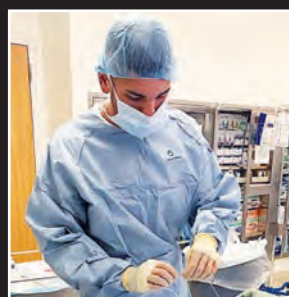
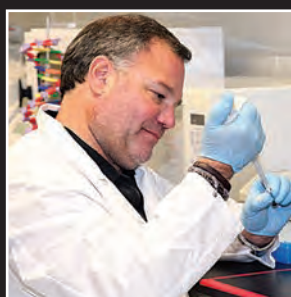
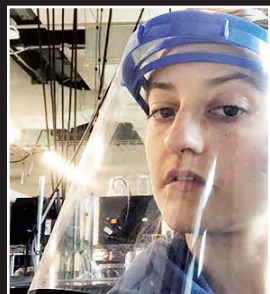
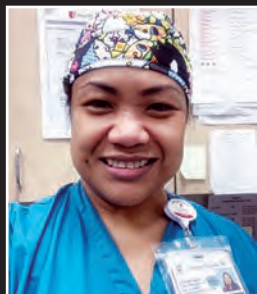
The spot pivots, stating that New York needs help to “get back on our feet.” It ends with the tagline: “Tell Congress: Send New York state the resources to build a better, stronger future—for all,” with the phone number to the U.S. Capitol switchboard.

The ad was produced by UUP Media and Publications, and GPS Impact, a Philadelphia-based company that has created ads for Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf, Pennsylvania Congress member Conor Lamb, and The Fairness Project, among others.



UUP praises members

Right from the start, UUP knew the toll a pandemic would take on the members—especially those in SUNY’s state-run hospitals and its academic medical centers in Brooklyn, Buffalo, Syracuse and Long Island. So when the *Albany Times Union* put out a COVID-19 special issue, the union was on board, buying a half-page ad to shed light on the dedicated employees and to thank them for their life-saving work. The ad ran Sunday, March 29.



At the heart of the pandemic

As New York state put out an urgent call for help during the coronavirus pandemic, UUP members responded with their hearts, their hard work and their ever-present sense of service to others—often while setting aside their own fears of a lethal virus that seemed to select its victims at random.

UUP members have comforted the dying and carried on in overwhelmed hospitals whose corridors were likened to combat zones. They have looked out for their less fortunate neighbors and colleagues, and used their creative and professional skills to supply health care workers with masks and face shields. Artists and scientists, physicians and building-services professionals all channeled their efforts into one all-consuming goal: to help students, patients, communities and first-responders.

If all the separate efforts of UUP members during this unprecedented global emergency could be stitched together in an imaginary quilt of love, skill and sacrifice, it would cover the entire state, giving comfort to everyone it touched.

The Voice documented dozens of these stories. The following selections are just a small sampling of what UUP members have done—and continue to do.

SUNY Poly Chapter members building better coronavirus test

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

As scientists around the world race to find answers that could help control the coronavirus, two UUP members at SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Albany are developing a test that will not only detect the infection, but also help improve patient care.

Nate Cady, an Empire Innovation Professor of Nanobioscience, and Scott Tenenbaum, an associate professor and head of nanobioscience at the college, have a working prototype of a coronavirus test that will provide additional information about the patient.

The test will show how far along the infection is, whether the patient has generated antibodies against the virus and, if so, approximately when the patient was infected. Those details can help pinpoint treatments more specific to individual patients.

FAST-TRACKING, WITH PARTNERS

“We have to go through FDA approval, which would include validation with hundreds of patients,” said Cady, whose title of Empire Innovation Professor



CADY

reflects his participation in a state-funded grant program designed to recruit and retain faculty in the sciences, education and security. But, he added, because work like this is unfolding dur-

ing the pandemic, the FDA has accelerated the normal 12- to 18-month approval process, and the two researchers expect their test to be approved much sooner.

The two are working on the project with Ciencia Inc., a Connecticut high-tech research firm that specializes in the production of medical and scientific instruments; and the state’s Wadsworth Center, a



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUNY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE

SUNY POLY CHAPTER MEMBER SCOTT TENENBAUM, AN ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR AND HEAD OF NANOBIOSCIENCE AT THE SUNY POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE IN ALBANY, IS WORKING WITH COLLEAGUE NATE CADY TO DEVELOP A TEST TO DETECT THE CORONAVIRUS AND IMPROVE PATIENT CARE.

“We have to go through FDA approval, which would include validation with hundreds of patients.” But the FDA is willing to accelerate its approval process during the pandemic.

— Nate Cady

SUNY Poly Empire Innovation Professor

public-health laboratory in Albany.

The test is being designed so that it can be quickly adapted to the expected mutations of the virus, Tenenbaum said.

“This virus is not only amenable to mutations, but that’s how it jumped from bats to humans,” he said.

UUP HELPS CLEAR THE WAY

Cady and Tenenbaum are working on this project in their research labs, having obtained the go-ahead from SUNY to continue during a system-wide shutdown of most activities and academic work on SUNY campuses. The University is also supporting COVID-centered projects

such as theirs with special funding.

And as colleges in the Capital Region announce furloughs, layoffs and salary reductions of employees, the two scientists credit UUP for quickly negotiating with SUNY administration and the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations on a myriad of work conditions for members—union action that they say has been extremely reassuring in such an uncertain time.

“I think with all the furloughs and layoffs as a result of this, I don’t think I’ve ever felt better about being part of an enormously strong union than right now,” Tenenbaum said.

Downstate chaplain a light to guide the way

BY MICHAEL LISI

Each day, the Rev. Sharon Codner-Walker pulls on her isolation gown and protective medical gear and makes her daily rounds at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, looking to bring peace in a place that feels more like Hell than a hospital.

Pain is in abundance here. So are anger and fear and sorrow and helplessness, emotions hidden behind the medical masks worn by thousands of grim-faced doctors, nurses and front-line providers caring for what seems like a never-ending stream of patients deathly sick with COVID-19.

But it's their eyes that give them away.

"I want to look in their eyes," said Codner-Walker, Downstate's director of pastoral care. I want to look beyond the stoic look and look directly into their busy, shifting eyes. I say, 'Can I look at you for a moment?' and they will take a breath, and now it's about vulnerability and doctors don't like that.

"What I see is weariness, I see pain and frustration," she continued, her voice soothing yet resolute. "But I tell them, 'You are handling all that is called to your hand and doing it in a phenomenal way,' and it's a boost of adrenaline for them. I yearn for whole recovery, that I'm a vessel, looking to bring comfort and support to all."

'I WILL FEAR NO EVIL'

In her 18-plus years as a Downstate chaplain, Codner-Walker said she's never seen anything like the havoc wrought by the coronavirus.

At SUNY Downstate, designated as a COVID-19-only hospital in March, wives and husbands, sons and daughters die alone, their families unable to be with them because they could be exposed to the deadly virus. Calls for emergency intubations and resuscitations echo through the hospital's hallways, all-too-familiar refrains of the pandemic.

"We go to nursing stations and depart-



PHOTO COURTESY OF STUYVESANT HEIGHTS CHRISTIAN CHURCH

THE REV. SHARON CODNER-WALKER, A DOWNSTATE CHAPTER MEMBER AND DIRECTOR OF PASTORAL CARE AT SUNY DOWNSTATE HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY, WORKS TO BRING PEACE TO COVID-19 PATIENTS. CODNER-WALKER HAS BEEN DOWNSTATE'S CHAPLAIN FOR MORE THAN 18 YEARS.

ments, and we ask, 'What do you need?' and they say, 'We just want to talk, we want to pray, we need to be heard so people can hear our hearts,'" she said.

"We're falling apart, and we're supposed to be strong and have the answers."

"We stand alongside medical house staff, where we find out which patients aren't doing well and which family members are despondent," Codner-Walker continued. "Our prayer books and collars have been traded for protective clothing, tissue boxes and portable telephones."

IN GOD'S HANDS

Doctors, nurses and front-line providers are doing everything they can to treat coronavirus patients. Sometimes patients respond. Sometimes they don't. Others teeter between life and death for days, reminding front-line providers of their mortality and the very real possibility of bringing the virus home to their families.

"One doctor I spoke with said he threw the kitchen sink at one patient, he tried everything so the patient could be well," said Codner-Walker. "We talked about it

and I reminded him that when it's all said and done, we don't control who dies and who lives.

