

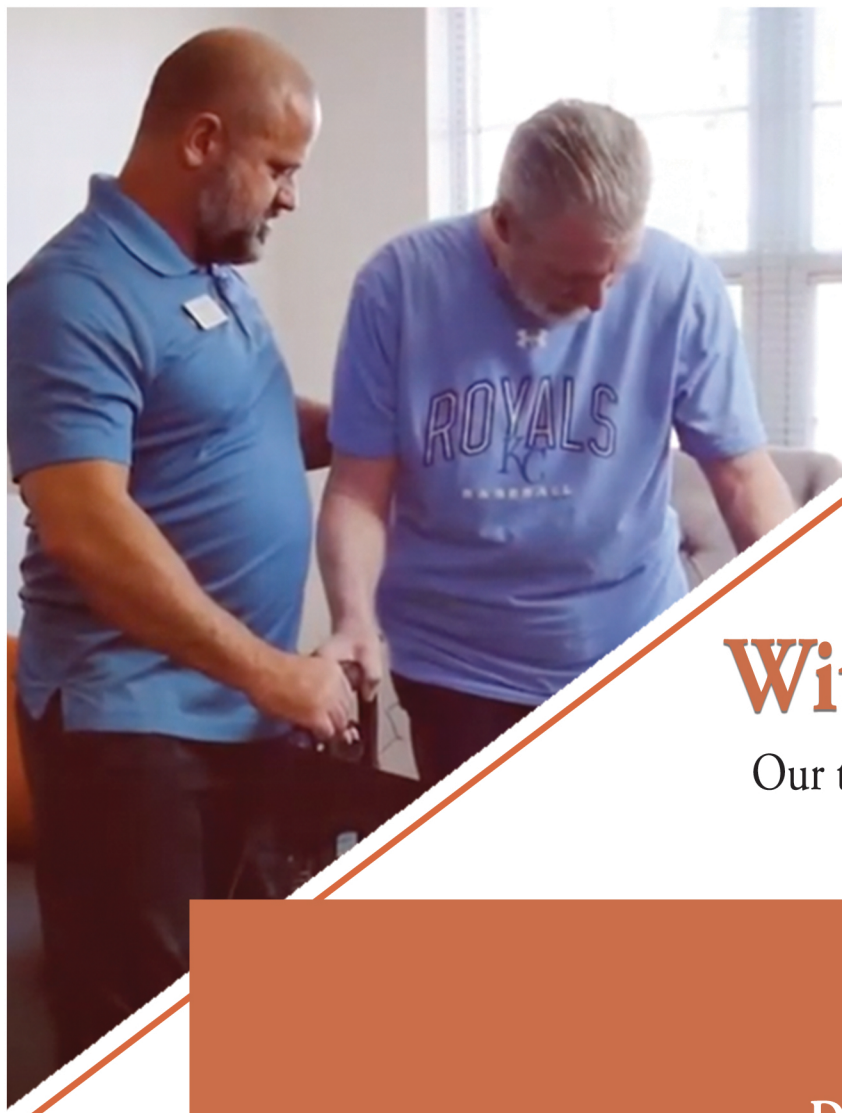
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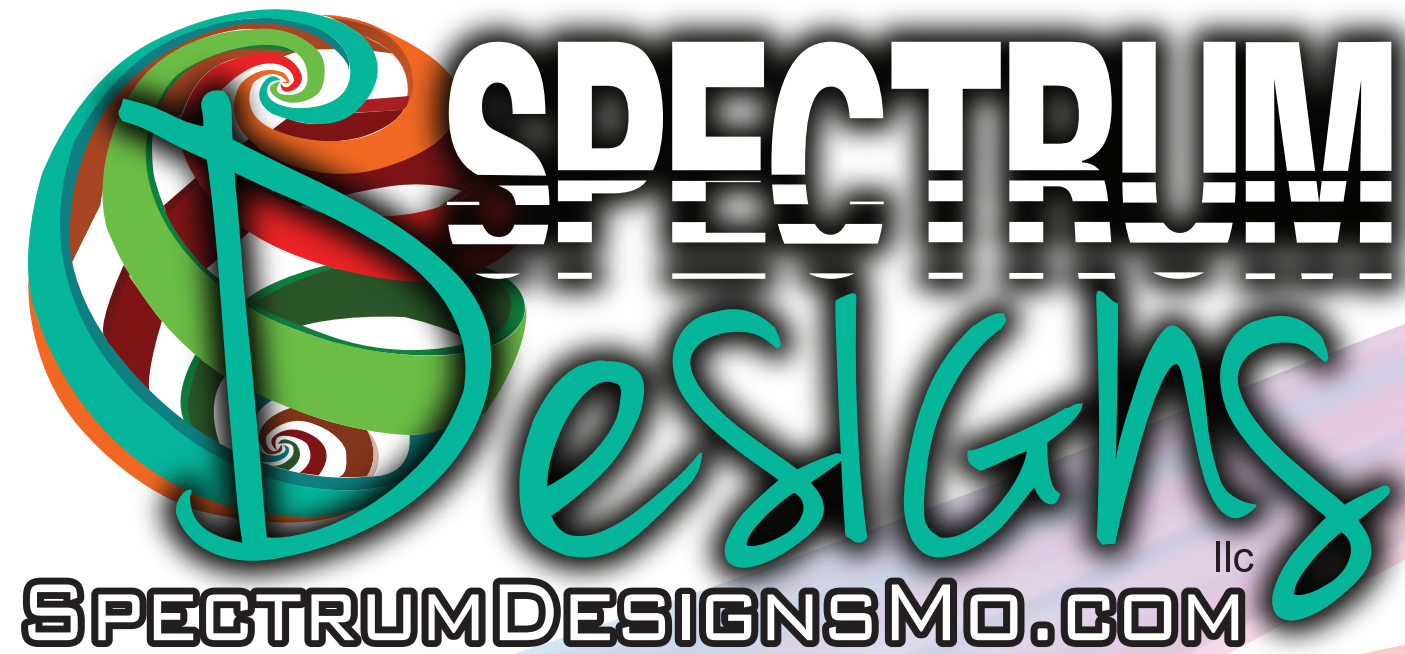
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# Honoring the people *who helped us get through a horrible year*

By: Fines Massey

A little over a year ago when reports of a deadly new coronavirus started to hit the news, none of us could have ever guessed how much that microscopic terror would have on our lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic finally came to Laclede County in April when a government order across the state forced some businesses to shutdown. After a month of lockdown, though, it didn't quite feel real as it hadn't officially crossed our borders yet. It wasn't until May, just after the lockdown ended, that Laclede County had its first laboratory confirmed case, but in the months that followed, thousands more would be infected and dozens would die.

More than 3,260 people have been infected in Laclede County since May 2020. The people who got the virus went through a wide array of experiences to spending a couple weeks locked in at home without any symptoms to spending months in a hospital bed recovering from the effects of it. Unfortunately, several of our neighbors, family and loved ones lost the battle to COVID-19. At the time we were putting the final touches on this magazine, there had been 66 people in our community lost to COVID-19. While this publication is meant to honor the people who have helped us get through this unprecedented time, let's also take a moment and remember those we have lost to the pandemic.

In the beginning, we were told that we just need a couple weeks then a couple months to stave off the pandemic, but, here we are, over a year later, still combatting this invisible enemy. Thankfully, this emotional rollercoaster seems to be nearing the end. Numbers in our county have been on a downward

with vaccination numbers growing. We're not out of the woods yet, but you can definitely see the light at the end of the tunnel.

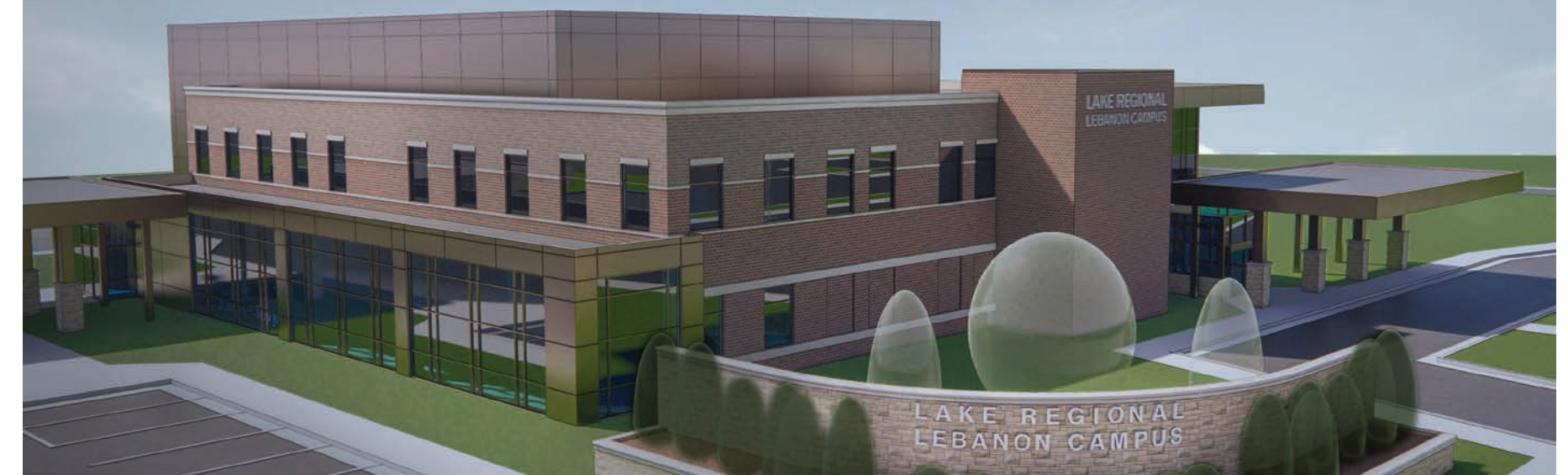
I know that for months we've lived through this and are probably (for sure) tired of all of the talk about COVID-19, but we here at the Laclede County Record felt it was important for us to thank all of the people who have gone above and beyond their normal duties to help us survive this pandemic. We've talked to everyone from nurses to grocery store clerks to the people at the school that make virtual learning possible. This is by no means a comprehensive list of those who helped us navigate the troubled waters of 2020, but we hope this sampling of those considered essential will honor all of us who have worked harder and harder to make an impossible situation better. Thank you everyone for all of your hard work.

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laurie  
Sanwald

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Being diligent in the fight against COVID in the school

Lead custodian for Boswell Elementary School, Laurie Sanwald, has been with the school for 13 years. The 4th through 5th grade school that's part of the Lebanon R-3 School District closed last spring, like most, but Sanwald and the custodians stayed for another two weeks to deep clean. Considered a front line of defense against COVID, their work is even more essential now than ever before to help keep schools safe.

