

Small but mighty, Hopedale Medical Complex (HMC) grew from the support of local farmers, residents and volunteers over half century ago. Today, the medical complex 25 miles south of Peoria offers the same services as its bigger city counterparts—and the same planning for COVID-19.

HMC leaders had a triage tent built outside its 25-bed hospital’s emergency department (ED) to screen patients for COVID-19 symptoms. Completed on March 15, the tent was put to use the very next day—the same day Gov. J.B. Pritzker banned gatherings of 50 people or more.

With temperatures warming, the hospital has moved patient screening from the tent to a trailer, said Emily Whitson, HMC chief operating officer. Patients with symptoms matching those of COVID-19 are directed to this triage area, where clinicians can take X-rays and lab samples, as well as perform a full patient exam.

If additional care is needed, the patient would be sent to an isolation room. The hospital has a designated COVID-care area, which was retrofitted for negative air pressure and equipped as a fully functioning intensive care unit with ventilators.

“We went through quite a bit of iterations on preparedness for this,” Whitson said. “Lots of really long days, so we can handle it. We’ve got to take care of our patients.”

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