"They want to do so much more, but the losses are so great that there's nothing they can do," said Codner-Walker. "It has nothing to do with them not trying. When (some patients) get to us, there's already severe lung damage and very little left that we can do."

And patients are terrified.

"Abandonment is a big part of what they feel," she said. "They ask, 'Have we been forsaken by God?' What we do is offer a different kind of hope, that we all have tribulations and trouble, but that God will never leave us or forsake us."

Codner-Walker said she makes a point of talking to and praying with patients who are intubated or in a coma. She once was in a coma and said the soothing voice of a hospital chaplain helped her recover.

The reverend also administers sacraments, but from a six-foot distance. Codner-Walker blesses a wafer and wine

Brockport facilities team flips dorm in less than two days

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

Sometimes, doing your job isn't enough. Sometimes, you're asked to do your job ... and then some.

For a team of dedicated UUP members at SUNY Brockport, that sometime came in early March, when the college received word that it would be one of two SUNY campuses to host students forced by the growing pandemic—and under order of the governor—to return to New York from their studies abroad.

Thirty-four students, who would be under a 14-day precautionary quarantine, were to be housed in the college's Gordon Hall, which hadn't been used as a residence hall for nearly a year. The building was in complete disarray. Some things were broken, other things were missing or had been taken to be used in other dormitories. Decades-long state cutbacks and flat SUNY budgets meant the college had to save money where it could. Administrators and staff believed there would be plenty of time to make the fixes.



PHOTO COURTESY OF BRAD MENEAR

BROCKPORT CHAPTER MEMBER BRAD MENEAR WAS PART OF A TEAM THAT PUT GORDON HALL BACK TOGETHER IN TIME TO HOUSE 34 STUDENTS RETURNING FROM STUDIES ABROAD. THE STUDENTS WENT HOME AFTER A 14-DAY PRECAUTIONARY QUARANTINE.

FLIP THIS DORM

That all changed in an instant. Maintenance and other facilities crews had about two days to turn Gordon Hall's 48 suites and 96 bedrooms into livable quarters. It took 10 maintenance service staffers—working two shifts alongside several physical-plant service staffers—to pull it off.

But they did. In a day and a half.

"We have four buildings on campus that were basically built around the same time," said UUP member Brad Menear, assistant director of maintenance services. "They all use the same parts, and (many) are obsolete."

It made sense that they would "re-purpose" many of the parts to keep the other residence halls up and running, Menear said.

The plan was to update Gordon Hall with new carpets and baseboards and renovate some of the bathrooms. Until that time, the staff had no qualms about removing sinks or filching shower parts.

"We had to find the parts to put showers back in use," Menear said. "The toilets hadn't been flushed in almost a year, so gaskets dry up and leak. Same with the showers, so they all had to be repaired."

Window blinds, lights, electrical outlets, heating systems and an emergency generator all had to be checked and returned to working order. Furniture that had been removed and stacked in the lounge had to be brought back into the rooms and reassembled.

Said Menear: Professionals "working together, can do anything."

sealed in packets and hands them to a nurse, who brings them to the patient. It's the best that she can do, and patients appreciate the effort.

"The gratitude the patients have, there's no words to describe it," she said

A TIME TO HEAL

But after days and days of giving, the reverend's indomitable spirit does weaken. Sometimes, those who heal need healing.

She and her staff, which includes a rabbi, an imam, a Catholic priest and a non-denominational representative, gather to debrief at the end of their 12-

hour days. They talk about the suffering they've seen and allow themselves to open up.

"I can cry, I can say that I too feel anxious," Codner-Walker said. "There is such profound sadness and brokenness. You're not the same person afterward. But with encouragement and prayer, we take care of ourselves. We ground ourselves, we allow ourselves to be vulnerable."

Yet, keeping the faith hasn't been easy. The reverend said she experienced a "crisis of faith" in the early days of the pandemic. And that's okay, she said.

"It's okay to have a crisis of grief and ask why this is happening," she said.

"It's okay to be numb and to be angry at God right now. Does it make me a bad person? Of course not. We ask, "Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief."

If there's a bright side to all of this, the reverend said it's the camaraderie shared by front-line providers during the pandemic. People are kind, they listen to each other. And they care about their patients, their co-workers, their families and themselves.

"We're seeing how resilient we are," she said. "We are all in this together. The oneness is what I see. We don't see color or difference. I hear people say, 'Let go of what kept us apart.'"

Downstate: Donors wanted in new weapon against COVID-19

BY DARRYL McGRATH

A few weeks ago, the scene inside the emergency department at Downstate Medical Center’s University Hospital was something that Dr. Michael Augenbraun could never have imagined in his long career as an infectious disease specialist.

Desperately ill people, sickened by the coronavirus, were everywhere. Some of them were already near death. They were arriving in such numbers that the staff could not register them, evaluate them and treat them fast enough. It was a modern-day version of a Medieval plague, with all its horror and hopelessness, dropped into one of the poorest parts of the nation’s largest city.

“Up until the third weekend of March, it was like a charnel house here,” said Augenbraun, director of the hospital’s infectious disease division, and a UUP member. “People were rolling in, and there was not a lot we could do for them.”

Now, there may be some hope for the sickest COVID-19 patients. At Downstate, as well as at the two other SUNY teaching hospitals—Stony Brook University Hospital on Long Island, and Upstate Medical Center Hospital in Syracuse—doctors are participating in a national effort to try a century-old treatment on COVID-19 patients.

In the midst of a pandemic caused by a disease which has no vaccine, no cure and few certainties—and which had, by mid-May, killed nearly 80,000 in the United States—the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has authorized hospitals around the country to begin convalescent plasma therapy.

DOCTORS TURN TO STAFF

Convalescent plasma therapy involves giving a transfusion of blood plasma from people who have recovered from COVID-19, and therefore carry antibod-

ies to the coronavirus in their bloodstream, to patients still sickened by the disease. It has been used to treat a range of serious diseases, including diphtheria, an often-fatal bacterial infection that especially targeted children before a vaccine was developed a century ago.

At Downstate, Allen Norin, an immunologist and UUP member who leads the convalescent plasma workgroup for COVID-19, enlisted the help of UUP Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud to get the word out to the staff—many of whom had



NORIN



contracted and recovered from COVID-19—that the hospital needed staff members to consider being plasma donors. They would be a ready source of plasma, reasoned Norin, and would be likely donors because of their vivid understanding of the damage wreaked by the coronavirus.

That’s just one more way that Downstate members are coming through in this crisis, Augenbraun said.

“Every day, I’m encouraged to go in, because of the people I’m dealing with,” he said of the medical and support staff in the emergency department and intensive care units. “We really appreciate the union getting the word out; we really think our strength is in our staff.”

AN URGENT RESPONSE

There is no certainty that convalescent plasma therapy will work; there is only a handful of case reports about patients in China and Korea who showed improvement after receiving plasma treatment. Published reports about the use of the therapy at the Mayo Clinic, which is the national coordinator for the plasma program, indicated early and limited anecdotal accounts of patients improving after receiving plasma therapy.

The urgency of the situation has fast-forwarded the medical response, and so this effort is not being handled through the usual, and slower, approach of a clinical trial, said Norin, who in normal times oversees the kidney transplant laboratories at Downstate and Stony Brook University Hospital.

“In my view, it’s not a trial unless there’s a control group,” Norin said. “This is a treatment approved by the FDA.”

Norin was especially enthusiastic about the convalescent plasma therapy because he knows from personal experience that it can work. Eight years ago, his infant grandson contracted botulism, a potentially fatal infection caused by a bacterium found in soil, when the baby put his hand

into some dirt and then into his mouth. The botulism bacterium leads to the buildup of a neurotoxin in the body, but Norin’s grandson responded to a transfusion of plasma donated by someone who had survived the infection. Today, he’s a healthy, active 8-year-old.

MEMBERS STRONG, STALWART

An effective treatment is needed now, but also for the strong possibility that there will be another coronavirus outbreak in the country before a vaccine is developed. Estimates on the production of a vaccine range from at least a year, to several years.