"Prior to us leaving we had gone through our entire building. We have a Kaivac machine (cleaning equipment) and we cleaned all the hallway walls, disinfected the classrooms," Sanwald said.

She explained the Kaivac machine is a new purchase since the pandemic. It mists disinfectant on hard surfaces to kill viruses and germs. Certain "hot spots" like the nurse's office are misted with disinfectant daily along with any areas where quarantined students may have been.

At the beginning of this school year, Sanwald said the custodians were given a specific cleaning routine they go through to sanitize the school. All the handrails throughout the building get wiped down with disinfectant three to four times a day. Sanwald also said the night custodians are wiping door handles, cleaning handrails, and bathrooms are cleaned more often than before the pandemic.

"I have an amazing crew that I work with. If it wasn't for all of them, we couldn't do what we're doing," Sanwald said.

To keep the students as socially distanced as possible, half of them

eat in the lunchroom while the others have lunch in their classrooms. While it's been effective in socially distancing them, Sanwald admits that it has created more work for the custodians. Lunch time clean up that is normally limited to the cafeteria is now in the classrooms as well. The teachers are also wiping the desks between classes to help sanitize.

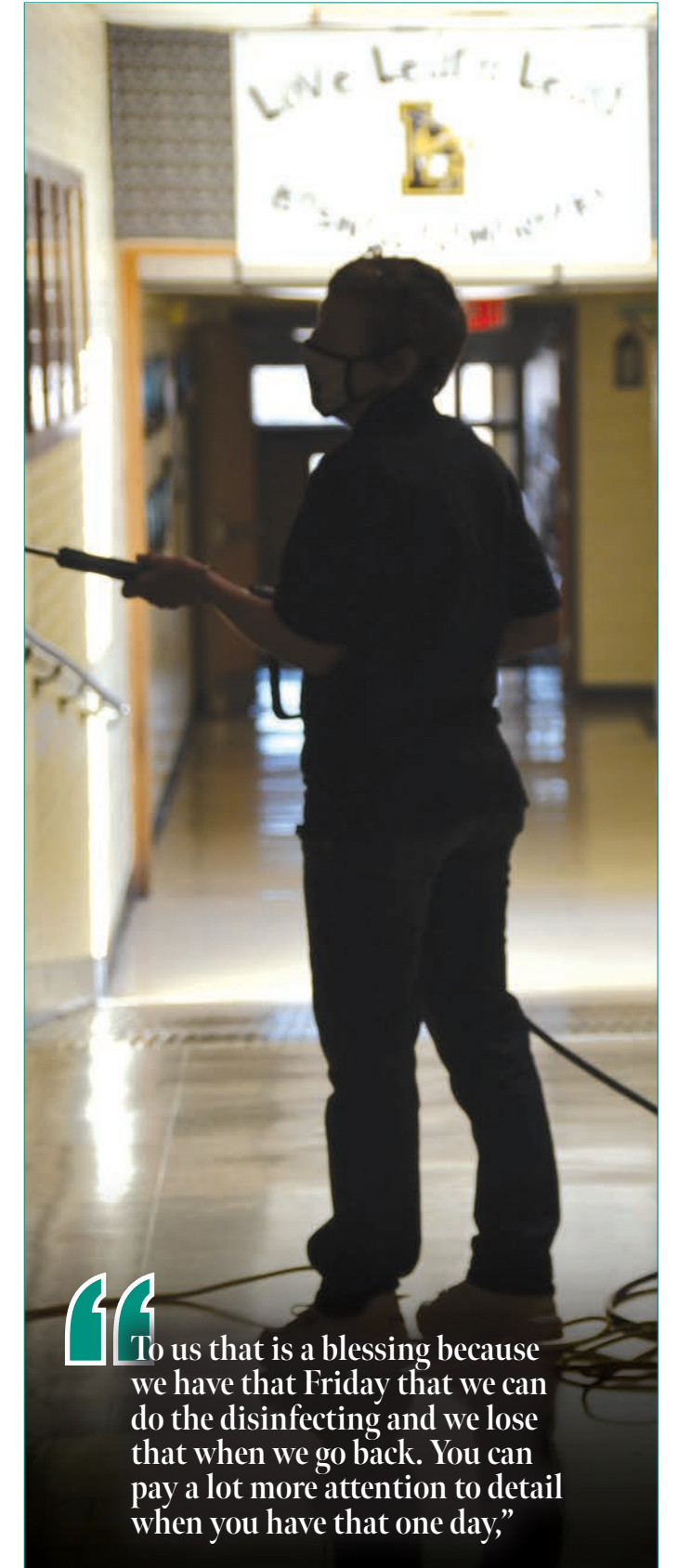
"Every classroom district wide gets a bottle of disinfectant and they get a container of hand sanitizer to put in the classrooms," Sanwald said. She mentioned that the kids are good about wearing masks and all the staff has been diligent in a situation that has created extra work for everybody involved. Boswell continues to be on the four-day-a-week schedule for the seated classroom. One of the advantages of this from a custodial perspective is cleaning.

"To us that is a blessing because we have that Friday that we can do the disinfecting and we lose that when we go back. You can pay a lot more attention to detail when you have that one day," Sanwald said.

Sanwald believes the COVID numbers at Boswell are low because of everyone's diligence. In moving forward, she mentioned that everyone is ready for a return to normal.

"Everybody wants this over. It's been a lot of work for everybody district wide," She said and added she is also thankful that none of her crew has had COVID.

"I know that we do everything possible to try to keep the kids healthy," Sanwald said.



"To us that is a blessing because we have that Friday that we can do the disinfecting and we lose that when we go back. You can pay a lot more attention to detail when you have that one day,"





pat  
*Shumate*

Story and pictures by Laura L. Valenti

## Church group has made 5,000 masks and counting

When the pandemic first hit, there was a scramble to find face masks, so Pat Shumate and her friends at First United Methodist Church began a new ministry to make masks for the maskless.

"You couldn't buy a mask in so many places and there simply were not enough of them," Shumate said. "My sister lives in an apartment building in New Jersey. We made a few for her and then ended up sending masks for multiple residents of her apartment building. Then someone else had relatives or friends in Texas or another town or state who couldn't find any and soon, we were busy making more."

The group, which never had a name other than the FUMC (First United Methodist Church) mask team, made 300 masks for a veterans' home in Columbia and many that went to the Lebanon hospital as well as masks for several of the local clinics.

"In the beginning, they needed masks for their employees to have one at work and another to take home," Shumate said. "They also needed more masks for their patients when they came into the clinic. We also made them for local retailers, who liked to keep a few at their door."

She is quick to point out that this was always a team effort.

"I was just one of about 20 at our peak time this spring. We had people on the team who were laundering, ironing, and cutting as well as sewing. Sue Harkness, for instance, has been an amazing cutter. She has cut out over 3,000 masks," Shumate said.

At this point, as the urgency has eased to some extent with the availability of masks from a variety of sources now, there are only three women still sewing for the project. In addition to Shumate, Linda Steinke, a retired administrative

assistant at the Methodist Church; and Annette Hutton, a retired teacher, continue sewing masks.

"Linda is just amazing and has made so many masks," Shumate added. "We have made a total of 5,000 masks and I think Linda must have made 2,000 of those. She is an absolute mask machine!"

Hutton joined the group when the church contacted the local Retired Teachers Association to solicit more help.

All of this has been accomplished by the individual women sewing and doing the other work involved in their own homes. They have also found a unique way to distribute their masks in that they have set up a small plastic cabinet with drawers at the Third Street door of the church that offers free masks to anyone who needs or wants one.

"There are masks for men, women and children," Shumate said. "We make the ones for the men with longer elastic, for instance. One of our members is now working on new patterns she's found that work better for those who wear glasses and another for men with beards. There's just all kinds of variations now."

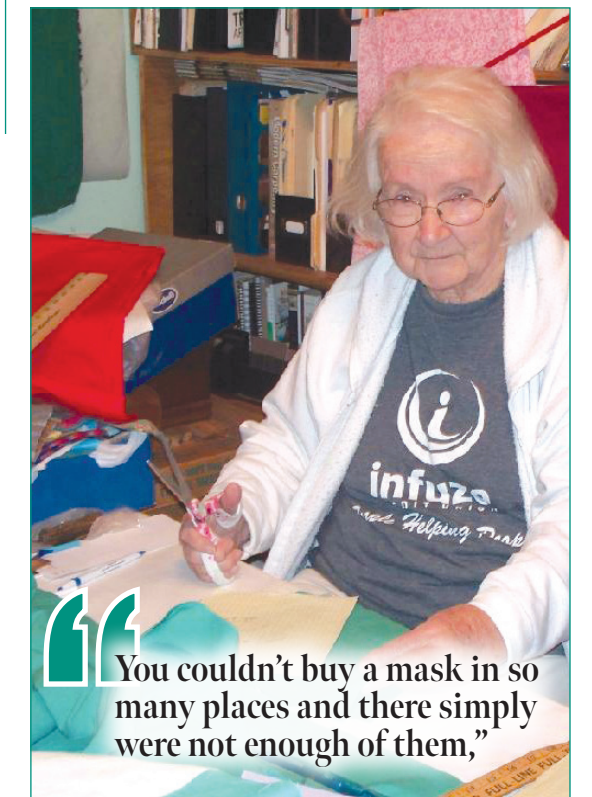
Shumate is a retired Christian educator and her husband, Scott, is a former Lebanon city administrator and Public Works director. Service in one form or another has long been their life. After retiring from their careers, they worked for several years with the NOMADS, a group sponsored by the national Methodist church. They traveled with their camper to various states, helping in service areas from clean up after Hurricane Katrina to light construction projects in Texas, Oklahoma, Wyoming, Illinois and Iowa.

"We worked on 15 different projects and really enjoyed that," Shumate said. Sadly, Scott's health finally ended their

traveling days. They have three grown daughters, two of whom live in Lebanon with their four grandchildren.

In addition to Pat Shumate, the original members of the mask team included: Linda Steinke, Sue Harkness, Annette Hutton, Lea Keen, Shirley Park, Judy Wistuba, Ann Seibert, Althea Winkel, Carol Bauer, Gail Anderson, Bette Baldwin, Dana McAllister, Ginny Bounds, Rose Lease, Joan True, Ruth Johnson, Sleeper Methodist Church; Charlotte Medley and Alberta Chasten were also members of the original team and both have since passed away from COVID-19.

"This sewing project has been great fun," Shumate said. "I've really enjoyed it. It is another way to serve—to serve one another, to serve God, while staying home and keeping our families safe."



