

Caring for COVID-19 patients is an all-hands-on-deck experience. In the case of Halina Zabinski—the first COVID-positive patient at Silver Cross Hospital in New Lenox—healthcare heroes from several departments shepherded the 59-year-old back to health after five grueling weeks.

Zabinski, of Lemont, came to the hospital with dangerously low oxygen levels. Fifteen minutes later, she was on a ventilator and in the intensive care unit (ICU), where highly skilled nurses, therapists and physicians were part of her team of healthcare heroes.

Prone, or lying face down to improve breathing, was part of Zabinski’s treatment—all day for several days. She also needed renal replacement therapy for kidney failure, so her team came up with a safe, effective way to deliver both treatments.

“It took a lot of creativity and ingenuity,” said Kristopher McDonough, MD, a pulmonologist and critical care specialist who cared for Zabinski. “It was a really big win. Her entire care team of nurses and therapists were amazing.”

Zabinski’s recovery represents the hard work of many healthcare heroes. Before discharge, physical, occupational and speech therapists helped Zabinski regain strength, communicate clearly and handle everyday activities like showering.

Then, the rousing send-off, organized by ICU social worker Andi O’Neill: “We were all rooting for Halina and wanted to say good-bye.”

ICU nurse Josie Kee, RN, found inspiration in the teamwork within her unit and across departments.

“I couldn’t get through this without my coworkers,” she said, “and Halina’s story is just so uplifting for all of us.”

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