“We have to figure all of this out, because this is telling us, ‘There is more

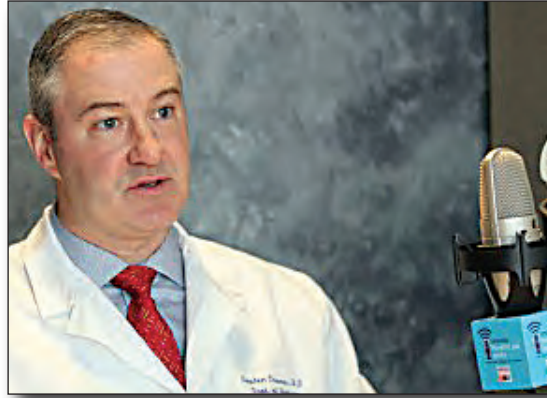
Q and A: Dr. Stephen Thomas, Upstate Medical University

BY DARRYL McGRATH

Infectious-disease experts live by the medical version of the mantra, “Prepare for the worst; hope for the best.” While they spend their careers studying and helping plan for outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics of serious and potentially fatal diseases—and they know they likely will be called upon to help quell such an event at least once in their career—they also hope they never see the worst-case scenario.

Now, infectious-disease specialists are seeing something they all knew was possible, but never thought would happen at this scale in the United States: a rapidly spreading and highly contagious global viral illness, with a mortality rate worse than originally thought.

Upstate Medical University member Stephen Thomas is a professor of medicine and chief of the infectious diseases division. A nationally recognized expert in his field, he has been interviewed by numerous news outlets on the coronavirus pandemic.



UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY CHAPTER MEMBER STEPHEN THOMAS HAS BEEN THE MEDIA’S GO-TO PHYSICIAN FOR FACTS AND UPDATES ON THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

A graduate of Albany Medical College, Thomas did his residency at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and served in a number of medical advisory positions for the Army, including on the staff of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command during the 2014 outbreak of Ebola. In that position, his responsibilities included helping with Ebola preparedness in the United States.

A member since 2018, Thomas recently responded to questions from *The Voice*.

What is the single thing your hospital most needs right now?

Reliable supply chain of PPE [personal protective equipment.]

How would it improve or change the situation at the hospital right now if you could get FDA approval to do on-site testing?

Being able to make the diagnosis or rule out the COVID diagnosis allows us to reduce risk to staff, save PPE, properly disposition the patient in the hospital, i.e., which floor do they go to? It also has considerable public health ramifications in terms of the timely conduct of isolation and contact tracing.

In your career as an infectious disease expert, did you—or your colleagues generally in the field—think that this kind of pandemic could someday spread to the United States?

Did we think the country was vulnerable? Yes. At this scale? Not really. The worst case was always envisioned as a respiratory pathogen which spread efficiently from person to person and had a significant mortality rate; this is our situation.

to come,” Norin said.

About 250 people had died of COVID-19 at Downstate by early May, Augenbraun said. Although the disease appears to have peaked in New York City, there are still many very sick people in the hospital.

“It’s been a struggle for weeks,” he said. “We’re getting a little bit of respite now, but the whole thing is unpredictable.”

So is the convalescent plasma therapy, but by early May, the hospital had provided convalescent plasma, as the treatment is known, to eight patients. Augenbraun said he could not comment on how the treatment is



DOWNSTATE.EDU

UUP MEMBER MICHAEL AUGENBRAUN, WHO HEADS SUNY DOWNSTATE’S INFECTIOUS DISEASES DIVISION, SAID THE SCENE IN THE EMERGENCY ROOM IN MARCH WAS UNIMAGINABLE.

working, as the use of the plasma “... is not a clinical trial and I have no comparator group.” In a clinical trial, the comparator group is a drug or treatment that is

already on the market.

Augenbraun, who first spoke to *The Voice* in mid-April at the end of a month-long stretch with the pandemic that he described as exhausting and anguishing for all of the staff, sounded a note of hope in an email in early May. He wrote that the week of May 3 had included “the first day in a long time where we had no deaths. So things are better to some degree.”

“We really appreciate the union getting the word out,” he said. The union members “have been a saving grace through all of this. They really are heroes.”

Upstate Chapter UUPer headed up Javits coronavirus hospital

BY MICHAEL LISI

UP Upstate Medical University Chapter member Chris Tanski unexpectedly found himself calling the shots at the sprawling temporary coronavirus hospital at the Javits Convention Center.

Tanski, an emergency room doctor at Upstate Medical University, was the chief medical officer at the 1,000-bed makeshift hospital in New York City, which closed May 1. The hospital treated slightly more than 1,000 patients, and it is being left in place for the time being, in case it is needed again. Tanski had been there since April 9, according to the Upstate website.

The doctor didn't treat any of the nearly 350 patients at the facility, all of them COVID-19 patients. Instead, he handled the hospital's operations, overseeing hundreds of doctors and nurses—many of whom are members of the military.

"I'm here 7, 7:30 in the morning until 8 or 9 at night, and every day," Tanski told Rochester's WHEC-TV April 13. "There's no time off with that. I just remind myself, these patients here they're having the worst day of their lives.

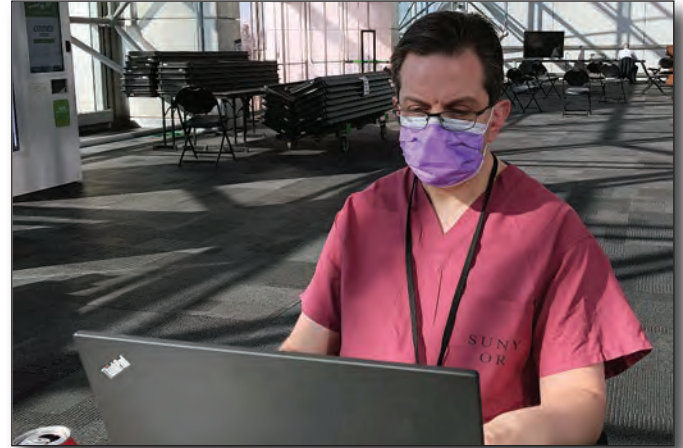
They have this unknown virus, they'd rather be home, and we're trying to do whatever we can to take care of them and get them home."

Tanski, 41, who was tapped for the Javits job by the New York State Department of Health, was also involved in managing health care providers on the U.S. Navy hospital ship U.S.N.S. Comfort, a COVID-19 field hospital docked at Manhattan's Pier 90. The Comfort left New York City April 30.

While he didn't tend to patients, he was in contact with them, and that was a concern.

"It's 100 percent COVID patients," Tanski told the Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle* April 15. "It's incredibly high-risk."

Tanski hadn't seen his wife, Holly, and his two daughters—4-year-old Audrey and 6-month-old Lucy—since he left.



UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY CHAPTER MEMBER AND EMERGENCY ROOM DOCTOR CHRIS TANSKI SERVED AS THE CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AT THE 1,000-BED MAKESHIFT CORONAVIRUS HOSPITAL AT THE JAVITS CONVENTION CENTER IN NEW YORK CITY.

On April 15, the governor's office asked Tanski to continue as medical director until the hospital closed.

Tanski agreed—fully and willingly understanding that he was committing to an open-ended assignment.

"I don't even know if I'm going to still be here two months from now," Tanski told Syracuse.com April 16.

Upstate nurses help downstate

Ten Upstate Medical University Chapter members were part of a second group of Upstate employees in Stony Brook to help their colleagues care for COVID-19 patients.

The 22 Upstate Medical University health care workers left Syracuse April 14 and arrived at Stony Brook University Hospital later that day. Twenty-two nurses formed the first group of Upstate medical staff to go to Stony Brook; they left for Long Island April 9.



VEENSTRA

Two of the UUP members who volunteered for the assignment are pharmacist Katie Triesel and respiratory therapist Amber Hart. The other UUP members include a second a respiratory therapist, two other pharmacists, and five pharmacy technicians, said Upstate Chapter President Rich Veenstra.

Veenstra said he didn't have the names of the other



Stony Brook HSC Chapter VP Bruce Kube shot video of grateful hospital workers welcoming their Upstate Chapter colleagues. View the video at <https://bit.ly/2zvyqGa>.

UUP members who volunteered to go to Stony Brook. A CNYcentral.com story identified Triesel and Hart; Veenstra said Upstate's respiratory therapists and pharmacists are represented by UUP.

"It takes a lot of courage to do what they're doing," said Veenstra. "They're stepping up."

Read the CNYcentral.com story at <https://bit.ly/2KCj8C9>.

Working for patients through grief, fear, uncertainty

BY DARRYL McGRATH

As Maria Theresa Estrella prepared to return to her patients at Stony Brook University Hospital in mid-April after a precious few days' break, she knew that she would do so with a once-unimaginably personal grasp of what they—and their families—have endured.

Shortly before she headed home April 11 for a weekend with her two children, she learned that a friend and fellow nurse had just died of COVID-19 after contracting the coronavirus while caring for COVID patients at Long Island Community Hospital. He left a wife and two children.