"You couldn't buy a mask in so many places and there simply were not enough of them,"



Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## School nurses are on the frontline of the pandemic, trying to keep the community's kids safe

Tracy Millsap RN has been with Lebanon R-3 School District for 16 years, starting out as a school nurse and eventually moving up to the director of nursing for the district.

Millsap started her career in urgent care and OB at Mercy Hospital before making the transition to a public school health professional. Millsap is responsible for overseeing the health of about 4,000 students.

Beginning in 2020, the challenges of her job grew tremendously.

"I never dreamed I'd be dealing with a pandemic in a school district in my lifetime," Millsap said. "It's very much an unknown."

Millsap works out of the Lebanon Middle School but says that each building has its own nurse and daily procedures that are followed to monitor and contain the spread of any infections, including COVID-19. Millsap said that this school year they have adopted some new policies.

"Everyone is required to wear a mask. Between each class the teachers clean at each desk. They wipe them down each time," Millsap said. She added that students are no longer allowed to drink at the water fountains and need to bring their own water bottles every day.

The nurses' office at each building keeps bottled water and masks for the students that forget to bring them. To reduce surface exposure in the lunch line, the cafeteria has switched to disposable plastic forks and spoons.

Millsap said the district also tries to restrict who comes in and out of the building and they meet with Zoom as much as possible.

Millsap was also able to secure free COVID testing for all students and staff through the state. The rapid 15-minute

antigen test is available by a doctor's order from the state for those students and staff that are symptomatic. There are some requirements handed down by the state for test administrators.

"All the nurses in the district have to take the training. The only person allowed to administer the test is a nurse with a license," Millsap said. "It's a good service."

Contact tracing of COVID positive students is another responsibility that Millsap is using to reduce the spread of the virus.

"That's been probably the hardest thing to take on in addition to our other duties," Millsap admitted.

The school keeps track of seating charts everywhere from the cafeteria to the classroom so that if a student tests positive for COVID, it's easier to discern which other students or faculty might be exposed. Millsap said that the district works with the Laclede County Health Department for this process. She said that a list is put together of students that would be considered a close contact and the Health Department then makes the decision to quarantine.

Millsap says that herself, the superintendent, and several members of the administration meet weekly by Zoom with the Health Department. They watch the numbers of COVID positives in the district and get advice from the health department.

During the day, the contact tracing is done by each nurse in their respective buildings. It's after hours or on the weekends that Millsap and Erin Bowman RN step in. Bowman is the nurse for Lebanon High School.

"Erin and I are on call all the time with it," Millsap said, mentioning that it's a necessity to prevent those in close contact

from coming to school the next day.

The district also has an online dashboard that allows parents and faculty to know how many positives are in each building and how many are currently considered close contact.

One of the issues in controlling the spread of COVID, according to Millsap, is dealing with symptoms that mimic it. Students could have influenza, allergies or the common cold and the nurses in each building must make the decision to test or not. Millsap says the district has been very diligent about preventing the spread of COVID and keeping numbers low in a unique and challenging time.



tracy  
Millsap



"I never dreamed I'd be dealing with a pandemic in a school district in my lifetime, it's very much an unknown."



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eric  
*Walker*

Story and pictures by Laura L. Valenti

## Walker has known that he wanted to be an officer since childhood

Eric Walker is a newer officer with the Lebanon Police Department, having arrived in August 2019.

Walker previously served with the Warrensburg Police Department for four years, having attended college and the police academy there. While Warrensburg and Johnson County boast a larger population than Laclede County, with the University of Central Missouri and its students located there, Walker has found Lebanon and Laclede County to be what he hoped for and expected.

"Everyone has been very kind here," he explained recently while serving on a day shift. "The police chief here is great. You really couldn't ask for better."

Walker, more than most his age, knows what he is talking about when it comes to comparing Lebanon, his current home, to other places. Originally from South Korea where he was born, Walker characterizes himself as a "military brat who has been all over."

"I went to school while my father was in the military, so I attended middle school in Washington state, my junior year of high school in South Carolina but actually graduated high school in Japan," he added with a smile. "I enlisted in the Army National Guard and left there as a lieutenant. I ended up in Warrensburg for college and then found the police academy there and graduated from that. Ever since I was a kid, I knew I wanted to join the military and be a policeman."

Despite having lived in international settings as well as US locations, literally from coast to coast, Officer Walker said he did not have any particular problem adjusting to Lebanon, perhaps since he was coming to what is his fiancé's hometown.

Like the rest of the world and especially the Lebanon Police Department, he

has found his world to be significantly impacted by COVID-19. Like all LPD officers, Officer Walker currently wears a black mourning band across his badge in memory of Lebanon Officer Kendle Blackburn who died earlier this year of the virus. "I was lucky to meet Kendle before he died. He was a really friendly person, a very nice guy."

Since the pandemic began, officers have had to change "procedures to better prevent the spread of this disease," Walker explained.

"When we arrive on any scene and approach others, we always wear our masks," he said. "If we are dealing with a minor crime, we take down the information, take a photo of those involved and issue a citation. When we take someone into our cars now, we wear our masks while transporting someone we've taken into custody."

Walker added that the pandemic is causing the Laclede County Jail to take

more precautionary steps.

"This virus has made everyone's job more difficult but we are doing all we can to make people feel more comfortable," he said.

According to Walker, the best part of his job is helping people, such as when he can assist a victim of theft regain his or her property. On the other hand, he admits the worst part is being the first on the scene of a serious accident or to see the very worst of human nature.

Like all of us, he is anxious to see the end of the pandemic. He and his fiancé are looking forward to traveling.

"I love to travel and I especially like to eat the foods from other places like Indian, Chinese and Japanese food," Walker said. Walker, now of Lebanon, still has family in California, South Korea and Vietnam, it's a safe bet, he'll be embarking on new adventures as soon as it is safe to do so.



"We have, of course, had to change our procedures to better prevent the spread of this disease."





rebecca  
Lohr

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Facing the challenges of connecting with students during a pandemic

When Joel E. Barber C-5 closed last March because of COVID, school counselor Rebecca Lohr said her immediate concern was losing contact with students.

Lohr is a certified school counselor for grades kindergarten through 12th and has been at JEB for 15 years.

JEB continued to provide meals to students after the doors were closed. To connect with the kids, Lohr volunteered to help with food distribution.

"It was a good way to connect with the parents and families. It helped to strengthen our connection," Lohr said.

It became a completely different role than that of student counselor. She said the positive impact of the school providing for families during quarantine was exciting to see. At the onset of quarantine Lohr mentioned it being a new and novel experience for the kids, but eventually she could see a change. Families were stressed from having to juggle work and the responsibilities of school from home. She also mentioned the constant bombardment of negative news on TV and social media.

"It can be overwhelming to people. I worried about my students," Lohr said. "In our area the mental health system is already overwhelmed. A lot of places are still only doing their counseling virtually," she said, adding that there are some challenges to connecting in a virtual world.

When school resumed in August, JEB took extra measures to keep students and staff safe. A mask policy went in place and the school lunches are served in their rooms rather than the cafeteria. Desks and supplies are sanitized after every class.

As the students started coming back from virtual learning to a seated classroom,

Lohr said other issues became apparent. Where there is normally some diversity in the classroom from an academic standpoint, this became amplified because of quarantine. Some students had been successful with virtual learning while others struggled.

The hope is that students can get back to some sense of normal in their routine including field trips and outings. Lohr said in a normal year, several students at JEB get to participate in the Kiwanis Kids Christmas Shopping, which helps buy clothing for children in need. This year was different.

"Normally we take students, and they go shopping. This year we did what they called ghost shopping," she said.

Families filled out a form of needs and Kiwanis Club volunteers did the actual shopping.

"I feel like the big component of that is the whole experience. Getting to go to the store. Kids really enjoy that. We ride over on the bus. We missed that," she said.

Lohr took several of the JEB staff with her to help fill the Christmas list and is glad that needs were met but admits it wasn't

the same experience.

A lot of the students' holidays looked different too. Many didn't go to grandparents or family gatherings. Lohr admitted that different isn't always a negative but people like their routines and some are feeling like there's no end in sight. The pandemic has especially been hard on the 8th graders from both last year and this year.

"Last year's 8th grade lost out on their field trip," Lohr said the class had always gone to Silver Dollar City. It's an activity that they look forward to and is a long tradition at JEB. Another trip the 8th graders missed last spring was touring their potential high schools of Lebanon and Conway. Lohr is hopeful the current 8th grade class will get that experience but that's still undecided. COVID took away what is normally the most fun and exciting time of the school year.

Some of the blessings Lohr is thankful for has been both the helpful school administration and how everyone seems to be pulling together to fight this common enemy of COVID.

"People are more kind," she said.







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Sam Allen - Support  
Services Director LCS  
Corporal Robert Doublin -  
supervisor of court security  
Heather Officer - Circuit Clerk

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Being versatile to serve the public in a difficult year

Sam Allen is the Support Services Director for the Laclede County Sheriff's Office. Allen, along with Corporal Robert Doublin, who is the first line supervisor in court security, have standards handed down by the Missouri Supreme Court to protect the public from COVID-19 while they are inside the walls of the court room. This includes everyone from lawyers, to litigants, victims, judges, and court employees.

Circuit Clerk Heather Officer works with the Sheriff's Office on court proceedings and the jury selection process.

"The Supreme Court actually has the say over how we run the courts," Allen said.

The court has four operating phases of 0, 1, 2, and 3 to follow based on the guidance of local health departments, judicial partners, and the CDC. The most restrictive rating of 0 can involve a suspension of all in-person court proceedings and rating number 3 considers resuming normal schedules.

At the time of the interview, Laclede County was in stage 1, however, the phases can go back and forth depending on the number of COVID cases locally. Stage 1 also involves limiting numbers to 10 and under in the court if possible. The result has been a bottleneck of court cases waiting to go to court. Jury trials have been pushed back until the operating phase improves and social distancing requirements relax.

"We're probably anywhere from 90 to 120 days behind schedule. Once it breaks open, we're going to be extremely busy," Allen mentioned.

Laclede County has adopted its own preventative program that they call the COVID Marshall Program. It was

designed by Laclede County Sheriff David Millsap along with input from several others in the department. The program is funded by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act and gives the county funds to hire a nurse to take temperatures before persons check in the court. The county was also able to hire workers to clean the court rooms between sessions.

Laclede County has several court rooms, often operating at the same time. Another challenge is each judge has different requirements for how the court room should be conducted with regards to social distancing and how many are allowed inside

the court room. The responsibility for carrying this out is on the bailiffs. Doublin oversees the six-person bailiff team.

