

AMH Employees Shine Brightly During Winter Storm

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ALTON, IL – During a winter storm such as the one that hit the area this week, it’s important to know that local hospitals are operating at full capacity. That was certainly the case at Alton Memorial Hospital, where operations continued smoothly thanks to the teamwork, skill and dedication of all physicians and employees.

At least 60 employees “slept over” at least one night this week. Cots were set up in various areas and sandwiches were provided. In addition to people spending the night, most of the Plant Operations crew worked double shifts, sleeping a few hours and then going right back to work. A total of 250 man-hours were used to clear the property of snow and ice, with some Plant Ops employees totaling 40 hours just working Monday through Wednesday.

“Everyone worked hard to keep the roads clear, which was a never-ending battle on Tuesday,” said Stephanie Travis, Plants Ops manager at AMH. “We used 50 bags (2,500 pounds) of ice melt on the sidewalks and 25 tons of salt on the streets and parking lots.”

Travis said that AMH Security and Plant Operations personnel made a few trips to pick-up locations for employees who otherwise would have had trouble getting to the hospital. One Security vehicle and one EMS squad leader vehicle – both with four-wheel drive – were used.

Charla Wikoff, staffing coordinator for AMH nurses, said she thinks that approximately a dozen people received rides in those vehicles. She said that Housekeeping supervisor Don Ackerman also gave a few rides himself.

“I am truly proud of the nursing staff this past week,” Wikoff said. “They have been real troopers.”

The Emergency Department noted only a slight increase in traffic in people being treated for weather-related injuries. Only one ED staff member had to call off because of the weather and the department was able to operate at full capacity all week.

OB manager Jessica Mossman said that her unit had three staff members spend the night and four more on Tuesday.

“One of those was a tech who had been in the building since 5 a.m. Monday,” Mossman said. “She stayed until 7 a.m. Wednesday to cover for emergencies. I was amazed by some staff members who came more than 12 hours before their shifts started to make sure they would be available to relieve their co-workers. Staff members who spent the night took shifts for some of those who were not here so that they would not have to travel in, and some also traded shifts with those who lived farther away so they would not have to travel in. Our staff understands the commitment to patients and co-workers. For a small with a specialized service, this commitment is imperative.”

Cathy Storey, manager of the AMH Lab, Cardiology, Respiratory and the Sleep Center, also noted the tremendous dedication.

“All the lab personnel showed up, some driving in from as far as Golden Eagle (in Calhoun County),” Storey said. “Not only the people that stayed overnight, but those that spent hours on the road to get in should be recognized because that also shows dedication. It’s all about our patients. These are the loyal and dedicated employees we value.”

The hard work wasn’t confined to the hospital. Just getting to AMH was an effort for many, especially north toward Jerseyville where the area was perhaps hardest hit.

“I had one staff member who was chipping away on her driveway (in Jerseyville) starting at 4 a.m. Wednesday,” said Amy Toenyas, manager of the Medical Care

Unit. “She was finally able to get enough ice chipped away at 11 a.m. and got here by 12:15 p.m. Others covered for her and were very grateful for the effort. What a team. They never gave up. Others would have packed it in for the day.”

Deb Meyer, manager of the Intermediate Care Unit at AMH, said that her unit had five employees stay overnight.

“I was staying here, so my husband went and picked up two employees and brought them to work Tuesday evening,” Meyer said. “At about 8 p.m., four of us joked that we should get Chinese takeout. We called and they **were** delivering, so we placed our order and the food arrived at around 10 p.m.”



“We had employees volunteer to spend the night for imaging services to ensure that we had staff here to cover the ED, Operating Room and inpatients,” said Stacey Ballard, manager of Medical Imaging, Twin Rivers MRI and Oncology Services. “We also had employees volunteer to relieve their co-workers who were here the duration of the storm to give them a break. We had teamwork at its finest, and I am really proud of my staff. They pulled together and made it happen with the best interests of our patients at heart.”

Vicki Rothe, manager of the Surgical Care Unit, and Cindy Igo, supervisor of the Intensive Care Unit, also reported that several employees stayed overnight and pulled extra duty.

“The evening shift came in prepared to stay with bundles from home, but they were able to get home (Tuesday) night,” Rothe said. “My midnight shift made it in and we had everything covered.”

“My unit is small but I had such great teamwork,” said Mary Holmes, manager of the Geropsych Unit. “One employee stayed all night two nights, another came in five hours before his shift to be here to work, and others came in extra hours or stayed longer. It made a potentially tough situation easy to work through. My thanks go out to all the staff.”

Even volunteers such as Carl Draper of Wood River and Delores Clark of Godfrey showed their faithfulness by reporting for duty on Tuesday. Some might think that Draper lives at AMH with all of the hours he puts in, and that was only reinforced Tuesday as he was present as usual to help in the ED. Clark hitched a ride from gift shop manager Susie Bechtold and helped keep the gift shop open for several hours Tuesday.

“I am very proud of everyone’s phenomenal response to the needs of our patients,” said AMH President Dave Braasch. “Under difficult circumstances and some long hours, each individual pulled together to create a super team effort. When their neighbors and co-workers needed help, they stepped up. Thanks go out to everyone for their dedication and support.”

Meanwhile, AMH had previously scheduled a midnight meal in the cafeteria on Tuesday night. That went on as scheduled, with breakfast served at midnight.

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