Social distancing became the norm in March, as COVID-19 began to spread across New Jersey with no vaccine or proven treatment in sight. Community Wellness quickly embraced videoconferencing to offer virtual versions of childbirth and family education classes; support groups; educational programs related to managing a wide array of chronic conditions; even yoga classes. Through mid-June, Community Wellness provided 145 virtual programs with 2,843 viewers.

The only in-person programs since March have been CPR training classes that Princeton Health staffers and other professionals need to maintain licenses or certifications. Classes were conducted at half-capacity. Masks were required, and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation was dropped.

Those precautions will remain in place when Community Wellness resumes Family & Friends CPR classes in July, Millar said. Other programs set to resume in-person sessions include Birthing Basics, Baby Care, and Prenatal Breastfeeding Instruction. An in-person breastfeeding support group, postponed since March, is also set to restart.

Bernadette Flynn-Kelton, RN, and Carolyn Schindewolf, educators and board certified lactation consultants with Community Wellness, noted that maternity tours at Princeton Medical Center remain canceled. To help fill that void, Community Wellness recently started a virtual pregnancy and postpartum support group, providing a weekly platform to address questions or concerns from expecting parents and connect them to resources. That support group will continue to meet virtually.

Another relatively new program, Mental Health First Aid, also will only be offered virtually in July. Participant feedback on virtual sessions has been about even — roughly half loved the convenience, while the other half would have preferred to be there in person. As a result, many programs will be offered both ways.

A few programs, however, are better suited to in-person presentation. For example, HypnoBirthing, a five-session program for expecting moms and their partners, was presented virtually in May and June by Lisa Stout, RN. The next program will be offered in person, if possible. Daddy Boot Camp, a popular class for first-time expecting fathers, also works better in person, but it will remain virtual for now.

Before COVID-19, each session would include a dozen or more soon-to-be-dads, their instructor Greg Barron, and veteran fathers — often graduates of Daddy Boot Camp — who would bring their babies to the class.

For men who are inexperienced with babies, the opportunity to observe and hold a baby — perhaps for their first time ever — is invaluable, Flynn-Kelton said. Because the pandemic is still ongoing, veteran dads will not bring their babies into live classes for the foreseeable future. The virtual version of the workshop will continue to provide valuable insight on preparing for the baby’s arrival, supporting mom physically and emotionally, and parenting as a team.

If all goes to plan — and, granted, very little has gone to plan in 2020 — Princeton Health Community Wellness will resume in-person programs in July. Yet the new normal will not be business as usual. Class sizes will be smaller, masks will be required, attendees will be screened for a fever and other symptoms, and extra precautions will be taken to ensure social distancing and limit potential exposure to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

“We will do this carefully, always following the guidance of infectious disease experts,” said Debbie Millar, RN, director, Community Wellness.

“In this Issue

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STAND TOGETHER for Social Justice and Unity

Princeton Health’s Diversity and Inclusion Committee sponsored an event June 8 in the Healing Garden outside Princeton Medical Center to honor the life of George Floyd and others whose lives were lost due to racism and social injustice. The gathering featured remarks by president and CEO Barry S. Rabner and the Rev. Matthew Rhodes, director of religious ministries, as well as musical performances by Samuel Yenn-Batala, manager of pastoral care, and Evan Watson, transporter (pictured above, far left). The event concluded with 8 minutes, 46 seconds of silence.

Visit https://vimeo.com/427817255 to view a video recap of the Healing Garden event.
Local Youth Efforts Benefit Princeton Health Staff, Patients

Throughout Central Jersey, elementary and middle schoolers put their imaginations and abilities to work this spring, raising money and donating needed supplies and food to support the healthcare heroes at Penn Medicine Princeton Health.

• Tony Wang, a seventh-grader at Princeton Academy of the Sacred Heart, used the money he had earned tutoring to donate 10,000 masks at a time when personal protective equipment was a dire need for healthcare organizations throughout the state and the nation.

• The youth group D.O.N.A.T.E. raised nearly $4,600 to benefit patients affected by COVID-19. Thank you to the team members: Jamie Creasi, Sabrina Liding, Karen Qin, Alice Yu, and Sophia Feng, and their co-organizer, the Martians Robotics FLL and FTC Team, Angela Yang, Christine Wu, Leanne and Christopher Yang, and Andrew and Kaitlyn Yang.

• 10-year-old Madelyn McCarthy benefitted patients by donating $250 that she raised by producing beautiful artworks commissioned by family and friends.

• Unnat Chhatwal, an eighth-grader at Monroe Township Middle School, donated healthy snacks to staff members at Princeton Medical Center (PMC).

• 13-year-olds Ava Burns and Bryce Hanley and 12-year-old Austyn Hanley, all from Pennington, set up a car wash to raise money to provide meals to the surgical team. The donation was made in the name of Jamie Ellmers, RN, a surgical nurse at PMC.

• Max Gertson, 12, organized a project called Max’s Snacks for Heroes and recently dropped off more than 200 bags of snacks for Princeton Health staff members.

To read more about community donations, visit PrincetonHCS.org/news.

Healthcare Heroes Campaign Provides 2,900-plus Meals to Staff

The online Treat a Healthcare Hero to Dinner campaign drew a swift, generous response from individuals and local businesses, enabling the Princeton Medical Center (PMC) Foundation to raise $167,312 from 494 donors within only a few weeks.

The Foundation used the funds to engage 15 local restaurants to prepare and deliver dinner for two to staff members throughout the organization. A total 2,935 staff members received the meals at the end of a workday in May.

The campaign was separate from the many food donations that were delivered to PMC and other Princeton Health locations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

One local organization alone — FLAG (Front Line Appreciation Group) Cranbury — raised more than $27,000 to provide takeout deliveries from local restaurants to PMC every day between early April and June.

The campaign provided a new look — not to mention the sundaes.

Why couldn’t PMC do the same thing… only better?

Bocanegra’s staff accepted the challenge and put their creativity and construction skills to work. Tom Early came up with the design, and then everyone pitched in to bring it to life. “My staff feels very proud of what they did,” Bocanegra said. “We are all in this as a team.”

Sydney Sookerman, patient experience manager for EVS and Food and Nutrition, reports that people seem to love the new look — not to mention the sundaes.

“This is a true example of teamwork that brought a lot of smiles and enthusiasm to our Mother-Baby unit,” said Lesha Colyn, director of Food and Nutrition.

Physicians and staff members recognized for their contributions during the COVID-19 outbreak are featured in the latest Princeton Stars video, now posted on the Princeton Health YouTube channel.

As usual, president and CEO Barry S. Rahmer interviewed the Princeton Stars. Yet as a sign of the times, in keeping with social distancing guidelines, Rahmer and the interviewees were filmed in separate rooms, speaking via video link. They were then brought together on split screen for the final videos. Employees can access the Princeton Stars videos through the Princeton Health intranet or online at PrincetonStars.org.