"Our primary goal is security," Doublin said. When much of the court's business was put on hold beginning last spring, Doublin and many of those in court security assisted in other areas of the county.

"In phase zero, there's not a lot going on so we disperse. I usually go to the road and work. I work some evenings and nights," Doublin said. Being out on the road more allowed Doublin to witness how the shut down effected the sheriff's office in a different way. More domestic assault cases and drug problems were having to be dealt with, especially during the quarantine of last spring and summer.

The jury selection process has also been altered due to social distancing requirements. Officer came up with a way to move forward while protecting the health of the potential jurors.

"We're using a church auditorium to conduct the voir dire," Officer said. The voir dire is the term for the jury selection

"We are really versatile people. We can change and go in different directions if we have to,"  
- Sam Allen

process. "We can't have jury trials until we get to phase 3," Officer said, mentioning that once this does happen, they have a plan to keep everyone separate and safe.

One of the positives from the past year is discovering how diverse those in law enforcement are and how well they adapt.

"We are really versatile people. We can change and go in different directions if we have to," Allen said.





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dr. karen  
*Hopkins*



Story by Christy Dieman

## Preventative medicine for patients and health care workers

**D**r. Karen Hopkins, the current Chief of Staff for Mercy Hospital Lebanon, has been with Mercy since 1996.

Hopkins is an internal medicine and pediatrics physician who also runs the Mercy Family Medicine Clinic in Richland. She says Mercy is the only health care system she has worked for in her career.

Hopkins said in a normal year the Chief of Staff duties for Mercy would mostly be limited to a few meetings and phone calls once a month.

"With COVID that's not what it's been," Hopkins said, noting that the commitment has been so much more. Hopkins had a spring break family vacation planned early in 2020 but decided to cancel it and spent the time in staff meetings, hoping to prepare the hospital for what was expected to happen due to the virus.

One of the immediate concerns in the spring of 2020 was making sure the staff were protecting themselves and had the right equipment. Along with the extra health precautions came the additional concern of supporting the emotional health of medical professionals at Mercy.

When the virus first hit in the spring of 2020, Hopkins said that much of the business in her clinic in Richland came to a standstill. Patients weren't coming in that needed to be seen because of concerns of COVID exposure. She said many of the patients had chronic health conditions that needed attention. Hopkins and other staff have made efforts to limit exposure for both patients and staff by offering video visits and curbside testing

for COVID so patients don't need to come inside the clinic.

"It totally changed how we did everything," she said.

Hopkins also mentioned the lack of availability of COVID tests initially as an issue.

"At first there weren't a lot of tests. We were trying to prioritize who to test. The sent out test took a long time to get back," she said.

The Mercy clinic in Richland became one of the first clinics in the area to get the rapid test.

Hopkins mentioned that early in the year in 2020 when they started hearing about the virus, one of the first things they did at the Mercy clinic in Richland was order additional PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) supplies.

"I don't know that the community realizes how much sicker COVID patients in the hospital are then somebody, say, with Influenza. How much longer they're in the hospital," Hopkins emphasized. "This is the oddest virus. It just seems like you can have a constellation of symptoms," she said.

Hopkins also stressed the importance of overall good health and its importance in battling COVID if a patient should contract it. Hopkins said some people get overwhelmed with all the concerns about good hand hygiene, wearing masks, social distancing, on top of trying to maintain general good health like weight management and not smoking.

"They're worn out," she said.

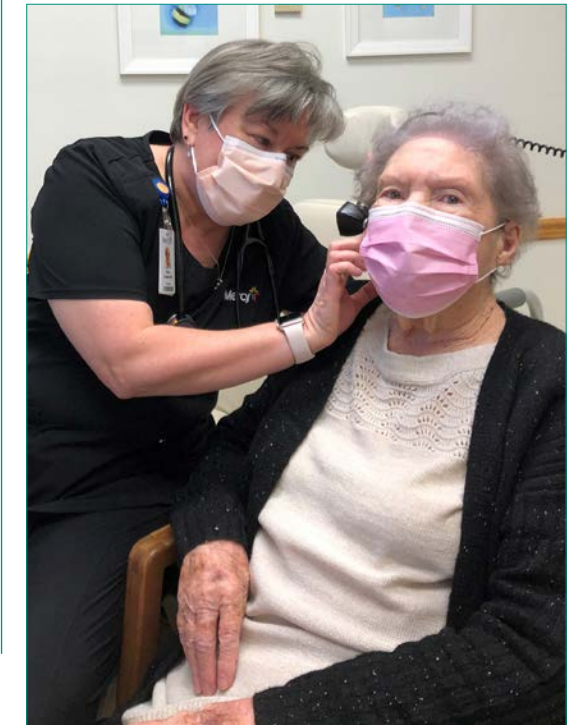
Unfortunately, a lot of the burden of that

responsibility gets placed on health care workers where it doesn't belong, she mentioned. Mercy has taken some steps to help with this.

"Mercy has a COVID at Home program," Hopkins said as part of this remote in-home program, patients can get a phone call with the option to speak to a medical professional.

"That has helped because if we're getting swamped, they have the option," Hopkins said. She said that it gives them confidence that older patients, or maybe a patient with symptoms that are progressing quickly, can get the care they need if necessary. The program is for those that are experiencing milder symptoms that don't need hospitalization.

Her concern going forward is that COVID numbers and hospitalizations will remain high until a good portion of the population get vaccinated.







bennie  
Johnson

Story and pictures by Laura L. Valenti

## People still need groceries in a pandemic

Even with a mask on these days, Bennie Johnson's smile can be seen in her eyes as she often greets her customers by name at her check out lane at Price Cutter. For nearly 16 years, she has been a friendly face, a constant presence, at this store, no small thing in this ever-changing world. "I've stayed at this job because I really enjoy it," she shared recently after her shift at the local grocery store. "When all of this virus started, my son, Eddie Cook, really wanted me to quit because of my age. He was afraid I'd get sick but I told him, 'No, I think I'll be fine.'"

For 30 years before becoming a cashier at what was then Ramey's, Bennie worked for H.D. Lee, the blue jeans manufacturer that has since left town. Whether working a factory job, checking groceries, or even at home, Bennie has always been about serving others here in her hometown of Lebanon.

She took time off work to take care for her parents in their last years, Guy and Gladys Cleland.

"Dad was the county treasurer in years past. He passed in 2000 and my mother, after having a stroke, in 2003. She was 93 years old," Johnson said.

Johnson was also away from her checkout stand a few years ago when she fell while doing yard work and broke her leg.

"I was off for about three months. My sister said she didn't think I should go back to work but I thought it would be good for me, and it has been," Johnson said.

When she is not at work, Bennie likes to read and to be outside. She and her husband, Gene, a Texas Christian University graduate, also enjoyed

concerts of different styles, from the Beach Boys to George Strait, before COVID-19 cancelled most concerts in 2020. Gene teaches political science, part-time at Ozark Technical Community College in Springfield.

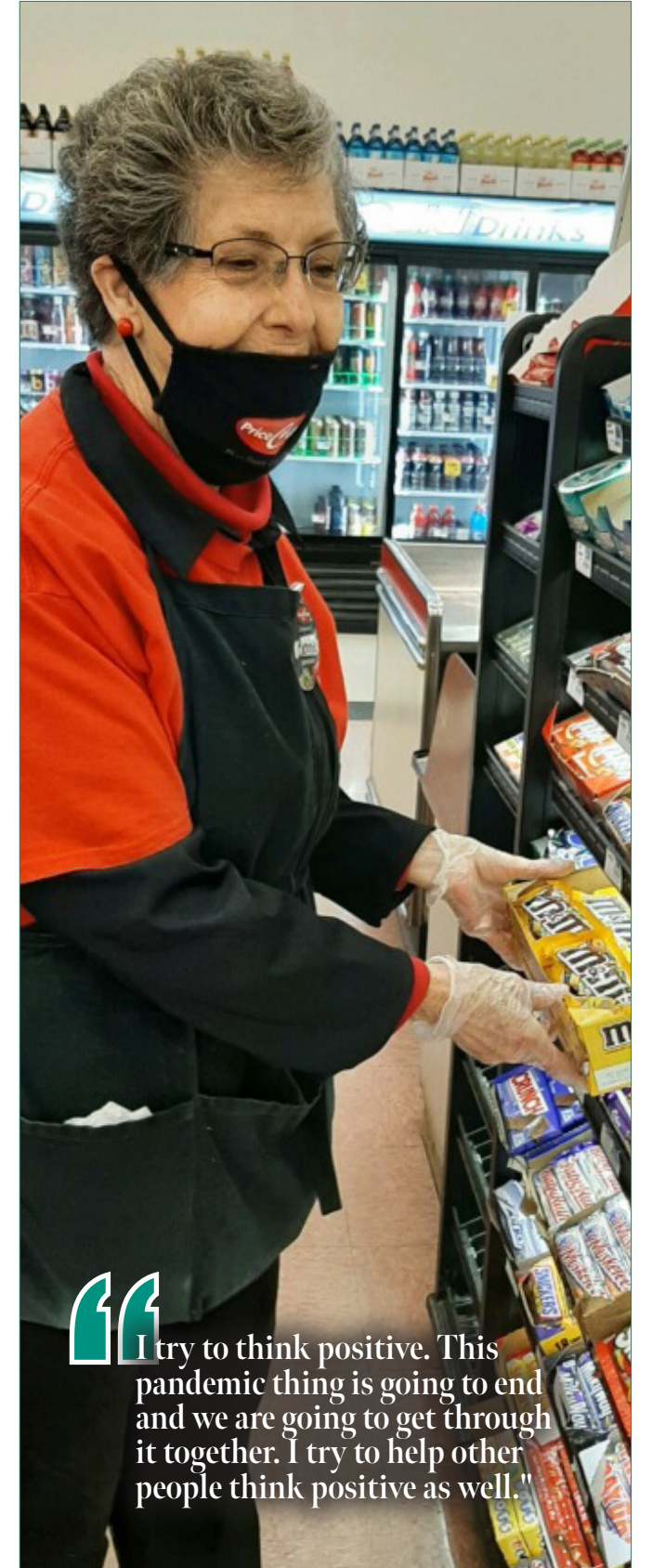
Despite the stress the pandemic has added to everyone's workload, Johnson's perpetual good nature is resilient.

"I really enjoy seeing the people here, some of the same ones I used to see at Lee's. That is the best part of the job. Most people are really nice," she said. "The store has added an individual guard here for each of the cashiers (a clear plastic wall that now separates her workspace from the passing public). I wear gloves all the time and of course, we wear masks. Some also wear shields."

Johnson says that she has been "very fortunate" through the pandemic.

