

## Marymount University answers call to action, donates much-needed supplies to Virginia Hospital Center

**Staff, faculty from Malek School of Health Professions give vital personal protective equipment to health care workers on the front lines of the pandemic**

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There is a sad truth that lies in the battle against the novel coronavirus pandemic – the health care workers who we count on to treat the sick are the ones who are most in danger of exposure and infection.

Doctors, nurses and other medical professionals across the country are facing critical shortages of vital personal protective equipment (PPE) as the virus continues to grow in scope here in the U.S. Reports indicate that health care providers are being forced to reuse or make their own PPE equipment. This poses safety concerns not only to the workers themselves, but also to their families and their overall communities.

“When we leave the hospital, there is a risk of increased exposure if we do not have proper supplies when caring for our patients,” explained Alicia Marconi, Adjunct Lab Instructor in Marymount University’s Nursing program and an

[https://www.insidenova.com/news/special/coronavirus/marymount-university-answers-call-to-action-donates-much-needed-supplies/article\\_628ecf3e-708b-11ea-9caf-532947a5abf3.html](https://www.insidenova.com/news/special/coronavirus/marymount-university-answers-call-to-action-donates-much-needed-supplies/article_628ecf3e-708b-11ea-9caf-532947a5abf3.html)

ICU nurse at Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington. “If we, the health care workers, get sick, then there are fewer of us to take care of patients in need.”

This troubling problem led the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) to sound the alarm, calling on all member schools to donate PPE supplies to their community health care facilities to help compensate for reduced inventories during this public health challenge. Before that call even went out, Marymount’s Malek School of Health Professions had a plan in place to make a donation to Virginia Hospital Center.

The process began when Marconi, who is also a graduate of Marymount’s Accelerated Nursing Program, reached out to Dr. Catherine Hillberry, Nursing Lab and Technology Coordinator at the Malek School, for help obtaining reusable goggles to withstand the PPE shortage. But with the support of Nursing department chairs Dr. Eileen Caulfield and Dr. Theresa Gaffney, as well as Clinical Simulation Technician and Instructor Kevin Cummings, Dr. Hillberry dropped off much more than that. Also included in the donation were surgical masks, isolation gowns and full-body suits (commonly known as “bunny suits”).

“I was quite literally brought to tears by the generosity and support shown by the Marymount team,” Marconi said. “My ICU coworkers and I were so appreciative of the contribution in this time of significantly increased stress, many unknowns and continued supply shortages. It set an example of both upstanding community action on the part of Marymount, as well as an example to my hospital colleagues that if we reach out to the community, we may be met with wonderful, supportive responses like this.”

“When I became aware of the dire circumstances that the nurses at VHC were in, I responded without hesitation. As a nurse, I could do no less than support those who walk into the fire every day to save us,” Dr. Hillberry added. “This helping hand is typical of the kindness and compassion that the Marymount University community is known for. The leadership, employees, students and alumni are committed to serving others and supporting the community in difficult times – and stepping up to help those who put their lives on the line daily to help save lives is a privilege.”

The reaction from the VHC staff and ICU workers was resoundingly positive, and took the form of gratitude and relief.

“The generous donation of PPE is having a direct and positive impact in my unit. Having it available means we have the tools and resources necessary to do our jobs,” said Karin Kutscher, an ICU nurse at Virginia Hospital Center and another graduate of the Accelerated Nursing Program at Marymount. “In these very strange times, my heart remains full because of what community leaders like Marymount do – take action to improve our situation.”