

How St. David's HealthCare employees navigated a challenging 2021

By: C. David Huffstutler

Healthcare is hard under normal circumstances. We help patients and their families during times of immense happiness as they welcome new life into this world and during extraordinary stress when patients are facing health battles.

As we approach the end of the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, the incredible bravery and the dedication to patient care exhibited by St. David's HealthCare employees has reaffirmed one truth—we are proud to be in the business of caring for our community, especially when it is hard.

The ability to take on the medical challenges presented to us, to heal and save lives, is why our employees keep coming into St. David's HealthCare hospitals and clinics each day. From doctors to nurses to the invaluable support staff, our employees have dedicated their lives to making a meaningful difference in the lives of strangers, and for that, I am in awe of what they have accomplished not in 2021, but since March 2020 when the pandemic came to Austin.

Last year started off on a positive note as vaccines for COVID-19 became widely available. This medical and scientific breakthrough remains the best weapon we have in the fight against COVID-19. In Travis County, 79.14% of people have received at least one shot and 69.2% are fully vaccinated. There is still work to be done, and if you haven't been vaccinated, or received a booster, I encourage you to do so. They are safe, effective, and free and offer protection for you, your loved ones, the community and especially healthcare workers, against COVID-19.

As 2021 continued, our employees cared for the community during the Delta variant spike that spread across the world. This was a difficult time for us all, but particularly for healthcare workers who had been fighting this virus for over a year when the variant hit. Through it all, they exhibited professionalism, courtesy and most importantly, selflessness when they put the care of their patients above all else.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued to present an immense challenge to Central Texas hospitals. This region experienced over 217,000 cases of COVID-19 and over 16,000 fatalities. To date, St. David's HealthCare has cared for more than 13,500 COVID-19 patients since the start of the pandemic. With news of the Omicron variant, we are not out of the woods yet.

We care about our employees at St. David's HealthCare because they are a part of our family and because they care for the community that we call home. It can be easy to forget that aside from the pandemic, our team is improving quality of life and saving lives each day in countless ways.

We ask that the community come together to show gratitude, patience and compassion for all healthcare workers as they have been under immense stress for nearly two consecutive years. This is key—if you know someone in healthcare, tell them how grateful you are for the work they've done and how fortunate our community is to have them.

We are extraordinarily thankful for our employees whose focus is singular—providing exceptional care for every patient, every day. As we begin 2022, on behalf of St. David's HealthCare, thank you for the trust you have placed in us. We strive to continue to earn it.

C. David Huffstutler is the president and Chief Executive Officer of St. David's HealthCare