"A few here have been sick but thank goodness, most of us have done well," she said. "The hardest part is that it is difficult for people to hear and to understand me and one another with these masks on," she added with a laugh.

"I try to think positive. This pandemic thing is going to end and we are going to get through it together. I try to help other people think positive as well. People have been good to keep their social distance, even standing in line, most of the time and that's been helpful. We live in different times now," she concluded. "Occasionally, some people tell you how much they appreciate you being here, still doing the job and that's always good to hear. It really helps. And even with all we've had to deal with this past year, I still like working with the public."



**“**I try to think positive. This pandemic thing is going to end and we are going to get through it together. I try to help other people think positive as well.”





allison  
*Tidwell*

Story by Christy Dieman

## Tidwell says the pandemic has been ‘emotionally taxing’ on patients

Allison Tidwell RN juggles responsibilities as a nurse between the Mercy Intensive Care Unit in Lebanon and the Newborn Intensive Care Unit in Springfield.

During a normal season, her work poses its share of challenges. Like most in health care, Tidwell has had to face additional complications in patient care as COVID-19 spread. She has been with Mercy since 2001, initially starting as a tech, but has been in ICU from the beginning.

“A lot about health care has changed,” Tidwell said.

Because Mercy Lebanon is rural and smaller it lacks a COVID specific ICU. Tidwell said extra precautions need to be taken as everyone from pediatric to geriatric, surgical, OBGYN and septic patients can end up in ICU along with COVID patients.

“Our world is COVID right now,” Tidwell said. She added that while Mercy ICU has always been a mix of patients with different medical issues, they are seeing COVID patients as a majority now.

“We want to see people healed. We want to see people get better,” she said.

Tidwell emphasized the extreme nature of COVID and the importance of medical professionals taking extra precautions to abide by Professional Protection Equipment (PPE) standards to protect themselves.

“Many of us have been affected by COVID in our own families,” she said.

One of the overlooked issues in dealing

with COVID has been meeting the emotional needs of patients who can’t have family physically present during one of the most challenging times in their life. In addition to the added health care load, staff is going out of their way to connect patients with family members. They do a lot of facetime calls and phone calls, going the extra mile. In certain situations, patients have family outside of their hospital room window.

Tidwell said that patient’s family members are often not prepared to see how quickly their loved one has regressed after a few weeks of battling COVID in ICU.

“It’s very emotionally taxing. We do our best to do everything we can to get them back to their families. We try to be more than just their nurse,” she said of the toll COVID takes on families.

According to Tidwell, Mercy does make provisions to let family members be at patient’s bedsides. This is especially important at end of life. The chaplains at Mercy in Lebanon have also been extremely helpful in the process of getting family and patients together in some form, Tidwell added.

The stress of dealing with extra workload and emotional challenges due to COVID has hit health care workers across the board.

“We are all overextending ourselves. It’s a very difficult time. We still have to balance our work life and family life,” Tidwell said.

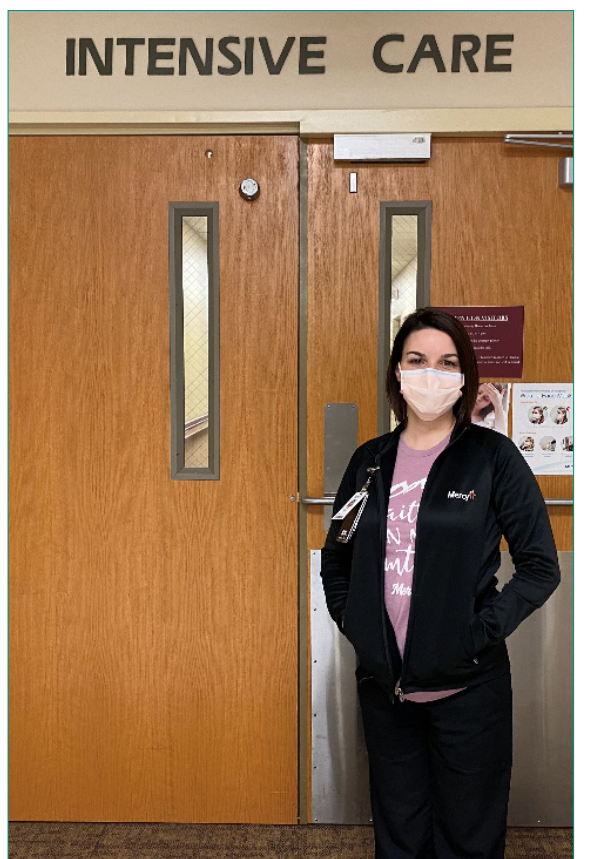
One of the biggest concerns she has is

the mental health of those dealing with COVID because so many are facing increased pressure and demands at work.

“Especially with health care workers,” she said.

Tidwell emphasized the importance and the effort the staff at Mercy has taken to support each other and the patients and their families. She said most people in health care went into it looking to help people, and even though many are overwhelmed right now, that’s still what keeps them going.

“Treating our patients like they’re our family,” Tidwell said.





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pastor david  
*Brown*

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman



## Discovering unexpected blessings during the pandemic

**L**ead Pastor of Lebanon's Hillcrest Baptist Church, David Brown, has been with the church since 2010.

Hillcrest was founded in 1954 in response to a need for a church in the community being built around Hillcrest School. Brown said the church is very mission minded and still feels God wants them in the area, reaching out to the neighborhood.

"The pandemic hit in March (2020) and really changed how we had to do things. The first thing was learning how to manage the online services. We had been doing that previously, but it made us up our game. Helping people stay connected with the church was the most challenging thing," Brown said.

Hillcrest's services went completely online from March until Mother's Day weekend last year, when the church gradually reopened. Brown said they still have several that have not returned to seated services but continue to watch online.

The church has added two services to accommodate for social distancing and have discontinued things like passing the offering plate and Connection Corner. Brown mentioned that Connection Corner was a chance for the church to fellowship over coffee and doughnuts. The church had an online giving option in place before the pandemic but have relied

more on it since. One of the unexpected blessings of their online service is connecting with people that aren't part of the church.

"The Wednesday night prayer time is usually the least attended service. We started asking people to send in their prayer requests. It's just amazing how many we get," Brown said of their livestreamed Wednesday night service.

Hillcrest has unfortunately had several mission opportunities cancelled over the past year. Youth trips as well as summer camp were postponed for a better time.

"We have a big fish fry we do every year in August. We use it to invite the community around us. We have a Thanksgiving meal as well. We didn't do either of those," Brown said.

Another concern was with the church's annual vacation bible school. Brown mentioned the difficulty of keeping children social distanced and dealing with good hygiene. With some creative thinking the church was able to go ahead with their VBS program. They came up with the idea of having parents pick up the crafts and lessons from the church, take them home and watch the lesson online taught by the VBS teachers. They were happy to have more than 200 kids that participated in VBS last summer.

"On the final night, which is our family night, we got a flatbed trailer and had a

little service in the parking lot. We had music. I was able to share the Gospel and we had three children that were saved and baptized from that," Brown said.

A unique experience that came from this was the church decided to forego the inside baptistry and instead the children were baptized in the Gasconade River.

One of the church's biggest local ministries is the Upward basketball and cheerleading program. Hillcrest is one of several other local churches that organize and host the program as an outreach to youth. Brown mentioned there was a big demand for the program that kicked off the last week of January.

"A lot of planning went into that," Brown said, mentioning it was necessary to approach it differently this year due to Covid. The practices and games are spread out to allow for the gyms to empty between. They are also requesting masks and asking for only immediate family to watch the games. An approach taken by most public schools for their sports programs.

The past year has been challenging for churches nationwide, but most will admit to gaining insight and learning from it.

"I've learned to trust the Lord more. I've learned to say, 'if it's the Lord's will' I will do this," Brown said.



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edie  
Percy

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Meeting the nutritional needs of students during COVID

Less than three months into her job as food service director for Joel E. Barber, Edie Percy found herself in the middle of a pandemic.

She has been in food service for several years, so while she had some experience to fall back on, she had no road map for how to handle what happened in March of 2020.

"That was tough," she said.

While JEB shut down after spring break and didn't reopen until the following fall semester, the staff continued to provide meals for students. The school still provides meals for virtual students. Breakfast and lunch are available, a week at a time, for those students that have opted out of the seated classroom setting. The families pick up meals at the school on certain days. Meal pick-up became an unexpected way to connect with students during quarantine and for those that are still learning virtually. One of the challenges Percy faced early on was supply chain issues.

"The biggest struggle at the beginning was finding foods that would transport well and had enough shelf life to be eaten when needed. I still can't get stuff," she said.

Finding food items hasn't been the only scarcity. Because of the way the food is transported now, the school had to rethink food containers and pre-packaged items. To-go containers were suddenly a necessity and hard to find because of the demand. Another unexpected problem was the financial burden.

"Our cost of food went up tremendously," Percy said. This also included plastic wear and containers, portable tables, face masks and

shields, and additional detergents and sanitizers.

When the school year resumed last fall, things looked different as well. Rather than seating kids close together in the lunchroom, meals are now brought to each student in their class. This was in part an attempt to social distance the students. This has been a struggle as well, according to Percy, because of the containers that are available. The state requires certain food items in each meal. Percy said she still can't find five compartment trays, and this causes issues with having to put different foods together in one section.

Percy said that the school district's food distributor has been helpful in locating hard to find items, going the extra mile to make sure they are set in what they need. She also mentioned her team and administration at JEB have helped things go as smoothly as possible.

She tries at least once a week to make a homemade dessert.

"I'm a homemade person," Percy said. She has also had to be creative on the menu because of the shortage of certain foods.

Percy acknowledged she has some concern about getting the virus but most at JEB are in the mindset of good handwashing and wearing masks and the numbers have been low. She is also concerned about the long term health effects of using the added sanitizers and detergents. Like everyone, she is hoping things get back to normal as soon as possible.

"I really miss the kids coming to the cafeteria. My team is awesome and they love the kiddos just as much as I do," she said.



"I really miss the kids coming to the cafeteria. My team is awesome and they love the kiddos just as much as I do."





stephanie  
Embry

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Preparing teachers to teach in a distance learning classroom

Stephanie Embry is the Instructional Technology Coach for Lebanon R-3 Schools.

She was a classroom teacher in both science and personal finance before deciding further her education by getting her Ed.S. in Information Science and Learning Technologies. Embry also has an Online Educator certificate from the University of Missouri.

She says she teaches teachers how to use technology to instruct students. When the pandemic closed school down last spring, Embry and the entire technology department had to pull their resources to prepare close to 4,000 students for a remote online classroom.