The two friends were close; the pair were registered nurses in their native Philippines and came to the U.S. a year apart in the early 2000s. Two of their four children were schoolmates, and their families were part of a small community of Philippine immigrants on Long Island whose members knew each other and socialized together.

Estrella never expected to find herself denied the same mourning rituals as so many of her patients' families, none of whom have been able to bid farewell to their dying loved ones in person at the hospital, and many of whom are unable to grieve together.

"It's so sad because we cannot be there, all together," she said in a telephone interview from her Long Island home, as her voice broke. "We don't have any answers. It's just the same as in the hospital, because once the patient dies, the family can't see them. I feel like there's no closure."

HEALTH CARE WORKERS FACE GREAT RISK

The exact toll of the coronavirus on health care workers in the U.S. is not known, and some states—including New York—are not tracking infected health care workers as a separate category, according to BuzzFeed News. But nationally, nearly 9,200 health care workers were reported to have been



PHOTO COURTESY OF MARIA THERESA ESTRELLA

MARIA THERESA ESTRELLA, A UUP MEMBER OF NEARLY A YEAR, IS A REGISTERED NURSE AND CASE MANAGER AT SUNY STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, WHERE SHE IS ON THE FRONTLINE OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.

infected as of April 15, with 27 deaths.

As of May 11, New York had more than 21,000 deaths from COVID-19—a figure that may not reflect many deaths at home of patients who likely had the illness but were never hospitalized or tested. The four Long Island counties account for nearly 13,000 of those deaths.

And so, Estrella now knows, grief is a precious commodity in a hospital during a pandemic.

Fear, however, is available in abundance, as Estrella has seen among her patients—fear that they will get sicker and be moved to intensive care.

"It's high-intensity right now in the hospital," Estrella said. "Of course, everybody is frightened. [Patients] don't have any family members who can visit them. I'm scared for myself, and I'm scared for my family. But this is what we signed up for."

REDEPLOYMENT AND RAPID ADJUSTMENTS

Estrella, a UUP member of nearly a year, joined Stony Brook Hospital as a

case manager in May 2019. Normally, she would be working in the hospital's orthopedic unit, coordinating a patient's care and overseeing discharge plans.

But because she is also a registered nurse, she is now one of the hundreds of health care workers in New York who has been redeployed during the coronavirus pandemic. The orthopedic unit is one of several areas of Stony Brook University Hospital that has been converted to a COVID-19 care unit, and Estrella has been reassigned to bedside nursing.

She has the use of a hotel room provided by UUP so that she does not have to go home at night in between shifts, to lessen the possibility of carrying the virus to her two sons, ages 6 and 20. She showers and changes clothes when she leaves her last shift before a break from the hospital. Her older son is a nursing student who moved home to help care for his younger brother during his mother's redeployment.

UUP PROTECTING MEMBERS

Stony Brook HSC Chapter President Carolyn Kube has been steadily available to members at the hospital and has been responding to their many questions about their suddenly upended jobs, Estrella said. At the statewide level, UUP officers have been working to ascertain, in negotiations with SUNY and the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, that the work conditions of members throughout SUNY are protected during this unprecedented situation.

"She's always available," Estrella said of Kube. "We've been reaching out to her from the day we heard we were being redeployed."

And Estrella knows that she will continue to handle her fears, her grief and her private distress at seeing people dying without their loved ones, for as long as the coronavirus pandemic continues to bring patients into the hospital.

"This is what we do," she said. "They need us. Everybody needs to help each other."

Downstate members heroes in CNN special

BY MICHAEL LISI

Julie Eason, the respiratory therapy department director at SUNY's University Hospital of Brooklyn, isn't jolted by the CODE 99 calls that periodically blare over the hospital public address system, alerting doctors to another COVID-19 patient in need of a respirator.

As jolted as she used to be, anyway. "They're so sick you lose them in a heartbeat, they're that sick," Eason, a Downstate Chapter member, told CNN. "They're talking to you and then a few minutes later you're putting a tube down their throat and you're hoping that you can set the ventilator



CNN PHOTOS

DOWNSTATE CHAPTER MEMBERS DR. LORENZO PALADINO, ABOVE RIGHT, AND JULIE EASON, LEFT, DIRECTOR OF THE RESPIRATORY THERAPY DEPARTMENT AT SUNY'S UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL OF BROOKLYN, WERE AMONG THOSE FEATURED ON CNN'S HOUR-LONG SPECIAL, WHICH AIRED NATIONWIDE APRIL 5.

View a five-minute clip from the CNN special at <https://cnn.it/2xxszQ4>

Read the transcript at <https://cnn.it/2yXUyc3>



in such a way that it actually helps them." "We have some young people in there in their 20s, not used to seeing this and some had a thousand-mile stare, just crying," Dr. Lorenzo Paladino, a Downstate UUP member, said of patients waiting for coronavirus treatment in Downstate's emergency room. "This is 'Grey's Anatomy' stuff for them, not real life. It shouldn't happen in front of them."

DOWNSTATE IN THE FORE

Eason and Paladino are two of many Downstate Chapter members on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic who were spotlighted in a CNN special,

"Inside the ER: The Incredible Fight Against Coronavirus." The hour-long special aired nationwide April 5.

Other Downstate UUP members interviewed in the special were Dr. Cynthia Benson, Dr. Mafuzur Rahman, Dr. Robert Gore, Dr. Robert Foronjy, and Michael McGillicuddy, Downstate's Gross Anatomy Lab supervisor and morgue supervisor.

"Words don't describe how proud we are of our members on the front lines of the coronavirus, at Downstate, our public teaching hospitals at Stony Brook and Syracuse, and our health sciences center in Buffalo," said UUP President Fred

Kowal. "The CNN special showed the dedication and passion of our Downstate members, working amid chaos and shortages of protective gear each day to care for COVID-19 patients."

The CNN special provided a stark, unfiltered look at what doctors, nurses and health care workers at University Hospital—part of SUNY Downstate Health Sciences Center—are dealing with as a COVID-19-only hospital. The governor designated the public medical center as a COVID-19-only hospital in March, one of three in the state.

"This is what we trained to do; this is what we signed up for," said Benson. "Just not in this volume."

The power of words

UUPer uses technology, creativity to interpret for patients at Upstate Medical University

BY DARRYL McGRATH

A pandemic cannot be allowed to come between a patient and the healing power of words, spoken in that patient's own language.

With this goal in mind, UUP member Sue Freeman, the manager of interpreting services at Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, had to think of the best way to meet patients' needs, while keeping patients and staff safe from the coronavirus. She knew that no matter how serious the pandemic was, patients would still need to speak with a caregiver, a discharge coordinator or a chaplain, and that patients' families would still need to meet with medical staff and social workers.

Whenever possible, Freeman has turned to technology as the safest approach—but she's also relied on flexibility, creativity, protective gear and the use of interpreters in the room with the patient, when no other approach could meet the patient's needs. It's been a balancing act, but one she says has been made easier by her supportive staff.

"I've got a great team. We work very, very well together," Freeman said. Two UUP delegates—Yolanda Beckon and Larhonda Caver—are part of that team, as schedulers for interpreting services.

MEETING MANY LANGUAGE NEEDS

Dozens of languages are spoken in the central upstate region—too many for the hospital to have a staff interpreter for each one. Spanish is the most common language other than English, followed by American Sign Language, Arabic, Somali, Nepali and Karen (pronounced Kah-ren), which is spoken by an ethnic group in Myanmar.

So Upstate has a staff interpreter for Spanish, and two American Sign Lan-

guage (ASL) interpreters, one of whom is Freeman. But for other languages, Upstate uses what's known as Video Remote Interpreters—fluent speakers who work for an agency and are scheduled to interpret via an iPad. Although this is not new technology, it's especially useful now, when the hospital is trying to limit how many people enter its buildings.

"We have the iPad that has the application; in 30 to 60 seconds, there's an interpreter in Bengali," Freeman said. "That's our first option for our interpreter services right now."

Sometimes, the hospital has had no

some creative solutions using other apps. A Spanish-speaking patient who had COVID-19 wanted to talk to a chaplain, but the chaplain, who did not speak Spanish, was not permitted to enter her room. The hospital gave one iPad to the patient, and another to the chaplain. With the chaplain and a Spanish interpreter standing outside the glass wall to the patient's room, the chaplain and patient were able to converse using FaceTime.

