

Jefferson COVID Stories



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In the first few weeks of the COVID pandemic, I often cycled between worry and hope throughout the day. What has always grounded me is the concept that for every bad thing that happens, there are at least two good things that can come out of it, if we look hard enough. As a geriatrician who practices

in post-acute and long-term care, I was inspired by the creativity, flexibility, and teamwork the staff provided. I witnessed leadership on every level. This pandemic highlights the importance and strength of interprofessional teams throughout the Jefferson community. With the understanding that a sense of purpose is the antidote of fear and worry, I aspired to use this time to capture the humanity that surrounds us all.

The concept of Jefferson COVID stories was modeled after the [Humans of New York](#) photojournalism project. I approached Nick Safian, Sidney Kimmel Medical College (SKMC) MS2, and together we started to create writing prompts to engage the entire Jefferson community on a weekly basis. We partnered with the student run [Humans of Jefferson](#) group to also obtain photos of the stories we received, and developed the [Jefferson COVID Stories](#) website. We most recently collaborated with the Humans of the Hospital podcast (created by an SKMC medical student) who helped us to showcase audio clips of expanded responses. I have been struck by the acknowledgment of the importance of interprofessional teamwork that has been written about in each round of prompts. Working on this project has been a form of self-care to witness and share the collective wisdom, vulnerability, and humanity throughout Jefferson.



Nick Safian, MS2
Sidney Kimmel Medical College

One of the prompts we asked in our first round of questions was: "Through all the COVID uncertainty, what has made your work meaningful over the past couple of weeks?" My personal answer to this question is wholeheartedly and undoubtedly working on Jefferson COVID Stories. When self-isolation and stay-at-home orders were first announced,

I was ramping up to take the Step 1 exam and then begin rotations... COVID derailed those plans. In the grand scheme of things, having exams and the start of clerkships postponed is not a big deal, but it still felt jarring; these were the two things I had been working towards, studying for, visualizing every day since I started medical school. It felt a bit like the floor being pulled out from under me. Studying felt pointless. How could I focus on memorizing the pathophysiology of Crutzfeld-Jakob disease, or how pufferfish tetrodotoxin works while the entire world was reeling from the impact of COVID? As I proverbially fell through the floor, I reached to try and find something to grasp onto to keep me from falling. Should I volunteer? Should I just do my part by staying home? Should I try and put my head down and study so that I'm properly trained and prepared in the future? Then Dr. Snyderman came to me with the idea of COVID stories. It felt less like I had grabbed onto something to keep me from falling, and more like I had landed on a platform, my feet firmly on the floor. It has been incredibly uplifting, inspiring, and energizing to see the outpouring of expression from the Jefferson community.

We are all grappling with how to make sense of the impact of COVID, with how to process it. It's been awesome to give Jeffersonians a space not only to express what their experience has been like, but also to read about what the experience has been like for other Jeffersonians. This collection of stories represents the communal Jefferson COVID experience; they are personal, unique stories that comprise a rich, eccentric tapestry bound by the thread of our connection, purpose, and humanity. Jefferson COVID Stories buoyed me through this pandemic, giving me a sense of purpose and keeping my spirits high. I hope it has helped do that for the greater Jefferson community as well.



Fran Schein, a Jefferson patient, is a former art teacher and made this 'Thank You' sign for Jefferson clinicians. She's pictured here with her husband Artie Schein (also a patient at Jefferson) and her daughter Emily Rubin, a dietitian with the Jefferson G.I. division for over 19 years.

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2 kids, ages 6 and 4, and my husband. Fluctuates between surprisingly well managed sibling affection and creativity to stressful chaos - that my husband, who is also trying to 'work from home', is left to primarily manage. I feel guilty leaving all of that on him, feel guilty at work not knowing how to actually help patients and families best. So many who are sick and hospitalized or not aren't able to have their loved ones with them. I had a hospice conversation with a patient I've had for the past 5 years the other day. Her and I cried over our masks - and I couldn't hug her. It felt like a failure in the humanistic side of how we care for people.

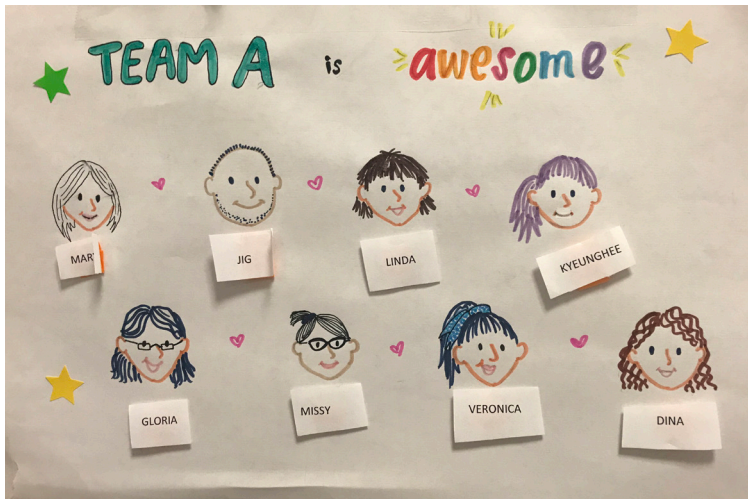
– Palliative Care Physician

My coworkers are the most amazing people in the entire hospital. There are no words to help you understand the camaraderie. One look at a coworker through the hood of a PAPR, through an isolation door, and they understand your worries about your patient, and exactly what you need to help keep them alive. My coworkers are the people who mean the most to me right now.

– Nurse, Medical Intensive Care Unit

The sun warms my back
Fragrance of flowers aloft
COVID dampens spring

– Security Guard



The Jefferson Blood Bank consists of 20 Medical Laboratory Technologists and Receiving Techs. Throughout the spring, they "left inspirational quotes, hilarious memes, food treats, decorated mail boxes, posted pictures of each group member either by photo, avatar or drawings, and also left games for one another."



Ronald Sherr, a Jefferson patient, cancer survivor and a professional photographer took this picture from his car, as part of a "porch project".