"There's seven people in our department. We're really divided between the infrastructure part and the instructional. It's been working together that made all of this happen," Embry said.

Embry has an enthusiasm for technology as a tool for learning. Several years ago, one of the first online classes offered by the district was a Personal Finance class that Embry helped pilot. It was from this class that the district began using online learning to enhance traditional.

"It was eye opening. I could see firsthand that it was different for teachers but also for the kids," Embry said. She also mentioned that learning in a virtual classroom setting was much different for the older more mature students versus kids in the lower elementary grades. A parent or caretaker needed to be available for the much younger students to participate. Students of all ages had to learn to be self-regulators and teachers began to deepen the partnership with parents and students.

Students in R-3 already had a Chromebook to take home with them. Teachers had the ability to do some remote teaching and video conferencing before the pandemic hit. Because of this, the district was more

prepared to take the next step.

When the pandemic hit and learning went completely virtual last year, Embry said some of the things teachers needed help with, along with technology issues, was time management and setting boundaries between work and home life.

"They were getting bombarded," Embry said.

Most learned to set virtual office hours to manage time and stress. Being available all the time was overwhelming many teachers. One of the tools Embry and the technology department created was a Facebook group they called Tech Hive. It was a place where the technology department could put out information and trouble shooting advice for teachers.

Along with the Facebook group, Embry's department created a quick course for teachers that provided best practice advice for online learning. They continued to use the digital learning platforms of Canvas, Google Classroom and Zoom.

"It was a huge learning curve at first," Embry said.

According to Embry, they made the transition by August of 2020 to prepare teachers for blended learning, which she describes as a transition between traditional learning and a more personalized approach. She believes that digital learning can provide students with a more engaging and passion focused learning process. It allows for an individual approach that works with a student's schedule and interests. She mentioned that Lebanon offers fully online, hybrid, or seated class options in a move that puts the student's needs first.

"It took a big pandemic to force a change in how we teach, and I don't ever see us going back to the way it's been. Teachers are seeing the value of what it can do," Embry said. "Technology can add so much more to the traditional seated classroom setting."



“It took a big pandemic to force a change in how we teach, and I don't ever see us going back to the way it's been. Teachers are seeing the value of what it can do,”



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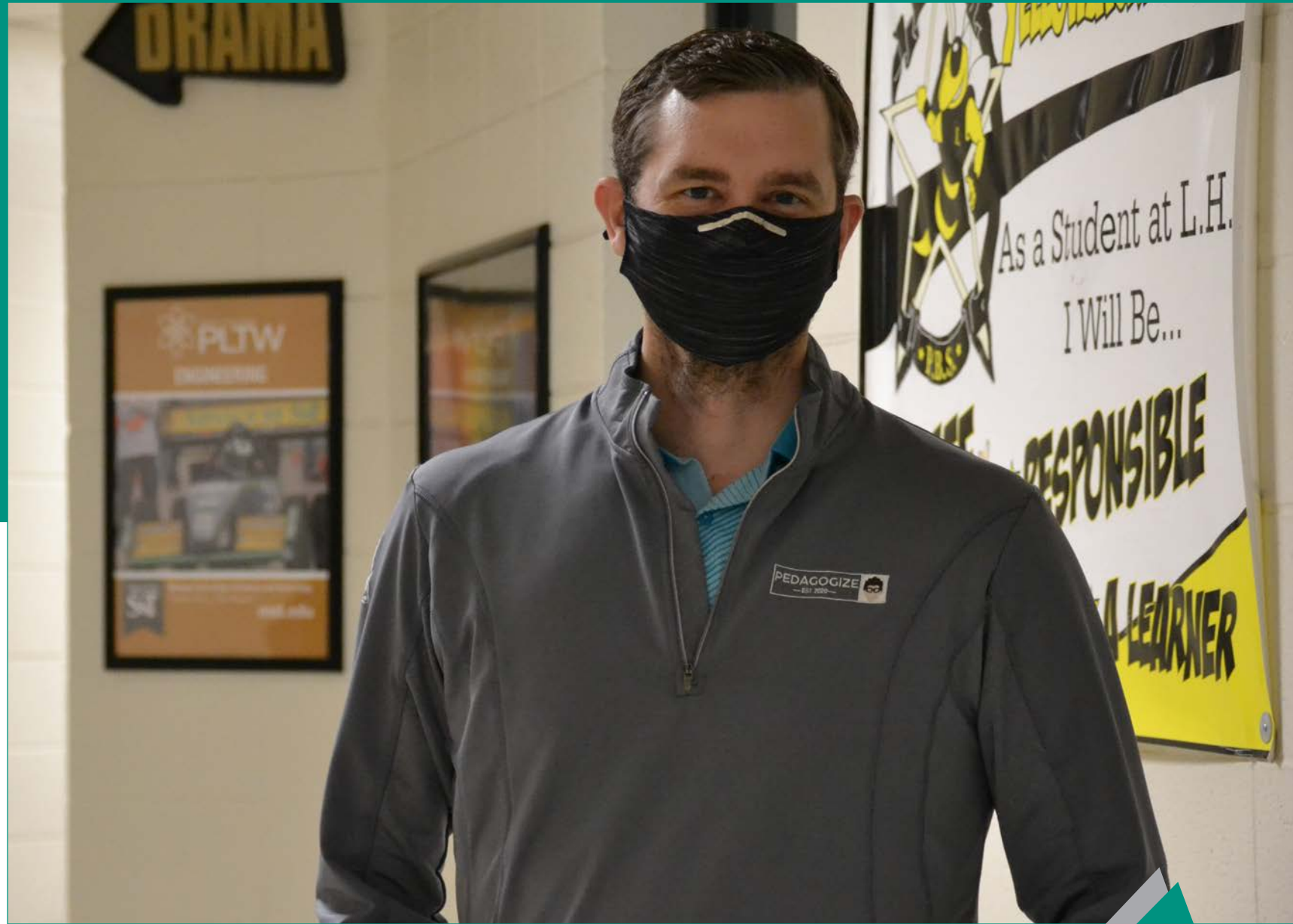
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dr. scott  
*Shellhorn*

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Preparing Lebanon R-3 School District to teach in a virtual classroom

**D**r. Scott Shellhorn is the Director of Technology for Lebanon R-3 School District.

Shellhorn has been with the district since 2008, eventually moving into the Director of Technology position several years later. During spring break last year, he got a phone call from school administration telling him to prepare the technology for the school district going completely virtual because of the COVID-19 shut down.

"We had a very short amount of time to respond, like one weekend. Most were on spring break," Shellhorn said. He knew he and the technology department needed to make this happen as soon as possible. Close to 4,000 Chromebooks and chargers had to be distributed to each student.

Another issue the department faced was making sure every student had reliable internet access. According to Shellhorn, the Lebanon Education Foundation (LEF), schoolboard, central office, and the schools' cell phone carrier partnered together to provide hot spots for families that either did not have access to internet or had limited service. The school also added WiFi access to several of the district's parking lots.

Shellhorn is part of a diverse technology team at Lebanon R-3 that oversees everything from system and network administration to instructing teachers to helping with user support for students and parents. He said that during the closure last, the department tried to maintain as much connection as possible with others in the department by video conferencing. This helped everyone support each other in what was a demanding time for the team.

The department operates an online Help Desk via email as well as answering

phone calls from parents about technology issues. Shellhorn mentioned the Technology Department also has in person office hours to give help, hand out mobile hot spots, and have students bring in Chromebooks to repair.

The team also created a Facebook group called Tech Hive for teachers to find answers to their virtual classroom questions.

"During the closure, that's when we were really working hard with the teachers. Trying to help when and how we can," Shellhorn said. "Going forward has really opened the door to a whole new skill set for our teachers. They're doing really well involving the community," Shellhorn mentioned.

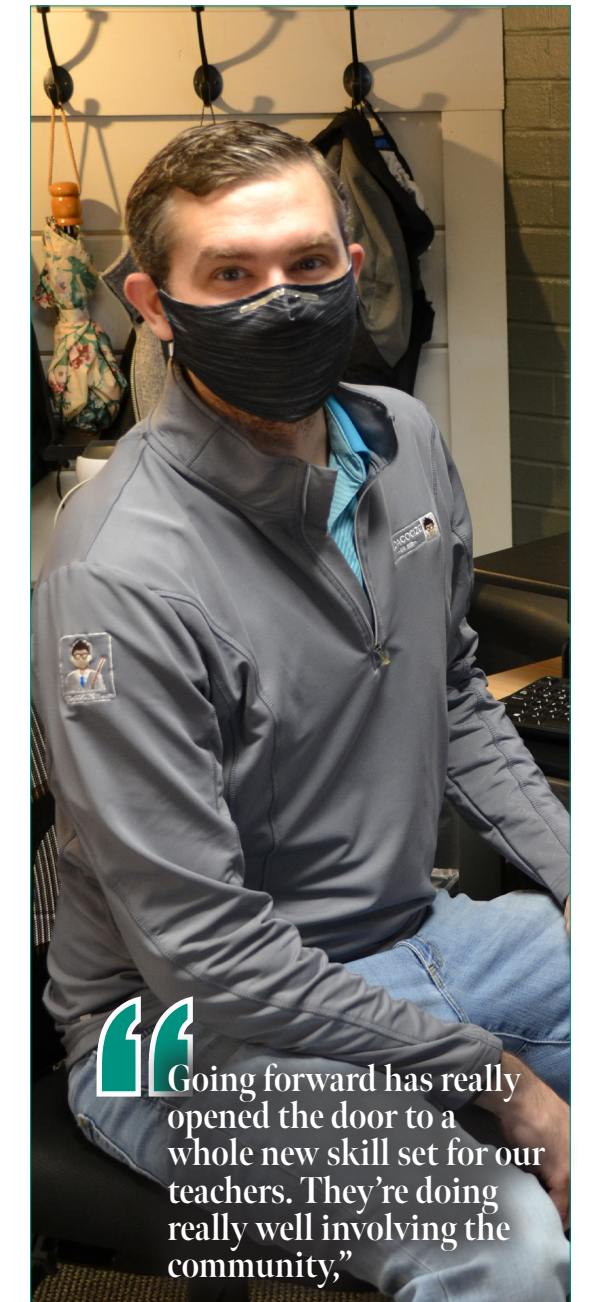
The collaboration with the technology department helped the teachers instruct and engage the students better.

"It goes back to the relationship between teacher and students," Shellhorn said. He mentioned that the teacher and student relationship is a big deal in a seated classroom but if the student is physically not right in front of you anymore things get magnified, good and bad. Online learning can be a good way to individualize instruction, but student accountability takes a big step forward.

