

Katherine Franczyk – Chestnut Hill Hospital



Katherine Franczyk takes care of people; that is who she is. Taking care of people is what she does as the director of the Intensive Care Unit and Post-Surgical Floor at Chestnut Hill Hospital. Her drive to care made staying home from her job for two weeks a terrible struggle, but it is also why she knew she had to do it: she couldn't risk making her staff or any patients sick after receiving a diagnosis for Covid-19.

It is Katherine's role to support the staff who care for the most critical patients. Whatever support the nurses and other staff needs, she is there. On any given day, she is busy providing PPE, adapting to recommendations from the CDC and Philadelphia Department of Health, and continually communicating with her staff to meet their needs. There have been times when these nurses have had to act as a family for critically ill patients who found themselves alone in the COVID unit. Katherine has seen what the staff of Chestnut Hill Hospital are made of, and she is overwhelmingly proud.

Katherine says that, compared to the people they see in the ICU, her COVID-19 symptoms were "mild". It has been over four months and she still hasn't regained her sense of smell or taste. This is an upsetting loss, but she knows it could have been worse. Her husband and children didn't get the virus, but they still quarantined for two weeks with her, because they knew it was the right thing to do to protect the community. Katherine doesn't want to see any more people suffering from this illness. So, even though it made her angry not to be able to go to work and care for people in that way, she mollified herself with the knowledge that, under these circumstances, staying home is a caring act.

As a leader, Katherine tries to model this caring behavior, advocating for folks to care not only for others but for themselves. If you can't take care of yourself, you aren't going to be able to take care of other people," Katherine says. She has both seen and experienced first-hand the toll this virus takes on people, families, workplaces, and communities. You have to adapt. Wearing masks, washing hands, socially distancing, and heeding other similar precautions are some of the best ways to care for others and yourselves.

Katherine can't wait to be back socializing on the Avenue with the community she loves so much. So many members of the Chestnut Hill community have communicated their well wishes to Chestnut Hill Hospital, leaving gifts like food, drinks, monetary donations, sidewalk chalk art, and cards. In this way, Katherine, and the entire Chestnut Hill community, have established a circle of caring. Katherine cares for the nurses in the ICU, the nurses care for the patients, and the community shows they care in return. This is one of the most beautiful things that has blossomed during these difficult times: a group of undaunted individuals coming together and putting both their lives and their hearts on the line to inspire, uplift, and care about one another. This is what truly makes a community.