

# Our Guardian Angels



Guardian Angel



Honoring our Healthcare Heroes



Thank you so much for the care I received from all of you.  
Through your effort, I survived.  
-P. Fernandez



Mahalo for all you do for the health and safety of our community!  
-R. Baker

# Our Guardian Angels

Healthcare workers have often been referred to as soldiers on the frontline. Never in our lifetime has the term been more apt than when COVID-19 became a global pandemic.

As most Maui residents sheltered at home with their loved ones, the staff of Maui Health showed up to work every day and in every way. They have worked long hours and under stressful conditions, sacrificing time with their own loved ones, to care for the sick. They have been diligent and careful to ensure the health and safety of their patients, their fellow workers, their family and their community.

Maui Health has a Guardian Angel program that allows patients to recognize individual staff members at Maui Memorial Medical Center, Kula Hospital, and Lana'i Community Hospital for something—their expertise, their compassion, a thoughtful gesture, their ability to meet a need before a patient even asked—that touched the patient's heart and made their stay better. We hold an annual gathering to celebrate these individuals.

But this year, there is no doubt that all of our staff—doctors, nurses, therapists, clinicians, housekeepers, cooks and more—have gone above and beyond to serve our community in this time of crisis.

We thank them for their service, their sacrifices, their compassion, their grace under pressure. They are all **Guardian Angels**, and you'll see just a few examples of why over the next few pages.

We hope you'll join us in thanking them for the selfless care they've offered to keep our Maui community well.

'A'OHE PU'U KI'EKI'E KE HO'A'O 'IA E PI'  
No cliff is so tall it cannot be climbed.



Thanks for helping the sick even while endangering yourselves.  
-S. Schroeder



## Together We Serve

At work, we feel like superheroes, fighting to save the innocent from an invisible evil. But at home and in our own community, we have often been feared as much as the virus we fight.

As nurses we instinctively run into risky situations and make sacrifices to help those in need. However, COVID-19 was new for all of us—a virus and threat we never experienced. The sacrifices are different, life-altering and far-reaching.

When it was announced that our unit would be converted into an isolation unit for patients who are COVID-19 positive or suspected positive, we were a little afraid, but we knew this was our calling. We prepared and opened the warm unit in one day.

Within those walls our role is all-encompassing. We not only provide medical care to these patients, but do whatever needs to be done— from disinfecting rooms to delivering food to our patients—to protect our coworkers from having to enter our unit. For twelve hours a day, we wear tightly fitted N95 masks that dig into our nose and face that leave bruises like battle scars. Countless times a day, before and after entering any room, we meticulously don and doff our personal protection equipment (PPE), checking our reflection in the mirrors set up next to each patient door to ensure we and the patient are protected.

But the virus surrounds us even away from work.

Before COVID-19, coming home typically meant a shower of hugs and kisses from kids and spouses as we walked in the door. The first shower that greets us now is either a DIY shower in the backyard or, if we can beeline directly to the bathroom, a hot shower to sterilize ourselves from head to toe.



We stay away from our loved ones—sleeping apart, some of us on the couch, others in a tent in the backyard or in a hotel room away from our families. We need them as much as they need us during this emotionally wearing time, but this is the norm for now. Some of us have lost babysitters because of the fear. We have been told by our neighbors, friends and strangers alike to stay away because of this fear.

We knew caring for patients would be frightening, but the effects have been harder than we ever expected. But when it comes to compassionate care we show no hesitation and we continue to show up because this is our calling, our life purpose.

It is exhausting, sweaty, grueling work, but we wouldn't be anywhere else.

We have always been proud to be nurses and have recognized the work of our team, but now we are family, literally protecting each other with our lives, and together we serve.

Despite the tough days when a simple hug is something we can only wish for, we are proud to take care of this island's COVID-19 patients. And we are grateful that at one of the scariest times of their lives we can be here for them.