ASL is an especially difficult language to conduct on an iPad. A conversation in sign language flows most easily when both people can see nuances of facial expression and a three-dimensional view of each other's hands, but neither expressions nor motion come across quite the same on a flat screen. However, the Video Remote Interpreter system on an iPad was acceptable to a deaf patient in the hospital's emergency department who was initially thought to have COVID-19; had it not been, the hospital would have used an on-site interpreter with the necessary precautions, Freeman said.

Freeman is certified as a professional sign language interpreter, and she went back to college to earn her degree in American Sign Language at the Rochester Institute of Technology. She was originally an accountant, but she became interested in ASL when she and her husband befriended a couple in which the wife is

deaf, and Freeman wanted to be able to speak to that new friend in the woman's language.

"She encouraged me. She said, 'You've got what it takes to be an interpreter,'" Freeman recalled.

To that, Freeman would add, her Upstate Medical University department has got what it takes to help people speak, and be spoken to, with dignity and compassion, even during a pandemic.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUE FREEMAN

SUE FREEMAN, MANAGER OF INTERPRETER SERVICES AT UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, SIGNS, "I LOVE YOU" AS A MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM HER UPSTATE COLLEAGUES TO UUP MEMBERS THROUGHOUT NEW YORK.

choice but to have the interpreter present, garbed in personal protective equipment. That's necessary during medical procedures such as an MRI, where the patient needs to hear instructions but cannot look at an iPad. And sometimes, a meeting between staff and family members is best handled with the interpreter in the room.

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS

But the iPad approach has worked well, Freeman said, and has even lent itself to

New Paltz pair leads efforts to print safety shields

BY MICHAEL LISI

Kat Wilson and Aaron Nelson had no idea whether they could use the 3D printers in SUNY New Paltz’s Hudson Valley Additive Manufacturing Center (HVAMC) to make face shields for doctors, nurses and medical professionals caring for COVID-19 patients.

But after they began getting calls from local hospitals and health care centers asking for help, the New Paltz Chapter members figured they’d give it the old college try.

“We started getting calls asking if we could make face shields,” said Wilson, the center’s assistant director. “We were like ‘We don’t know, but we’ll give it a shot.’ So, we were kind of shocked that it worked as well as it did.”

“When we got this call, we knew this was in our wheelhouse,” said Nelson, director of the MakerBot Innovation Center, co-director of the Digital Design and Fabrication Program, and an assistant professor of art. “Once we knew we could make a difference, we were on board.”

Working with center Director Daniel Freedman and intern Rachel Eisgruber, the UUP members are using the HVAMC to print about 200 face shields each day using a bank of 20 printers—called a “print farm”—to kick out the masks. The pair is sharing the design template for the masks online for others to use.

They’ve printed and shipped more than 6,300 face shields since they began printing in late March. The masks are being used at health care and elder care facilities in Orange County and New Paltz, as well as area hospitals and a drive-through testing site in Kingston.

“Last week, we had 2,000 (shields) go out the door and the feedback we’ve gotten is that people are very happy with them,” Nelson said. “We’re happy to do it. We’re turning and burning around the clock.”

Face shields are important personal protection devices; they protect the eyes, nose, mouth and face from splashes, sprays, and spatter of body fluids. A 2014



NEW PALTZ UUP MEMBERS KAT WILSON, LEFT, AND AARON NELSON DIDN’T HESITATE WHEN THEY GOT THE CALL TO PRINT 3D FACE SHIELDS FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS AND OTHER MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN DIRE NEED OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT—TO THE TUNE OF 2,000 A DAY.

Centers for Disease Control study showed that face shields reduced a health worker’s exposure to an influenza-laden cough by 96 percent and the surface contamination of a respirator by 97 percent.

SHIELD DETAILS

Transparencies—the kind used for laser printers, copiers and overhead projectors—are used to create the shields. 3D printers are used to make the shield headpieces; rubber bands are used to link smaller plastic pieces and keep the mask secure.

Wilson said she and Nelson are working on getting a mold of a face shield that will allow them to increase production to as

many as 2,000 shields per day.

“We’re glad that we’re able to make an impact,” said Wilson. “What we strive to do is connect with the community, and we’re engaging with them on this project.”

Being a UUP member has also played a role in their willingness to give back. Knowing that they’re protected and that their jobs are secure has given them piece of mind and allowed them to focus on helping their community.

“At a time when a lot of my friends are at a place of instability, it’s nice to know that I don’t have to worry about that because I’m part of a group that will protect me,” said Nelson, a UUP member since 2016. “I can spend my time here, working.”

'The Masked Stitcher' has you covered

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

Potsdam Chapter member Alexis Foster—a.k.a., The Masked Stitcher—is on a mission.

She is sewing face masks for first responders, people with special needs, vet office workers, and high-risk individuals. She is also creating videos and instructions for students who want to make masks for themselves and other community members.

“As a UUP member involved in our chapter, I have learned that we truly are a family,” said Foster, a costume shop manager in the college’s Theater and Dance department. “Helping our community, especially during a crisis, is a critical mission.”

As soon as she heard about the pandemic, Foster reached out to chapter assistant Jennifer Hernandez, who has a special-needs son. Knowing that he would have to venture out to doctor and hospital appointments, Foster said she wanted to do what she could to ensure the two were safe.

“I scoured the internet and found a mask pattern that seemed to have a good shape,” she said. She altered the pattern and gave the homemade masks to Hernandez “for a test run.”

And run with it she did.

Hernandez suggested Foster sew protective masks for the local EMT and first responders, many of whom were being forced to reuse masks, as available supplies ran dangerously low. After another internet search and a redesigned prototype, Foster perfected a tight-fitting mask for first responders to wear over their N95 face masks.

“Since EMT and first responders might not be on the top of the list to receive personal protective equipment, I started putting feelers into the community to see who needed help,” Foster said. “I am really concentrating on groups and individuals who might not be on the normal radar for help.”

Foster continues to work on prototypes from her basement shop—which she set up with \$1,000 from her personal savings—and to send shipments of masks to a growing list of groups in need. She has enlisted the help of students, whom she provides with instructional videos and other mask-

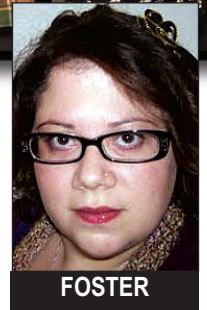


PHOTOS COURTESY OF ALEXIS FOSTER

making resources to protect themselves and their families, and to help community members if they wish to do so.

“We are strongest together and being able to show that support through actionable means helps to boost the morale of those performing amazing essential work,” she said.

Anyone with questions about the mask-making process, or who wish to help out by sewing or donating, can email Foster at TheMaskedStitcher@gmail.com.



FOSTER



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE DOWNSTATE CHAPTER

Help UUPers on the front lines

Our doctors and health care workers at SUNY’s public hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse are in desperate need of personal protective equipment and other crucial medical supplies.

Our members are in need of: personal protective equipment; N95, N99 and N100 masks; powered air-purifying respirators; half-mask or full-face elastomeric respirators; surgical masks and gowns; nitrile gloves; goggles and face shields; hand sanitizer; and any medical respiratory equipment.

To donate to Downstate, please email donation submissions to the Downstate Chapter office at brooklyn@uupmail.org or Downstate Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud at rblackma@uupmail.org.

To donate to Upstate, email Coviddonations@upstate.edu.

To donate to Stony Brook, email COVID19Donations@stonybrook.edu.

Alfred Chapter member helps nursing students help each other

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

Linda Panter's nursing students had just started their final class in their baccalaureate nursing degree program when the coronavirus pandemic began in the United States.

The students have already earned their associate degrees in nursing, and are continuing with their education to also obtain their bachelor of science degrees in nursing. All are now working as registered professional nurses as they complete their coursework.

But while the possibility of a global pandemic of a previously unknown disease was understood in the medical profession, few practitioners ever expected it to happen with such speed and devastation.

A WAY TO CONNECT

Panter, a longtime UUP member, professor emeritus of nursing at SUNY Alfred and chapter vice president for academics, wanted to help her students support each other. So, she set up a discussion board through her students' final course, which is an overview of professional practices in nursing, and invited them to exchange ideas, experiences and concerns.

The results have been both gratifying and illuminating. One student, for example, has volunteered to work with COVID-19 patients, out of a feeling that she would get excellent training doing so.

"They're helping each other survive in the professional setting, but helping each other as classmates," Panter said. "I'm pretty impressed with their insight."

INSIGHTS INTO A PANDEMIC

One student said the support with classmates has been extremely helpful. His written comments of the benefits he's gained from the discussion board echo those he's shared with his classmates.

