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Community effort culminates in 1,000 meals, 1,400 cards delivered to frontline workers

Submitted by Elana O'Loskey



Frontline hospital staff at Contra Costa Regional Medical Center were delighted to receive 250 box meals and cupcakes, 250 Gratitude Cards and a flower arrangement on March 17. Photo copyright Lori A. Cheung

With the COVID situation continuing to be challenging and likely remaining with us through most of 2021, critical frontline healthcare workers are resource constrained and tiring in the face of these ongoing challenges. In parallel, local restaurants have been hit hard by the pandemic, and economic loss of in-house business, and are struggling to survive. Seven community groups - Orinda Association, Orinda Community Foundation, Lamorinda Arts Council, Orinda Garden Club, Orinda Chamber of Commerce, Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary Club and Orinda Rotary Club - came together to make a difference.

On March 16 and 17, volunteers delivered 1,000 boxed meals, prepared by approximately 20 Orinda restaurants, to four Contra Costa County hospitals and health centers, as well as 1,400 handmade cards colored by school-age children and those "young at heart." Floral arrangements donated by the Orinda Garden Club were also delivered to the hospitals.

"We had no idea the frontline hospital workers would be so moved by the children's messages," said Elana O'Loskey, who is the curator of the Art Gallery at the Orinda Library and a board member on the Lamorinda Arts Council. "Some are papering the walls with them! It took quite a bit of coordination to gather 1,400 of them! John Muir Concord, John Muir Walnut Creek, San Ramon Regional Medical Center and Contra Costa Regional Medical Center in Martinez all received 250 cards as well as 250 box meals, 250 cupcakes and a flower arrangement."

A GoFundMe page was created to offset the costs of this community-wide effort, with its initial target at \$15,000, but with extra box lunches being requested by the hospitals to include all their frontline workers, the target goal was adjusted to \$20,000. As of March 26, the GoFundMe page showed \$26,268 raised.

"Our hope with this campaign is that other communities repeat this formula. Even if there is no hospital in their city or town, there will be a care home or vaccine center," O'Loskey said. "The personal touch is very important - forget just 'dropping off box meals' - the frontline workers need a personal acknowledgment of some kind to know the community truly understands the sacrifices they are making and heavy load they bear."

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