We are not to be feared. We are protected and doing everything we can to protect you. And we will be here for you and your family for whatever your need.

*Laurie Chock, RN, Nurse Manager, and the nurses of the COVID-19 unit  
Maui Memorial Medical Center*

# Together We Heal

Being admitted to the hospital for COVID-19 is an ordeal for anyone, but for Talilotu Carlson, it was especially frightening.

Struggling to breathe, the single mother worried how her three children would cope if she were hospitalized. Her condition rapidly deteriorated and within 48 hours, she was placed in a medically induced coma and on a ventilator in the ICU.

She spent two weeks on the ventilator and another three weeks in two other hospital units, but has now returned home to her family and is on the mend. Her success story was a team effort, to say the least.

Talilotu's care teams in the ICU, the ruled-out unit, and skilled nursing stayed in constant contact with her son, who became the primary caregiver to his two younger sisters. Other team members arranged check ups for the children, and expedited virus testing at our Emergency Department for all three when her son fell ill as well. Our chaplains held prayers outside Talilotu's room for her and her family. Financial Assistance helped with arrangements for her copay and social workers helped secure necessary resources for the family.

After coming off the ventilator, Talilotu rebuilt her strength and ability to care for herself with our physical and occupational therapists. As she became stronger, our diabetes care team taught her and her son how to help her manage her diabetes when she returned home.

As so many of us worked closely with Talilotu and her family, the Carlsons became a part of our family. So much so, that when Talilotu was well enough to be discharged, 36 days after she was admitted, staff lined the hallways to cheer her on and celebrate her return to health and her family.

"Her condition had been so dire, it was a joy to know she was literally able to walk out of here and be united her family," said Faith Thornton, RN, one of Talilotu's nurses.

Medicine is defined as the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of illness or injury. But for all of us at Maui Memorial Medical Center, it's also the art of returning a person to wholeness—body, mind, and spirit.





## We Are Here For You

We've all seen the disturbing images on TV and social media of overflowing emergency departments and hospitals overwhelmed with suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases.

So while out walking my dogs, I wasn't surprised when a neighbor asked me, "What do we do if we have an emergency? We only have one hospital on Maui, and I'm afraid to go there because I don't want to get the Coronavirus." My neighbor's concern was that our ER was overloaded and not a safe place to go during the pandemic.

But guess what? Going to the ER is probably safer than going to the grocery store.

We are safe because, before many other hospitals in the state or the mainland did, our Emergency Department has done EVERYTHING to prevent ANYONE from contracting or spreading contagions such as COVID-19: wearing personal protective equipment in suspected patient rooms, thoroughly washing our hands, and disinfecting the rooms after each and every patient visit. We designated isolation rooms to help contain any airborne contagion—and have done so for years. Our protocols are proven and practiced consistently by all.

Today, it is especially important that our community knows this. Why? Because our ER is seeing 50% fewer people than we typically see. People have been avoiding going to the emergency room because of this fear.

As a result, we have seen a rise in both strokes and heart attacks in our community. We now often see patients only after they have waited to access care—often until it is too late. And having been an ER doctor for over 15 years, I feel helpless and frustrated when I can't offer the best of care because the patient didn't come in at the first sign of distress.

It doesn't have to be this way. Our hospital is rated one of the best in the state for stroke and cardiac care. But when patients wait days or a week after their health crisis to seek care, even we are left with limited options.

So please know, we are here for you and above anything else, it is SAFE to access care at Maui Memorial Medical Center. Do NOT WAIT to come see us if you are experiencing an emergency. Please. We have always been here for you and always will be.

*Vijak Ayasanonda, M.D.*

*Co-Director, Emergency Department, Maui Memorial Medical Center*

*We are ready for whatever comes next.*



On behalf of our employees, patients, and physicians, we want to thank Goodfellow Brothers, Inc. for their continuous support of our Guardian Angel program, including this publication. We are very grateful for their annual partnership.