"Nurses are being uprooted and forced to float to other units due to the high acuity of patients and dire short staffing situations that many large and small hospitals are facing," he wrote. "However, through all of the doom and gloom, many of us nurses have formed bonds with our staff tighter and closer than ever before ... We see the death and sickness that the general public typically does not see or is not aware of. Having a discussion board where we can talk and vent our feelings has helped all of us express our emotions in a safe area where we all understand what each of us are going through. We talk to each other and encourage each other that there IS light at the end of this tunnel and there will be an end to this someday."

PRACTICAL TIPS

Panter, who began practicing as a nurse at age 19, has weighed in on the discussion board with occasional advice and reassurance.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LINDA PANTER

ALFRED CHAPTER MEMBER LINDA PANTER OPENED UP A DISCUSSION BOARD SO SHE AND HER STUDENTS COULD BE THERE FOR ONE ANOTHER DURING THE PANDEMIC.

For example, she was able to quell students' fears about reusing the N95 mask, which is considered better protection than a surgical mask, but which is in extremely short supply in most hospitals. Many health care workers are sterilizing and reusing their precious N95 masks. Panter told her students that she has sterilized and reused her N95 mask, and that they should be fine doing so.

"I have to give them a lot of credit," she said. "They're taking on a heavy case-load, they're dealing with COVID. They are doing an amazing job, and they are managing it very well."



Keep a diary of your front-line stories

UUP is encouraging members to keep a diary of their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic, which can be done by filling out a form on the UUP website at <https://uupinfo.org/resources/covid19/solidarity.php>.

Documenting unsafe conditions and inadequate personal protective equipment can help protect UUP members and patients. UUP will not use members' names or contact information without their express permission. UUP will email a copy of the form back to the member who submitted it. Members are urged to save it for their records.

Also on this webpage: A call for members to submit articles about the work being done by UUP members on campus, in SUNY's state-operated hospitals or in their communities.

Aiding front-line workers—one hotel room at a time

BY MICHAEL LISI

For surgical technologist Nicholas Rico, being able to stay in a hotel room provided by UUP meant he could sleep well at night.

Rico, a Stony Brook HSC Chapter member who works at Stony Brook University Hospital, stayed at the Hilton Garden Inn in Stony Brook for a week after hearing about a UUP initiative to provide rooms to front-line caregivers dealing with COVID-19 patients.

This way, he was able to keep a safe distance from his family, alleviating the all-too-real possibility of exposing them to the coronavirus.

“I am in need of a room in order to isolate myself from my healthy family,” Rico said in an April 12 email to UUP Director of Meetings and Travel Mary Bergquist. “Thank you for your assistance. This means a lot to me.”

STATEWIDE UUP STEPS UP

UUP began providing housing in early April to members caring for COVID-19 patients at SUNY academic medical centers in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse, as well as Buffalo-area medical professionals who are members. The union is covering the full cost for rooms, including tax, for up to seven nights, although longer stays would be accommodated in certain situations.

“Our members at SUNY’s hospitals are working 12-hour days and they’re putting their lives on the line as they tend to those infected with the virus,” said UUP President Fred Kowal. “Providing these heroes with clean, comfortable rooms close to the hospitals they work in is the least we can do. We’re proud to offer this support.”

Kevin Niles, chief physician assistant in



PHOTO COURTESY OF NICHOLAS RICO

ABOVE, STONY BROOK HSC CHAPTER MEMBER NICHOLAS RICO, LEFT, IS ON THE JOB AS A FRONT-LINE HOSPITAL WORKER.



KUBE

Stony Brook University Medical Center’s department of cardiothoracic surgery, was designated a front-line provider April 12, which means he’ll be working long shifts with COVID-19 patients.

“I have four children at home and my wife is a schoolteacher at home,” Niles wrote in an April 10 email to Bergquist. “My commute is about 45 minutes and the shifts are very long. Could I please get a hotel reservation, so I don’t risk bringing [the virus] home to my family?”

So far, more than a dozen Stony Brook HSC Chapter members have requested and received rooms; UUP also secured a block of rooms at the Crowne Plaza Syracuse—just minutes from Upstate Medical University. About a half dozen members have taken advantage of the stay.

“These are people working 12-hour shifts who don’t want to go home and inadvertently transfer the virus to their families,”

said Stony Brook HSC Chapter President Carolyn Kube. “That’s their main concern.”

That was a concern for Cecil Philip, a doctor at Stony Brook Medicine and a Stony Brook HSC Chapter member who requested and received a seven-day hotel stay.

“I appreciate you and UUP’s help to all the physicians on the front line,” he said. “This really puts my mind to ease.”

DOWNSTATE DORMS

In Brooklyn, Downstate Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud worked with administrators to open dorm rooms for front-line providers at SUNY Downstate. In March, the governor designated SUNY Downstate as a

COVID-19-only hospital.

Upstate Medical University Chapter President Rich Veenstra said members have emailed him to thank him and UUP for the union’s offer and support.

“A lot of our members are concerned with coming into contact with COVID-positive persons and bringing the virus home to their families,” said Veenstra. “Sometimes, it’s a family member or a spouse with some underlying condition, or they’re caring for their parents, and they don’t want to expose them.”

Vishal Tolia, a Stony Brook HSC Chapter member and a pulmonary/ICU physician at Stony Brook University Hospital, summed up his gratitude for UUP’s help in keeping him safe and making it easier for him to tend to patients with COVID-19 in one short sentence.

“I appreciate UUP’s help to all the physicians on the front line,” he said.

Potsdam Chapter members help out-of-work colleagues

BY DARRYL McGRATH

In an ordinary spring semester at SUNY Potsdam, campus dining spots would be thrumming with conversation, and campus-run stores would offer faculty and students a place to browse, buy a snack or enjoy a respite from work and studies.

But this is no ordinary spring, and with the mandatory cancellation of on-campus academics during the coronavirus pandemic, most of those Potsdam dining spots and shops are shuttered. Along with the closures, some 130 of the approximately 145 non-unionized workers who staff those sites have been laid off from their jobs.

In a chapter-wide act of solidarity with their stricken colleagues, and with the considerable organizing abilities of UUP chapter assistant Jennifer Hernandez, Potsdam UUP members have rallied to purchase \$7,000 worth of \$25 gift cards, so that the workers of the Potsdam Auxiliary and College Services, as the food-service and retail employees are known, can buy meals, groceries or other necessities. Members



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE POTSDAM CHAPTER

GIFT CARDS COLLECTED BY MEMBERS OF THE POTSDAM CHAPTER WERE DISTRIBUTED TO LAID-OFF CAMPUS FOOD-SERVICE AND RETAIL WORKERS. THE FAMILY OF EVERY UNEMPLOYED WORKER RECEIVED A \$25 GIFT CARD. ANOTHER COLLECTION WAS UNDERWAY AS *THE VOICE* WENT TO PRESS.

are using local businesses as often as possible for the gift-card purchases. UUP Potsdam Chapter President John Coté credits Hernandez with the idea of the gift cards.

A SHOW OF UUP UNITY

Given how much members were dealing with as they converted to distance education on very short notice, “I was taken aback at how quickly they unified around a cause,” Coté said.

Coté said that Hernandez brought to his attention several conversations among members that pointed to the same goal: to do something to help their PACES colleagues. Those conversations started, Coté said, as many members realized that their families might qualify for stimulus checks from the recent federal economic relief package—assistance they would appreciate, especially if they had a partner or spouse who had just lost a job in the economic downturn, but which most of them could well afford to share, given that they have solid union jobs and benefits.

“I was very impressed at their faith in the strength of our union—that they knew those in leadership positions will work through this, that there is light in the end of the tunnel,” Coté said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ALLEN ANDERSON

ONEONTA CHAPTER MEMBER ALLEN ANDERSON WORKS IN HIS BASEMENT MACHINE SHOP TO MAKE FACE SHIELDS ON A 3D PRINTER.

Oneonta Chapter member doing his part

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

Allen Anderson is used to isolation.

So when the Oneonta Chapter member began printing and assembling 3D face shields in his basement machine shop in the college’s Physical Science Building, he knew social distancing wasn’t going to be a problem.

“Even in normal operations I am isolated,” said Anderson, a physicist who teaches an occasional course and a “creator of devices” for the science faculty. “The building has been thoroughly cleaned and I feel safer in the shop than at the grocery store.”

Safer—and busier than ever.

When Anderson set up the machine shop 14 years ago, he requested a 3D printer, never envisioning that he would one day be making personal protective equipment to guard against a pandemic that is sweeping across the continents.

