

*A message from Bob Van Meeteren, Reedsburg Area Medical Center President/CEO*



I hope this message finds you well and safe at home. I know that so many are overwhelmed with what's happening in our world right now but I wanted to personally reach out to all of you.

Reedsburg Area Medical Center responded to the COVID-19 pandemic very swiftly. Early on we knew our primary goal needed to be our commitment to keeping our patients, visitors, team members and communities safe and well. That is always our goal, no matter the situation.

Our physicians, surgeons, advanced practice providers and therapists made difficult decisions, postponing elective procedures and appointments. Know these were very, very carefully reviewed and scrutinized by them with your health in mind.

We made difficult decisions to greatly limit visitors throughout our campus – in the hospital, clinic and Senior Life settings. Know it is with our absolute abundance of caution that we did this.

We screen every person on our campus – patients, visitors, construction workers (we are *THIS close* to being completed with our project!), team members and residents.

Our medical screening tent, staffed by physicians, advanced practice providers and nurses, has helped us determine the levels of care needed for patients with respiratory symptoms. We have cared for many in their cars and in this tent and will continue doing so for as long as it takes.

Our organization's leaders, including our physician leaders, meet daily and often multiple times a day, reviewing our processes for today and planning for what may be to come tomorrow. We are also working side by side with community, state and national leaders because we know that working as a team strengthens us all.

Our team members are protected with personal protective gear. We have taken their safety and good health seriously as they are needed to care for our patients and residents. On our campus and at home, we all practice social distancing and cannot stress enough the importance of this. It does work if we all do it!

I know the lack of COVID-19 testing kits has been frustrating. It has been for us, too. These test kits are rationed by the state and we have no control over that. Testing criteria is also pre-determined in tiers, by the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. Tier 1 – Critically ill in ICU and residents of long term care facilities and Tier 2 – Hospitalized (non-ICU) patients with symptoms and healthcare workers with symptoms.

We are fortunate in our facility to have many, many negative pressure rooms. In our inpatient setting, in particular, our new HVAC system has allowed us to convert all of our inpatient rooms to negative pressure. This is in addition to other rooms throughout our facility including ER. Negative room pressure is an isolation technique used to contain airborne contaminants and prevent cross contamination from room to room. What this means is, not only are our team members and patients safe, so is our facility.

Our pharmacies, Viking and Community, responded by offering Monday – Friday complimentary deliveries within city of Reedsburg limits. Plus, they offer mailing services, too. And, Community Pharmacy (at RAMC Physicians Group) is now offering convenient curbside pickup!

Many of our primary care, behavioral health and specialty providers responded to the need to safely see patients, by starting our secure telehealth program. Many are already offering select clinic appointments virtually with more providers receiving training to offer this soon. It's their way to see and talk with patients with a variety of medical concerns, while they are safely in their home. Don't have that kind of technology? There are some visits that can take place over the phone, too!

I cannot thank our team members enough. They are our true heroes who work tirelessly each and every day for all of us. I am beyond grateful for the incredible donations from individuals and businesses with their donations of personal protective gear, handmade facemasks, alcohol so our pharmacists can compound much needed hand sanitizer, use of the medical tent and so much more. Communities certainly come together and I could not think of a better one to be a proud part of.

I am deeply grateful to all of you as we navigate this situation which is affecting us all, in ways we never thought possible. Yet, we always knew this drive and resiliency was possible.

These are unprecedented times for sure. As I have said to my daughters, we are living history right now. But we are living it together. So let's work together to care for one another. Let's support our businesses that have had to press pause or reinvent themselves to continue their business. We can all do our part to make a difference. Reedsburg Area Medical Center remains resilient and strong and we are definitely all in this together. We are here and we are your partner, even at a safe distance.