Online learning must lean heavily on a student's ability to self-regulate. This can be especially challenging for the younger students, Shellhorn mentioned. "Teachers put out the assignments and its really on the students to deliver. You still have your teacher there with you, but personal responsibility starts to pick up," he said. To make online learning work, especially last spring when it was new for so many, the parents, students, and teachers all had to work with each other to pull it off.

"It's been nice to see that everybody

throughout the district has really risen to the occasion. We saw it as a challenge and we all pulled together and leaned into it together," Shellhorn said.



“Going forward has really opened the door to a whole new skill set for our teachers. They're doing really well involving the community,”





melissa  
*Willoughby*

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Adapting to virtual education and how it has changed teaching

Melissa Willoughby is the 6th through 8th Special Education teacher for Joel E. Barber C-5 School. While this is her first year of teaching, she has been at JEB for six years with five of those as a paraprofessional.

"I always wanted to be a teacher. In March when school closed it was such a shock to everyone. No one really knew what to do next. Luckily, we had a lot of grace given to us as teachers," Willoughby said. Overnight they went from a seated classroom setting to a distance digital learning platform that most weren't prepared for. She said they had to learn quickly, and the JEB administration was right there to help.

Willoughby mentioned teacher collaboration being an important part of getting through that tough time. Educators were concerned with keeping kids engaged, how they were doing, and just getting in contact with them.

"I was at every food pickup because I just wanted to see my students," Willoughby said. JEB, like a lot of schools, continued to serve meals after they shut down in March. The meals were available for pick up at the school. Meal pick-up became an unexpected way for teachers to connect with the kids and their families.

Distance learning at the end of the spring 2020 semester looked different than it did once students started returning in the fall. JEB continues to have virtual learning as an option for several students with the condition that they are passing their classes. One concern initially was students' access to internet. In a rural school district with limited signal that isn't a guarantee. Lesson plans were made available for those students to physically pick up at school.

"It was messy. We did what it took to get through. As educators we do what we have to," Willoughby said. As some students continued with virtual distance

learning in August 2020, accountability became more of a focus. Willoughby said students are required to log in every single school day and expectations are greater than last year.

One of the tools that the school district uses is the digital learning program called Launch. Launch is a third-party education program that is used by educators in several school districts locally. Willoughby said she is thankful the teachers at JEB are not required to instruct both seated and virtual students. Most in education agree that the pandemic has changed the way teachers teach and the way students learn.

"Virtual learning has become a learning style. Some students are very good at it. I think we will always have virtual learning. This pandemic has changed the way we look at education," Willoughby said. Another component has been how educators prepare their lessons. Willoughby said that she now always

has a plan for putting her daily lessons into a digital format if they should close again. "We all have a plan. We are prepared," she said.

Along with the change in the way students are learning, preventative measures had to be taken in the classroom for safety concerns. The students wipe their desk after every class, they aren't using water fountains, and supplies are disinfected. Willoughby said she tries to plan group learning activities differently. She has to consider the social distancing component.

Moving forward Willoughby wants the remainder of this school year to be as routine as possible. Hopeful that the 8th graders get to enjoy their last year at JEB. She said she is thankful to be in a smaller school with good administration.

"Inside the walls of my classroom I try to make it as normal as I can. We definitely want to celebrate them and their accomplishments," she mentioned.





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L to R seated: Alicia Morgan, Loring Admire, Amanda Brown, Alicia McAtee  
L to R standing: Kim Smith, Leslie Anderson, Lois Curran, Angie Maples, Kim Bailey, David Wyant

laclede co.  
*Health Dept.*

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## The Laclede County Health Department continues to offer contact tracing to protect the community from COVID-19

When the first official case of COVID hit Laclede County in the spring of 2020, the staff at the Laclede County Health Department began a seven day a week contact tracing process to help slow the spread of the virus.

Kim Smith RN, the Director of Nursing for the LCHD, has a team of several other RNs working with her on contact tracing. Nurses Alicia McAtee, Lois Curran, Kim Bailey and David Wyant work together to contact trace for Laclede County. Handling the initial wave of cases, according to Director of Nursing, Kim Smith, was a shock.

"It was so overwhelming. It was beyond a challenge," Smith said. Contact tracing involves calling every person who tested positive for COVID, documenting their symptoms and any underlying health conditions, and where they think they contracted the virus. The LCHD also must get information about where the patient has been for two days before showing symptoms. If requested, letters must be sent to employers or school systems for quarantine purposes.

Smith said many of the counties surrounding Laclede have discontinued contact tracing for several reasons including the lack of staff to handle it. Eventually the LCHD hired additional contact tracers to help with some of the phone and paperwork. The department's second round of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) funds have not been approved, and according to Smith, there is concern going forward.

Many of the services offered by the LCHD have been suspended for a time. Alicia McAtee RN said much of that has to do with protecting the staff.

"We haven't done pregnancy testing, DNA, car seats, due to extended

exposure," McAtee said. She also mentioned the LCHD does not offer COVID testing either. Many of the hospitals, clinics and now several schools offer the rapid testing.

Lois Curran RN has been with the LCHD for several decades.

"I don't think a lot of people have any idea how this has effected the Health Department. The magnitude of it. I've been here 44 years and I've never seen anything like this. I went through H1N1 and I thought that was bad but nothing like this," Curran said.

Contact tracing of communicable diseases is something the department handles on an almost daily basis. What makes COVID different is the volume of potential exposures to notify. David Wyant RN admits to the difficulties he has seen with COVID.

"One case impacts so many people," Wyant said.

Like so many in health care, the extra workload and time away from family hasn't been the only issue. Kim Bailey RN mentioned the emotional weight of dealing with positive cases.

"It's really hard when you do an interview with a positive case, sounds like they're doing good. Couple days later you find out they're in the hospital, later you find out they passed away. That hits us hard," Bailey said.

Handling the tremendous amount of COVID related phone calls the office now receives has been the job of LCHD office staff Leslie Anderson, Angie Maples and Amanda Brown. The department has seven phone lines and according to the staff, it's not uncommon for all to be ringing or busy. When COVID first hit, many of the calls were from people who were scared and confused.

The staff mentioned the largest spike in COVID cases came after Thanksgiving when they were walking into the office in the morning to between 60 and 80 cases a day. Administrative assistant Lorin Admire said they have been thankful for the community support like gift baskets and food for Thanksgiving. "A shout out to our companies here in town, the churches, the outpouring from our community," Admire said.



"I don't think a lot of people have any idea how this has effected the Health Department. The magnitude of it. I've been here 44 years and I've never seen anything like this. I went through H1N1 and I thought that was bad but nothing like this"





lisa  
Mizer

Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## Helping Laclede County find employment and improve workforce skills during the economic downturn of COVID-19

Missouri Job Center Lebanon supervisor Lisa Mizer has helped people with their employment searches for 11 years.

The MJC is part of the Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development. The center provides job seekers opportunities to improve their job search skills including access to adult education and literacy programs, and access to printers and computers for their job search.

“A lot of people don’t know what we do. There’s no fee. We’re not a placement agency but we will job search with them, help them do a resume and do mock interviews,” Mizer said.

Another service the center provides is helping employers find skilled workers. Mizer said the center holds job fairs. When COVID arrived last year, the center had some changes to deal with.

“Missouri Job Centers closed to the public in March 2020 and reopened in a phased-in approach throughout the summer, depending on COVID-19 cases,” Mizer said. She added that Missouri Job Centers across the state began doing many services online and quickly set up a call center to assist virtually and route calls to staff who were working from home. The center followed precautions as things reopened. “Extra cleaning was implemented, guidelines for social distancing and masks enforced,” Mizer said.

Another precaution was requiring customers to schedule appointments to keep the center less populated and to allow for better social distancing.

“We set appointment slots every 15 minutes. We pre-register them and they can complete the applications prior to that day. When they come here, they’re interviewing with the employer,” Mizer said. The interviewees can create an account and begin their application at [www.jobs.mo.gov](http://www.jobs.mo.gov).

Mizer said the staff at the center spent some time last year helping the Department of Labor aid people with their unemployment claims. Once businesses started reopening, the center was able to transition back to helping people gain skills and return to work. One advantage, according to Mizer, is the staff at the center has become much more efficient in helping job seekers virtually.

Mizer said the MJC in Lebanon has five staff members under her direction, including one that is still working from home, and a temporary CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) professional. She mentioned that the Lebanon area has more job openings than people to fill them. Many of the once in-person job fairs and hiring events like those offered through the Office of Workforce Development went completely virtual in the summer of 2020. Mizer mentioned that some of those job fairs were focused on specific high-need industries such as health care and manufacturing.

“Ten virtual job fairs are planned every other week for spring of 2021. The Office of Workforce Development has also focused on helping Missourians get training as the economy recovers.

Coursera courses were offered for free to all Missourians, and CompTIA (Computing Technology Industry Association) training and certifications are available now for those eligible,” Mizer stated.

The Office of Workforce Development partnered with Coursera, the online education and college course provider, last year to help Missourians gain job skills during the economic challenges that happened due to COVID-19.





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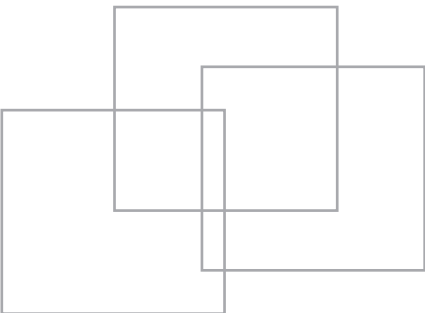
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# durham Company

Jon Chastain and Don Anderson



Story and pictures by Christy Dieman

## An essential company meets the demands of production while maintaining COVID safety standards

The Durham Company's Vice President of Sales Jon Chastain and Lean Coordinator Don Anderson have had a year of adapting to the challenges of COVID and its impact on the manufacturing industry.

Chastain, a 46-year employee of the company, said he genuinely enjoys his job and felt like Durham was an essential company even before the pandemic.

"We produce metering equipment for the utilities industry, and we supply product all over the U.S. and a few foreign countries," Chastain said.

One of the first things the company did early in the pandemic was to reach out to utility companies for letters officially deeming them an essential workforce. Durham customers include municipalities, investor-owned utilities, and electric coops including the City of Lebanon and Laclede Electric.

According to both Chastain and Anderson, the company was experiencing record growth leading up to the pandemic because of the construction boom along with the migration of people out of larger cities to more rural areas. Keeping up with production was a challenge pre-pandemic but became much more pronounced when COVID hit. A very competitive market last year had them short on help.

"We've reorganized and restructured to increase our production and output," Chastain said. He mentioned that some of the company's product availability is still extended well beyond normal because of the timing of a boom in demand alongside the difficulties COVID has placed on manufacturing nationwide.

