always thorough but efficient, Banks said. The patient room cleaning and sanitizing is said SWAT team member to ensure the virus won’t spread to other areas. These patients is known. EVS staff still wear outpatients who are coming for procedures for COVID. All admitted inpatients and today, the SWAT team continues to clean personally met with staff, heard their fears HUP Environmental Services. “Our director be done … and how to stay safe while doing it. “Unknown things can be terrifying, but we were able to fight fear with knowledge,” said. Asiya Dealey-Carter, assistant director of HUP Environmental Services. “Our director personally met with staff, heard their fears and addressed them all.”

Today, the SWAT team continues to clean the rooms of inpatients who test positive for COVID. All admitted inpatients and outpatients who are coming for procedures are tested, so the COVID status of all of these patients is known. EVS staff still wear the necessary personal protective equipment, carefully putting it on before entering a COVID room and, even more important, removing it safely upon leaving the room to ensure the virus won’t spread to other areas of the hospital. “I always feel well-protected,” said SWAT team member Latasha Banks.

The patient room cleaning and sanitizing is always thorough but efficient, Banks said. “With all the PPE on, you do what you have to do and get out,” she said. But she’s found the patients “super nice” and very polite. “They ask me ‘Are you ok? Do you feel comfortable being in here?’”

In addition to the bleach wipes and other cleaning supplies, EVS’s cleaning arsenal includes an electrostatic sprayer gun, which sprays positively charged particles that evenly coat all surfaces and objects, even if it’s only sprayed on one side. The sanitizing agent in the spray then disinfects all the covered surfaces. EVS also expanded their use of UV light technology, using it regularly in COVID patient rooms after discharge and outpatient areas throughout the hospital.

A month after she joined the COVID team, Banks went to a family gathering. “A few days later I started feeling short of breath and fatigue,” she said. After testing positive based on a suspected exposure there, she quarantined herself for two weeks and then rejoined the COVID team. “This time, though, I understood how the patients were feeling and shared my experiences with them,” she said.

Even though the local severity of the pandemic is easing, EVS staff continue their COVID vigilance throughout the hospital. “I’ll keep myself on the front lines to do it until there’s no more COVID,” Banks said.

Tackling all of PCAM

The EVS team across the street from HUP — who cover the Perelman Center, Jordan Medical Education Center, and the Smilow Center for Transitional Research — have also had their work cut out for them. “In all of my time here, nothing compares to this. It freaked everyone out, not knowing what was going on,” said Geneva Jefferson, a 22-year EVS employee. “But we had to get to work.”

Similar to the HUP team, the EVS staff at PCAM received a “lot of training,” said Kadey Lowery, assistant director of EVS in PCAM. In-service sessions stressed the importance of “staying safe, keeping social distance, and wearing your mask.”

Their basic strategy was to cover all areas from top to bottom, and then start again. Even in areas where staff were working from home, the EVS staff cleaned and sanitized computer keyboards, desk tops and chairs. During the early months of the pandemic when traffic through PCAM had dropped, EVS continuously tackled “every inch of space,” Jefferson said. “There were still people moving throughout and we didn’t know where they were traveling.”

Today, more is known about the spread of COVID. For example, the transmission of the virus from contaminated surfaces and handled objects such as stethoscopes and phones is likely an uncommon route of infection when compared to exposure to respiratory droplets. But, to minimize even this small risk of surface transmission, the EVS teams are keeping to their COVID-learned routines: making sure every PPE dispenser is full and that there’s plenty of soap and paper towels in the bathrooms and that high-touch areas, such as light switches and door handles, are kept sanitized and cleaned.

Many people — patients and staff alike — have noticed, and commented on the thorough work of the EVS staff, at both HUP and PCAM. “I’ve had people thank me on the street!” Jefferson said. The recognition, Lowery said, “not only brought worth to what they’re doing, but it brought people together.”

While Jefferson finds that constantly wearing a mask at work can be tough, her motivation to keep going comes from a friend who was very ill with COVID. “She thought she was going to die. That scared me to death, when it’s so close to home. But it also makes me work even harder. “We’ll get through this — we’ll overcome. Everyone just needs to do their due diligence and follow the rules.”
Learning that many members of the HUP family were experiencing food insecurity, Reich organized and implemented an employee food pantry that has, to date, provided hundreds of bags of food. (Read more about the pantry at https://blic.ly/3ISTVZw)

"Jesse is known as a loyal friend and generous person. She is a champion for anyone in need," Martiioni said. "Like Maryellen, Jesse has been able to achieve these many accomplishments with grace, dedication, enthusiasm, positive energy and an unwavering commitment to her colleagues, patients and the community."

Last month, Yvan Pierrelouis, an active lieutenant with 30 years of service with the NY police department, received a police escort from Philadelphia back to his home to continue his recovery from COVID-19. But had his daughter, Diane Latham, MSN, assistant nurse manager on Silverstein 9, not moved heaven and earth to get him to HUP, his story would have had a very different ending.

It started on March 26, just three weeks after a family vacation. Pierrelouis was admitted to NYU Winthrop Hospital — a small community hospital — after testing positive for COVID-19. The following day he was put on a ventilator and he stayed on it for the next three weeks. But it wasn’t helping. “He was not doing well and was already maxed out on ventilator settings,” she said.

Latham knew her father was not suffering from a multi-organ failure. In fact, nothing seemed wrong except his lungs. She thought a lung transplant could save his life. His care team reached out to transplant programs in New York, but because of the severity of the pandemic in NY at the time, some were temporarily closed while others thought he was just too sick.

But Latham wasn’t giving up. She reached out to the Penn Lung Center and connected with Andrew Courtwright, MD, PhD, a transplant pulmonologist. He spoke with doctors at North Shore, reviewed her father’s medical records, and agreed to have the patient transferred to assess in person. PennSTAR airlifted Pierrelouis to HUP late on May 1 and he was brought to Rhoads 5, a COVID ICU at the time. A month later, when he tested negative for COVID, he was moved to the medical ICU.

Over several weeks, following ventilator management protocols, his clinical team were able to slowly lower the ventilator settings and gradually take him off his medically induced sedation in preparation for wearing him off the ventilator. The first week in June, he woke, looked around and asked “What’s going on?”

“They told me my dad was going to die,” she said. Because of visitation restrictions, she hadn’t seen her father for a month but “I needed to physically see him.” Now, as a so-called “end-of-life” patient, she — and her mother — were allowed to visit. The formerly robust police officer “had 50 pounds of fluid. I didn’t even recognize him he looked so different.”

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“This case was remarkable. It was a testament to the hundreds of people who cared for him, the consistent dedication,” Courtwright said. With the lung transplant option as a possible back-up, “they just kept pushing forward.”

Clinicians continued to slowly wean him and, on June 19, he was “liberated. They took him totally off the vent,” Latham said. “You could tell a story about the pandemic just based on kind of the understanding of the disease at different times,” said Courtwright in an Inquirer article, adding that the use of steroids probably made the biggest difference in his care.

Three weeks later, Pierrelouis was discharged from HUP and sent to Good Shepherd Penn Partners for rehabilitation. On September 12, he was escorted by his fellow police officers to his home in New York.

“From April 28 to now was a totally different story,” Latham said a few days before his trip home. “My father’s going to be ok. His quality of life is there. And he can return to what he likes to do.”

"I was blown away by everything Penn did," she continued. “I never stopped believing.”

"This case was remarkable. It was a testament to the hundreds of people who cared for him, the consistent dedication."