



Celebrating 75 years of Caring for Our Community

Good afternoon, my name is Dan Colgan and I serve as the administrator of Redeemer Healthcare Center in South Mpls. which is part of a larger provider called Cassia the result of a merger of Augustana and Elim care organizations.

Thank you for inviting us here today to tell our story regarding Healthcare Heroes who have valiantly fought the battle of COVID-19 on the front lines, and why they deserve the honor and recognition for their service.

I reference this pandemic as a war, a war against an enemy we knew very little about in the early stages of 2020. I know this first hand as we created and operated a COVID Unit beginning in March.

In 2020, we admitted 237 residents with COVID from local facilities and as far away as Buffalo, Princeton and Milaca. 100 of those moved back to their originating facility, 115 stayed on at Redeemer and 22 passed away which is well below the State average. There were no internal cases until September of 2020. Having heard of our COVID unit, the Atlanta CDC along with members from MDH, the University of MN and the City of Mpls Epidemiology departments visited our COVID unit and lauded the care being provided, stating, "If this could be replicated in other facilities it would be amazing." Of our 150 employees, 37 contracted COVID.

This pandemic was unlike anything we had ever encountered in LTC. It is impossible to immerse you today into what the frontline looks and feels like but I'm going to give you an opportunity to at least look and feel like one of us.

Each day every staff member in the facility don their appropriate PPE, have their temperature taken, answer a series of exposure questions, and be tested for COVID on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and then literally put their life on the line, using a military term, putting themselves in harm's way. Having to wear this battle gear, many feel it hard to breath, feeling encumbered and hot while carrying out their work for 8 to 12 hours each day.

Besides the physical constraints there is the emotional stress and fear of the unknown. Will I contract the virus, will I spread it to others? There was and is the reality of isolation from friends and family. We housed staff for months in hotels who were not able to go home, who had family members who were compromised because of conflicting health conditions. Mothers, fathers, sons and daughters that were not able to see their family for weeks.

Conversely, our staff became more like family to our residents because resident family members were not allowed to visit their loved ones for months on end.

Why should frontline workers be offered this "bonus"?

Because they've done the work that most within our society would never consider doing. How people do you know would work within a LTC facility especially during this pandemic? Additionally, the majority of healthcare heroes are paid at or just above the Mpls minimum wage of \$15/hr. Many businesses can pay much more for employees who haven't endured anywhere close to the hardships and health risks that LTC healthcare workers face every day.

We take care of the most precious resource we have in this country, human life. And I think it's time to recognize the sacrifices our LTC health workers have faced and continue to face during these days of an evolving pandemic.

Thank you for your time today, the work you do during the year and your consideration of this important matter.

