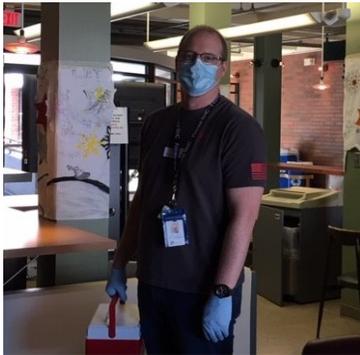


FIRCREST'S UNSUNG HEROES



On April 20, 2020, Fircrest received news that a client tested positive for COVID-19. Other results for clients and staff began coming in at a rapid-fire pace and DSHS' response had to be swift, organized and decisive.



An unoccupied duplex was readied to serve as an isolation unit for this possibility. Getting the unit off the ground and running required the hard work of many staff. It took teamwork and dedicated staff who worked countless hours in a variety of roles, including supporting clients on the isolation unit, which meant wearing full personal protective equipment (e.g., surgical mask, face shield, Kevlar lab coat and booties) for their entire shift.

Attendant counselor managers, attendant counselors, adult training specialists, recreation staff, registered nurses, licensed practical nurses and custodians all played a part in caring for ill clients. Swift middle-of-the night moves happened for clients whose tests came in positive. Managers, nurses and other members of the team facilitated the moves, some returning to campus after hours to do so.



Staff on the isolation unit as well as across campus have gone above and beyond, volunteering to work six to seven days per week and pulling double shifts to make up for short staffing. Many volunteered to work in capacities out of their job class or in different locations from their home units.

“The saying ‘It takes a village’ truly applies here. Every employee who helped support our clients through this outbreak deserves the title Unsung Hero,” said Upkar Mangat, Fircrest superintendent.

“The RN who monitors ill clients, the LPN who passes medications, the AC staff who gives direct care, the ACM who keeps the unit organized, the staffing person who ensures we have coverage of posts, the Duty Office folks who keep everything in motion, the dietary staff who makes sure meals are made, the maintenance staff, the transportation staff, the infectious disease nurse who coordinates with the Department of Health, the physicians and medical team, the safety officers, the commissary staff who ensure emergency equipment is available and the fiscal specialist who ensures the clients have access to cash--all are heroes,” Mangat added.



As of May 29, 11 clients and 31 staff have tested positive for COVID-19 at Fircrest School. The facility is pleased to report all are either recovered or on their way to full recovery.

“Providing quality care for the clients, keeping them safe and doing all that is needed to meet the needs of Fircrest during these challenging times was what was most important. I would like to say that I am extremely proud of the staff that have stepped up and provided the essential care needed for the clients who were sick with COVID-19. The long hours and the time taken away from their families and friends show how committed they are to providing services to the clients we serve as well as their dedication to our mission of DDA seems true in my eyes. I would like to thank each of you for your service to our clients. You are the definition of unsung heroes.”

Brandon Taylor, ACM

“I have worked for Fircrest for almost 35 years now. I feel that my commitment has always been to support our clients’ needs and keep them safe. I feel the same commitment for our employees and the courageous work they have done and continue to do. So I step up without hesitation and commit myself in supporting others as it is what being part of the Fircrest team is all about for me. It’s just what I do!”

Dave Greenman, MA3 (Staffing)

“I have felt very privileged to work on our COVID unit. What we have done as a team is nothing short of miraculous. Caring for others is not just a job for me, it is a passion. It has been amazing working with other nurses, C.N.A.s, and AC staff who are just as passionate.”

Erica Hitchen, RN2