Another big change has been the suspension of most sales related traveling to other areas of the country.

"Most of our customers are still in lock down mode so in person visits are rare," Chastain said. He added that Durham has also closed to in-person vendors to protect their workers.

"We do a lot of virtual meetings. Zoom meetings are just a way of life for use," he said.

Virtual meetings aren't restricted to out-of-state customers. Most of Durham's in-house meetings are now held virtually.

Anderson, mentioned that they work closely with the Laclede County Health Department to put as many safety measures in place as possible. They also have a team that meets virtually every week to discuss how well that is going. "It's been a challenge, but we've worked as hard as we can to make them safe," Anderson said. This includes social distancing, masks, and encouraging people to stay home if they are sick.

Travel restrictions placed on outside service technicians has created another challenge for Durham.

"They won't come unless we're COVID

free for a few days. We've had to learn to adapt and work on our own machines. Sometimes over the phone," Anderson said. One silver lining in this going forward is the challenge it's placed on them to think outside the box. Anderson, a 25-year employee at Durham, said he thinks this has helped them to be more adaptable and to change quicker to the circumstances when needed.

In a season that has been unpredictable and stressful for some many, those at Durham have had an equal share in those difficulties.

"We recognize that our employees have had to deal with this emotionally as much as we have had to deal with it business wise. We've had employees that have been quarantined. We had employees that have had COVID and aren't able to come to work. There's always a fear that everybody has," Anderson said, mentioning that Durham lost a long-time loved employee to COVID. It was an emotional time where the company pulled together to support the family.







theresa  
*Anthony*

Story and pictures by Laura L. Valenti

## Staff and residents are like family at Cedarhurst

The news has been filled with the tragedies occurring in nursing homes and assisted living facilities across the country as COVID-19 has wreaked havoc upon these highly vulnerable populations.

Theresa Anthony, a registered nurse at Cedarhurst, Lebanon's newest assisted living and memory care facility, is one of the local dedicated workers, making certain Lebanon does not follow such a tragic national trend.

"Cedarhurst has been open about a year and that's how long I've been here," she shared recently after her daily shift. "I've been an LPN since 1988 and became an RN in 2010. I worked for 10 years at Mercy Hospital here in Lebanon."

Like a number of professionals in her field, Anthony has worked in several different medical venues over the years such as the hospital medical-surgical floor as well as elder care. She was a nurse at Arrowhead Senior Living at Osage Beach before coming to Cedarhurst, where she is now the charge nurse on her shift.

Her mother-in-law, Zola Anthony was a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) and then a CMT (Certified Medical Technician) for many years.

"She lost the lower portion of one arm in an industrial accident and still managed to raise seven kids as a working mother. She helped with her grandkids, too. She was a big influence on me in terms of becoming a nurse," Anthony said. "Two of her daughters also became nurses, so she had quite the impact on several of us."

Theresa and her husband, Louis, are both from Indiana where several of their family members worked in factories.

"I knew I didn't want to do that forever and Louis has always been an outdoor person. His brother and sister both lived here and we would come to this area for

long weekend visits, just to hang out with family, hunt, fish, and have a great time. He said he felt like he could get work here that would somehow be in the outdoors."

Louis Anthony has worked at Bennett Spring State Park as a Department of Natural Resources' park maintenance employee for the past 25 years. He was recently made lead man on his work crew. He and Theresa have three daughters and eight grandchildren.

Theresa admitted that her kind of work is not for everyone but she finds it rewarding.

"I run a med cart all day and take care of our residents here at Cedarhurst," she laughed. "This is such a beautiful new facility and the staff gets along well and that is such a good feeling. All of our residents, on both the Assisted Living side and the Memory Care unit, are members of this community. Of the 26 residents we

have here, I think we may have only one person who is from outside of this area. It all makes this such a positive place to work. We literally feel like family. I've been a nurse for 22 years and I hope to stay here until I retire."

Through the pandemic, Anthony said that losing a resident has been the hardest part.

"We really get attached to our residents so that is the only hard part about working here. With COVID, of course, we have all had to wear masks and everyone—staff and residents alike—really hate that," she said.

According to Anthony, almost all of Cedarhurst's staff and residents have had vaccines.

"...We can't wait until we get to the day when we can take these masks off," she said.



“Almost all of our staff members and residents have had our vaccines now and we can't wait until we get to the day when we can take these masks off!”



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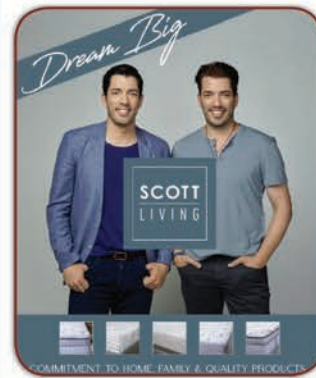
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shannon  
Prince

Story and pictures by Laura L. Valenti

## Shannon Prince feels blessed to be a member of the Lebanon Fire Department

For the past 12 years, Shannon Prince has been working for the Lebanon Fire Department as a paramedic.

"My dad was in the military and my mom's family was from here. I was born in Lebanon and then we moved to Detroit for a short time before moving back. My younger brother, Steven and I then grew up here in Lebanon," Prince explained recently while on shift at Lebanon's Fire Station #1. "My mother, Betty Reading West, worked as a dispatcher and an EMT in years past. I got a job, cooking my last year of school but I was always interested in the kind of work she did. She convinced me to take the EMT class when I was only 17. You have to be 18 to take the test and get licensed so I had to wait a little while to complete that part."

Prince has been an EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) since 1990 and a licensed paramedic since 1992. EMT's provide basic life support like bandaging, splinting, CPR, bleeding control and oxygen administration in addition to driving an ambulance.

Paramedics start out as EMTs but are then much more extensively trained to provide advanced life support. This can include but is not limited to IV therapy, the use of advanced airway adjuncts, and many other scopes of medical practice in uncontrolled environments without direct supervision.

Paramedics, like the others who work on the fire trucks, do so on 24-hour shifts. Prince rides on the firetruck with firefighters and responds to all sort of calls, car wrecks and other medical emergencies. In these days of a worldwide pandemic, paramedics are now responding less often to what would be considered a more minor trauma call than in the past.

"For years, we have always responded to calls with gloves on and then assessed a situation to see what else we might need in terms of protection. Now, we go in with gloves and masks on, just to begin. It may sound harsh in a way, but now there has to be more awareness on our part. Our call volume has actually decreased as we now respond primarily to critical calls, which involve life-threatening trauma. There has always been a lot of stress to this kind of work, and COVID-19 has added to that. We've had one staff member down, so far, with this virus and others who have had to be off work for a time either due to exposure, quarantine or to care for family members in that same situation. It's simply on everyone's mind now," Prince said.

On the positive side, however, Prince, like others in the Lebanon Fire Department, is excited about the groundbreaking for the new Public Safety building which will include a third city fire station at the corner of Ivey Lane and Beck Drive. He

attended the groundbreaking ceremony along with many other city employees and officials last month.

"I think Fire Chief Sam Schneider has been working on a third fire station since he became chief so this is a quite an accomplishment," Prince said.

Sam Schneider will mark his 20th anniversary as Lebanon Fire Chief in short order in April 2021.

Shannon Prince and his wife, Sharon have four daughters and a son. His grown daughters live in Lebanon and his son, who is about to be married, lives in Rolla. He has 8 grandchildren. His one regret is that he doesn't get to spend enough time with any of them and, of course, the pandemic has not helped that.

"The best part of my job is that I get to help people," he said. "I've found a job I like, with a good group of guys and a good boss so until the lottery tickets pay off, I think I'll probably just stay here. Those are my blessings."



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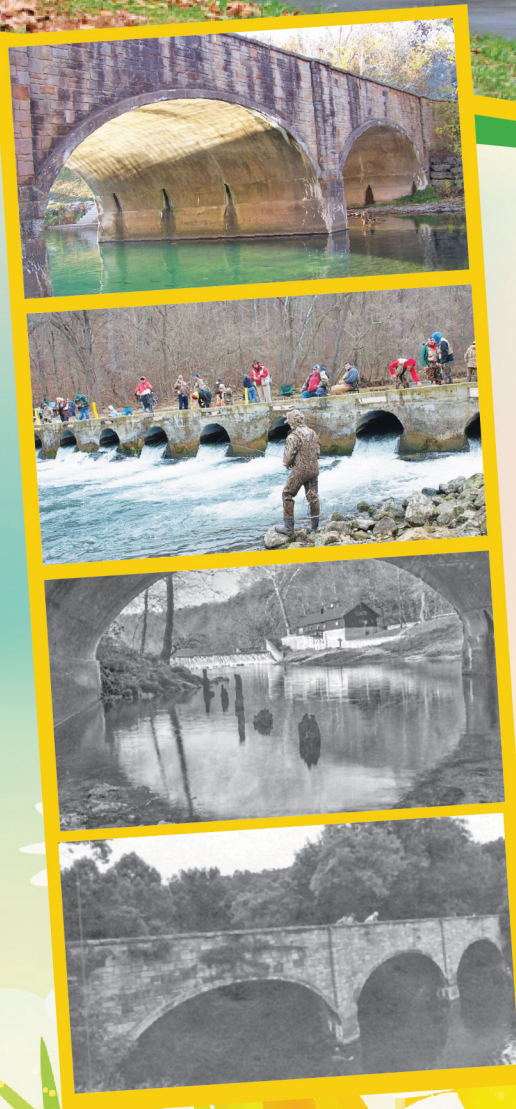
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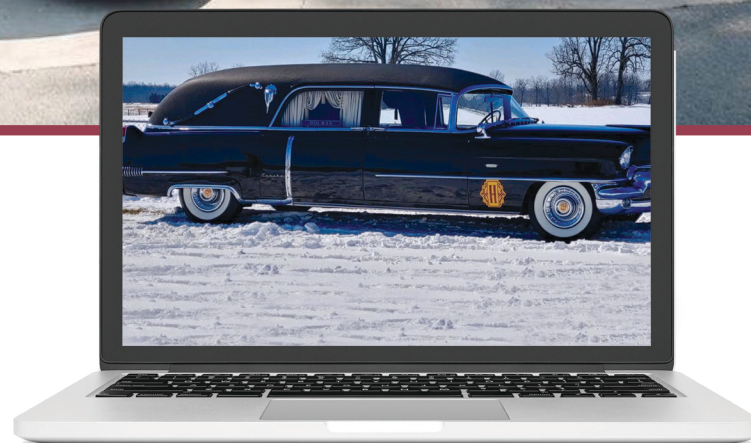
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