

In late March, a resident of a Newton long-term care facility interacted with an asymptomatic COVID-19 carrier—and the spread began. The healthcare heroes of Sarah Bush Lincoln Newton Clinic threw themselves into the fight against the virus.

“They told us we’re here for you. We will do anything you need,” said Deborah Riddle, Jasper County public health administrator. She said the community is lucky to have Michelle Fulton, APRN, and Michele Kinder, APRN, who volunteered to run a drive-through testing site outside the Sarah Bush Lincoln Newton Clinic—the only COVID-10 testing in Jasper County, home to 9,610 people.

Donning protective gear, Fulton and Kinder tested all residents and employees of the 60-bed facility in Newton. They quickly identified the facility as a COVID-19 hotspot.

The collected specimens are processed by the Sarah Bush Lincoln Laboratory. Both the lab and Newton clinic are part of Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center in Mattoon, which has served small towns across east central Illinois since 1977.

“It is a privilege to take care of our friends and neighbors,” Fulton said. “We want the community to know that we are here for them. When times are hard, small towns come together.”

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