

The “Green Team” at Rush Copley Medical Center in Aurora is on duty 18 hours a day, seven days a week. Its mission: make sure frontline staff are using and removing personal protective equipment (PPE) correctly.

Wearing green vests, this rotating team of five PPE coaches is part of a hospital initiative to protect nurses, physicians and other clinicians against COVID-19. Four coaches oversee specific units while the fifth coach is the “house rounder,” or extra set of eyes—and hands—for the rest of the hospital.

As part of their work, the coaches have caught staff who might have accidentally contaminated themselves.

“[Our colleagues] count on us,” said DeAnna Zaccardi, MSN, CGRN, who serves as lead PPE coach and is pictured center in the photo. “It’s rewarding—and necessary for the health of our staff.”

Frontline staff are regularly trained in PPE safety, but guidance on how to use it has changed frequently due to COVID-19. The Green Team, which includes 40 nurses, stays up-to-date on all those changes.

When they’re not surveying colleagues, PPE coaches help remove hazmat hoods, disinfect reusable equipment and retrieve needed supplies.

“These PPE coaches make sure we stay safe and don’t contract or bring this disease home to our families,” said Hesham Hassaballa, MD, FCCP, FAASM, Rush Copley medical director of Critical Care and Respiratory Therapy. “To me, this is nothing short of life-saving.”

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