Despite feeling fortunate to have his 3D printing equipment updated a couple of years ago, the process is still complicated, and the going is slow. It takes one of the machines three hours to print two face-shield assemblies, while a second smaller machine in Anderson’s shop produces only one in the same amount of time. In his first week of production, Anderson made 39 face shields. There are now five printers in operation around campus, and by early April the daily output of units had jumped from

Empire State Chapter UUPer sews hope into medical masks

BY DARRYL McGRATH

When Anita DeCianni-Brown gives one of her handmade quilts as a gift at a bridal or baby shower, she likes to think she is giving the promise of a future.

The Empire State College member, based in Saratoga Springs, has for years presented her quilts as gifts to family and friends, as well as raffle prizes for good causes.

“Especially baby showers,” she said. “They know one is coming; they just don’t know the design.”

Now, DeCianni-Brown is sewing fabric scraps from her hobby into masks for use in the coronavirus pandemic. So far, she’s produced a little more than 100 masks—cotton on the outside, flannel on the inside.

CASTING A WIDE NET WITH 100 MASKS

While homemade masks do not offer the protection of manufactured N95



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANITA DECIANNI-BROWN

UUP EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE CHAPTER MEMBER ANITA DECIANNI-BROWN IS USING FABRIC SCRAPS FROM BELOVED QUILTING PROJECTS TO MAKE MASKS FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS. SHE SAID EACH FABRIC CARRIES A SPECIAL MEMORY—AND A LITTLE BIT OF HOPE.

medical masks—which a home sewer cannot duplicate—they do offer better protection than the bandanas that some health care workers have used as a last

resort. DeCianni-Brown’s masks have gone to area medical offices, to a nurse to distribute to her colleagues, to certified nursing assistants and to home health aides. Her two daughters work in health care, and have distributed their mother’s masks to their colleagues.

“I know 100 is not a lot when you consider the need, but it’s what I can do,” DeCianni explained. “At a time like this, this is the only thing that can make me feel not helpless, to focus on feeling I’m doing some good.”

For this talented sewer, this effort is another way of offering a message of hope, especially when she uses a favorite piece of fabric from a past project, and remembers its original purpose. A piece of pale-blue cotton sprinkled with stars that she recalls from a baby quilt she made evoked such a memory.

“I don’t know why, but to me there’s just a lot of hope in there,” DeCianni-Brown said. “I have to have a glimmer of hope in these.”

to supply face shields for front-line workers

approximately eight to 25.

“I am actually busier now than a normal (pre-coronavirus) workday, as I am trying to ramp things up,” he said. “There are very few people around, so it takes more time to get simple tasks done.”

The face shields were distributed to members of the University Police Department and campus Emergency Medical Services. That need has been filled, Anderson said, so “our overrun is being sent to the New Paltz face shield project and they are distributing masks to various hospitals (and medical professionals) who need them.”

IN IT TOGETHER

Anderson may be used to working away from the hustle and bustle of an active

college campus, but that doesn’t mean he is going it alone. He said he is grateful to his colleagues for reaching out.

“When I started the program, I received immediate support from other UUP members and the administration of SUNY Oneonta,” he said. He credits fellow UUP member David Kenny, an instructional support technician in fine arts, for the daily increase in production. Kenny is helping to produce head bands for the project.

“UUP and the general community have been of great value in allowing me the opportunity to contribute to the general effort,” Anderson added.

And, he said, it beats binge-watching Netflix.

“I do not see myself as extraordinary

in any way,” he said. “I am just doing something that is helpful. I might add that many folks are doing the same. Everyone working in a grocery store or other business that is open is doing the same thing I am.”

What has Anderson gained from this experience?

“I have learned that it is always good to help and take the initiative when required,” he said. “I can’t say this is really new; it has always been my attitude. I have learned it is a very good idea to not listen to the drum beat of fear and foreboding that dominates the current news cycle.”

“Work, in general, gives one a sense of usefulness and accomplishment,” he added.

Canton UPer teaches auto repair from his garage

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

Trying to pull together and videotape auto technology lessons in his home garage was a bit daunting at first for Canton Chapter member Brandon Baldwin.

How does one adequately provide hands-on instruction for students when they are miles away?

As it turns out, his video classes came as a welcome change for his students, who appreciate the quality of the video and the ability to review the material as often as necessary.

“I think I may be covering more content, more completely than in a live lesson, because we can get the camera into tiny spaces that a live session can’t do well,” said Baldwin, an associate professor in the School of Engineering Technology. “For example, to show a lesson under the dashboard is impossible, but not in video. Or to show which wire I’m getting the signal on, on the oscilloscope, is possible with a camera, but not in a live session. The students have provided feedback saying they like the clear picture detail, and often watch certain [lessons] many times.”

Some students are checking out the videos mere hours after they are posted, he said.

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES

While many students may believe the transition to remote teaching was effortless, Baldwin knows it was anything but. Quirky internet connections, reimagining how courses are taught, researching video techniques and camera angles, and finding the right vehicles for specific lessons were just a few of the obstacles he faced.

“The challenges of teaching remotely include learning how to teach remotely, when you didn’t just weeks ago,” he said.

Baldwin said he has produced “a bunch of short videos, rather than one long video,” and posts a new one every few days on Blackboard, the campus learning management system for online and remote education.



CHARLOTTE BALDWIN

CANTON CHAPTER MEMBER BRANDON BALDWIN TEACHES AN AUTOMOTIVE LAB FROM HIS HOME GARAGE, AS HIS WIFE, DEBRA, VIDEOTAPES THE LESSON.

“I try to stay a week ahead,” he said. “The reason for this is that some lessons may take an hour or two to set up for only three minutes of filming.”

Sometimes, finding the right car or truck for each lesson means borrowing from family, friends or neighbors.

“I was lucky that one dealership up here is lending me their plow truck,” he said.

And if all else fails, turn to your family.

Baldwin’s wife, Debra, is videotaping his lessons. One daughter’s Subaru was used for an automotive lab and another daughter took the photo of her parents that accompanies this article. Both children will be enrolled at SUNY Canton in the fall.

“I couldn’t do all I do for SUNY Canton all this time without (my wife’s) support,” said Baldwin, who has been at the college since 2006. “I’m very lucky to have her.”

POSITIVE OUTCOMES

In addition to the instructional videos, students have access to an information system used by technicians, from which they can pull up wiring diagrams. A Monday-night chat on Blackboard Collaborative Ultra gives Baldwin a chance to outline the goals for the week

and to answer questions.

“I leave the session open, so that the students can meet with each other to discuss the video lessons as well,” he said. “I love that they do that.”

He also appreciates the newfound depth of their questions, and their willingness to respond to impromptu lessons to review especially troublesome assignments. Baldwin has given extra credit to students who posted their own videos of what they’re working on.

“Most of them have their own cars or work on someone else’s car,” he said. “This forces them to think when I’m not right there to immediately answer, as I would be at school.”

Baldwin said some good has come from being thrust into remote teaching.

“I’ve learned that video is a better method of teaching than I thought possible,” he said. “I’m happy that the students who may have missed part of the lesson can watch as many times as they want. I think that the students who may be a little more reserved during the live lessons may actually be doing better because they can see every bit of detail. This is a far better learning tool, even for hands-on curriculum, than I would have thought.”

Buffalo doctor confident about graduates working in pandemic

BY DARRYL McGRATH

No one could have seen this coming—the greatest global medical crisis in 100 years—and certainly not medical schools sending their students into an unprecedented situation this spring.

Not since the post-World War I influenza pandemic have new doctors started their careers at a more difficult or unnerving time. But Dr. Lisa Jane Jacobsen, a UUP member and associate professor of obstetrics and gynecology in the University at Buffalo's Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, is both calm and confident about how this year's graduates will fare during the coronavirus pandemic. They are well prepared, she said, and more than ready to handle this unprecedented time.

"They are eager to start patient care," said Jacobsen, who is also associate dean for curriculum. The school offered an elective at the end of the semester on COVID-19, which Jacobsen said was a "really, really informative elective teaching them a lot about the public health perspective. We have certainly been forwarding them information."

VIRTUAL GRADUATIONS, UP-ENDED SCHEDULES

The Jacobs school was the only one of SUNY's four medical colleges that held its graduation on its original, pre-pandemic date of May 1, as hospitals in



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA JANE JACOBSEN

BUFFALO HSC CHAPTER MEMBER LISA JANE JACOBSEN KNOWS HER MEDICAL STUDENTS ARE PREPARED TO ENTER THE WORKFORCE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC. SHE SAID PHYSICIANS UNDERSTAND THE RISK OF GETTING SERIOUS INFECTIONS IS PART OF WHAT THEY SIGNED UP FOR.

