



**(Pictured from left to right: Vicky Stewart-Purchasing, Sherry Pigg-Manager, Josh VanLoon-Stores, Candace Downs-Stores, Shaun Selmes-Stores, and Kirby Pitt-Purchasing)#**

## **The hunt for personal protective equipment**

March 2021 - It's been more than one year since the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. Norfolk General Hospital (NGH) is paying tribute by acknowledging the heroic efforts and accomplishments of our staff in response to COVID-19. Here are our stories.

When the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a worldwide pandemic of a virus called COVID-19, many of us didn't know what to expect.

Norfolk General Hospital (NGH) staff took immediate action before the pandemic landed locally. NGH leaders worked closely with infection prevention and control team members to prepare for the coronavirus. They began to share information with staff and laid out an action plan to increase hospital capacity. Our staff worked to keep our community safe by opening a COVID-19 Assessment Centre, adding screeners to our hospital entrances, created a specialized COVID unit to care for COVID positive patients, and reacted quickly by putting infection protocols into place throughout our hospital and the Norfolk Hospital Nursing Home (NHNH).

However, in this story, we would like to shine the light on our Purchasing and Stores Department. These amazing staff members were tasked with hunting down personal protective equipment and supplies as the COVID-19 pandemic spread worldwide. Sourcing and storing large amounts of personal protective equipment (PPE) became a momentous challenge.

The Purchasing Department reacted with lightning speed to source new vendors outside of NGH's current suppliers. An internal collaboration from multiple departments was formed to locate PPE, equipment, and other supplies, such as cleaning supplies and sanitizer.

"We quickly pulled together and everyone was engaged to help," said Manager of Purchasing and Materials Management Sherry Pigg. "Improvising when regular supplies were not available, reaching out to local industrial suppliers to assist in PPE support. During this period, my team helped manage the current day-to-day orders, following up with suppliers creating a backorder report, and coordinating/communicating to floors on substitutes ensuring we had product on hand."

Pigg and her department did everything they could to source innovative solutions to get equipment into the hands of staff and doctors. The volume of PPE required to meet the needs of staff, physicians, patients, and visitors exceeded demand and supply available at NGH. So Pigg and her staff worked collaboratively with non-traditional partners to meet a PPE shortage.

"Our contracted vendors were unable to support the quantities requested due to global pressures, therefore for most items we were put on strict weekly allocations, based on historical usage prior to the pandemic, we are pulling 150 – 200% of their volumes and they were not able to keep up. Therefore, we needed to find another source fast. As a non-SSO (Shared Service Organization) hospital, sourcing new products (non-traditional vendors) was a risk, therefore building a greater relationship with an SSO (HMMS London and Mohawk Shared Service) and Regional Healthcare Partners (Norfolk EMS, Brantford General Hospital) was vital to this hospital. HMMS jumped into action, setting up NGH as an HMR customer, having access to purchase from their warehouse for critical items, providing donated PPE (masks and gloves), provide logistics to the Provincial Stockpile for the Ontario West Group. The community also donated PPE. It was overwhelming but so appreciated, it really made us proud as an organization having the community step up and support."

Pigg also had this message to her staff who went above and beyond to meet the needs of the hospital.

"We have reached a major milestone, and it's all because of you. We kept our staff and patients safe by ensuring the right supplies in the right place at the right time. Thank you for your patience, dedication, and at being the heart and soul of this Hospital."

Our purchasing department is not out of the woods just yet. Some challenges remain with the delivery of supplies and PPE worldwide, so we are thankful to have a team of experts like Pigg and her entire department to keep us all safe throughout the pandemic.

Thanks, team! You are very much appreciated for all that you have done and continue to do for our hospital every day.

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