

HOMETOWN HERO

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**ST. LOUIS
BUSINESS JOURNAL**

LYNN MEYER

Infection preventionist at Friendship Village Senior Living

Lynn Meyer has been a nurse and infection preventionist for nearly 50 years — but she's never experienced anything like Covid-19.

"We have trained for years to expect such an epidemic, but experiencing it is totally different," said Meyer, who works at Friendship Village Senior Living.

In her role at Friendship Village, which includes two senior living communities, 700 employees and 1,300 residents, Meyer has worked tirelessly on the front line of the Covid-19 crisis, staying up to date on the latest information and safety protocols to keep her staff and residents safe.

As the pandemic rages on, Meyer is finding positives inside the walls of Friendship Village — including Zoom calls and window visits between residents and their families.

"Being able to listen to their stories, seeing pictures of their loved ones and doing my best to be there for their families is a blessing," she said.

You serve as the infection preventionist for Friendship Village. What does that job entail?

It is my responsibility to track all infections in our residents in our skilled nursing centers. I oversee the infection prevention activities in all levels of care on campus, which includes our assisted living memory care and independent living facilities. The scope of my activities includes input into product choices for sanitizing, disinfecting and hand hygiene agents; choice of personal protective equipment used by staff; policy development for resident care; and employee safety and health. I am a resource to all residents and staff for any infection prevention question and assist the leadership team in decision-making regarding safe practices in all levels of care. I am also the resource for communication with local, state and federal public health agencies.

How has your job changed due to Covid-19?

Covid has brought a new meaning to infection prevention and control. In my 50 years of nursing, I have never seen or experienced anything like Covid. My job has become more of a resource person and communications person for our residents, our resident families, our staff and our leadership team. Managing, processing and communicating new information, which changed by the minute, was a major challenge. Building trust with residents, families and staff has

been a major challenge, which was made easier through Zoom meetings, email updates, video clips for our website and video communications with our residents and staff through our internal channel. Helping people to understand that we did not have all the answers as the pandemic was evolving and sharing current science with them assisted in easing their fears and gaining their trust. I have observed lifestyle changes in residents and staff that will benefit all in the future.

What's been the most challenging part?

And the most rewarding? The most challenging part of my job was supporting our health care workers during this time of constant change. Fear was, and continues to be, a major part of this illness. Our workers are committed to caring for the elderly, and early in this epidemic the elderly were the ones most affected by this illness. The staff saw their residents become very ill and felt helpless. They wanted to help but feared for their own lives. Guidance changed daily in how to care for the Covid patient and what signs and symptoms we needed to look for to identify the illness. Education, communication and encouragement were a constant need for not only staff, but also for residents and resident families. The most rewarding part of my job was to see our staff respond to the challenge in providing care to our residents and supporting the residents' families.

In your view, what makes a hero?

Someone who makes the sacrifice to put others first. Before Covid, my thoughts about heroes were related to our military personnel, fire and police, as they daily put their lives on the line for others. If you look at definitions of a hero, you will find a hero is courageous, committed, brave, shows conviction, helpful, has determination and is inspirational. Since Covid, I have thought a lot about who I would consider a hero. I pass signs on the lawns of health care facilities that state "Heroes Work Here" and feel that same sign should be placed across the nation. This pandemic has shown the sacrifices made by many for the good of the mass, whether that be the gas station attendant who came to work so health care workers could get to work, or the grocery worker who was there when I needed food for the family, or the delivery driver who brought the supplies that we so desperately needed.

— Veneta Rizvic

ABOUT THIS SECTION

The Hometown Hero program identifies and illuminates the region's most extraordinary contributors to the well-being of the St. Louis community. These health care workers, entrepreneurs, service workers and others have gone far above the call of duty to contribute to the common good during a historically challenging time.