Western New York never reached the stage of inundated emergency departments and intensive-care units that the New York City region did.

All 13 medical colleges in New York City, Westchester County and on Long Island held their graduations early—including at Stony Brook and Downstate—as did Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, so that the new physicians could assist overwhelmed hospitals at the height of the state's coronavirus hospitalizations. Virtual graduations, once unthinkable, became the new norm at

all four SUNY medical colleges.

"I think for the New York City schools, some saw themselves in a dire emergency, where it was all-hands-on-deck," Jacobsen said. "I think students probably had a real strong sense of wanting to get out there."

And she both understands and admires that attitude.

"When you sign up to be a physician, you sign up to treat people who will be ill," Jacobsen said. "I think we are always at risk of getting our patients' infections. It's part of our job."

Kowal addresses Faculty Senate

In an April 17 video message to the SUNY Faculty Senate, UUP President Fred Kowal underscored how "UUP is expending every effort imaginable to protect the health and safety of our members ... who are on the frontlines of the coronavirus crisis." The union, he added, is also working with SUNY leaders and the Governor's Office to make the case for overtime and extra-service pay for the dedicated academic and professionals—full-timers and part-timers—who have taken on additional work to keep SUNY up and running for students, patients and the communities it serves. View his message at <https://youtu.be/gLLOSyAWCA>.



Delhi residence life staff, students ‘get through it together’

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

When a few dozen students are stranded on campus during a pandemic, what do you do? You stick by them, because that’s what you signed up for.

“As a residence life professional, I am committed to taking care of the students the best I can,” said Delhi Chapter member Jason Fishner, the college’s director of residence life. By the end of April, there were about 40 students still on campus due to extenuating circumstances, such as international students with no way to travel home or those with personal situations who have permission to stay.

“The pandemic is a situation that we will get through by all working together and taking things day to day,” he said.

Practicing social distancing is key. Fishner noted that the college is strictly adhering to mandates and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control, the Governor’s Office and the New York State Department of Health.



ANDREW BRADFIELD

UUP MEMBER AND DELHI RESIDENCE LIFE DIRECTOR JASON FISHNER, RIGHT, CLEANS UP WITH STUDENTS STILL LIVING ON CAMPUS. RAKING THE GROUNDS APRIL 25 WAS IN CONJUNCTION WITH NATIONAL COMMUNITY SERVICE DAY.

“Students have been advised and are reminded often of the social distancing rules and other preventive actions that can be taken to remain healthy,” he said. “It is important for everyone to personally practice preventative actions and adhere to the guidelines to keep ourselves and others healthy.”

COMING TOGETHER, HELPING OUT

Social distancing doesn’t mean the students can’t—and shouldn’t—interact.

In addition to staying connected by walking, hiking, exercising and socializing in small groups, Fishner said the students can take advantage of residence life programs that have been tailored to meet social distancing parameters.

“In lounges, you can still space students out to do arts and crafts or video game tournaments,” he said.

The residence life staff and students are also using their time on campus to help the community.

As part of National Community Service Day,

residence life staff and students raked and cleaned up around campus April 25.

“I could not get through this without my residence life team of professional and student staff,” Fishner said. “Everyone is doing great pulling together at this time.”

AFT ad takes on Trump

The AFT recently launched an ad campaign aimed at President Trump for failing to protect health care workers after suggesting March 31 that doctors and nurses were taking and hoarding personal protective equipment like masks and gowns.

Titled “Thieves,” the ad—in 15-second and 30-second lengths—began airing April 14 in Washington, D.C., and New York City.

View the 15-second ad at <https://bit.ly/2ysDYkf>

View the 30-second ad at <https://bit.ly/2XKSWNo>

In the ads, AFT members criticize Trump for failing to secure enough N95 masks, face shields and ventilators for U.S. hospitals and health care workers on the front lines of the pandemic, and for forcing states to compete against each other to obtain equipment. The ads ask viewers to call the White House at (202) 456-1111 and tell Trump to do his job to protect the American people.

At his March 31 media conference, Trump implied that health care workers were making off with PPE, which was helping to cause shortages. “Something is going on, and you ought to look into it as reporters,” Trump said. “Where are the masks going? Are they going out the back door?”



Contingent issues vital in pandemic, with remote teaching

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

Anne Wiegard has always viewed contingent work conditions in higher education as an equity issue, which spoke to larger problems of inequality even as the country saw the longest economic boom in U.S. history.

The burst of that economic bubble during the coronavirus pandemic, with record-setting unemployment reported in the first week of April—a trend that would continue until more than 20 million people would end up losing their jobs by the end of the month—hasn't made contingent issues suddenly less important, Wiegard said. Instead, it has given them a new relevance and a special urgency.

"This COVID-19 crisis is really shining a light on structural inequalities in our society," Wiegard said to a national audience in a live-streamed panel discussion about contingents sponsored by UUP's national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, and aired April 17. "It has forced people to see the realities of underfunding that many people, not just adjuncts, are dealing with."

She specifically cited the hospital and health care workers who are employed in low-wage jobs, but who have become sick and even died during the pandemic.

AFT CITES NATIONAL ABUSES

Wiegard was one of six participants in the panel discussion, with AFT President Randi Weingarten. Callers from across the country logged into the discussion to question the panel, which included UUP delegates Anne Fearman of Fredonia, who chairs the union's statewide Contingent Employment Committee; and Richard Aberle of Plattsburgh, who is his chapter's officer for contingents.

The presentation coincided with the AFT's release of a major report about contingents in higher education, called "An Army of Temps," which the AFT says is the first nationwide survey of contingent faculty since 2013. The report

highlights the continuing difficult work conditions many contingents face, including poor pay, inequity in benefits compared to their tenure-track colleagues, and some of the same issues as low-income college students, including food insecurity and inadequate housing.

The decision to release the report at a time of so much other breaking news made perfect sense, Weingarten said, because contingent faculty will be especially vulnerable as colleges reopen in the fall facing likely funding cuts, budget deficits and declining enrollment because of the pandemic. The report notes that, "the coronavirus pandemic ... has made a grave situation even worse."

UUP AHEAD OF THE CURVE

Wiegard encouraged listeners to continue to push for adjunct rights. She served on the Negotiations Team that negotiated the current UUP bargaining agreement; the contract includes a minimum salary for part-time faculty working at SUNY's state-operated campuses.

"The dollar amount was not huge, but it was a victory," Wiegard said. The union in which she became active 15 years ago was not the same union that negotiated that minimum salary, she added; UUP had become far more responsive to contingent concerns.

"It takes time; it takes conversations with other union delegates," she said.

UUP SURVEY DRIVES ACTIONS

UUP conducted its own voluntary survey of contingent academics in the 2017-18 academic year. The union's statewide Contingent Employment Committee developed the survey, and more than 1,000 members responded.

"Those survey results have been impor-



KAREN L. MATTISON

AT THE 2019 FALL DELEGATE ASSEMBLY, CORTLAND CHAPTER MEMBER ANNE WIEGARD TALKS WITH MEMBERS OF THE UNION'S STATEWIDE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE ABOUT THE NEED TO SUPPORT CONTINGENT EMPLOYEES.

tant for informing UUP's work to address contingent employee needs statewide and at individual chapters," said Vice President for Academics Jamie Dangler. "UUP's survey was very comprehensive and yielded extensive written comments from members. We're still in the process of analyzing all information received for UUP's final survey report."

Wiegard, one of several UUPers to gain national recognition for advocacy on behalf of contingent academics, said the fact that Weingarten participated on the panel is a sign of AFT's commitment.

"Let me amplify what I said at the beginning, that the COVID-19 crisis is making many Americans newly aware of gross inequities in the workforce, specifically, the low wages and insecurity of the majority of service workers," Wiegard said as she reflected on the panel discussion. "We can use this pressure for the larger economic reforms many progressive public leaders are calling for to draw attention to the unsustainable employment practices in higher education."



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**UUP REMEMBERS THE ACTIVE
AND RETIRED MEMBERS WE'VE LOST
TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

Members of our union family—many of whom work on the front lines as health care professionals—are among the first casualties. UUP has created a web portal to pay tribute to the brave unionists who made a difference throughout their lives.

To submit a name, go to
<https://bit.ly/2KNqRNL>
or scan the QR code.

