



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information contact:

Ben Roberts
Director, Public Relations & Communications
O: 229-312-5180
C: 229-343-7499
benroberts@phoebehealth.com

Phoebe Marks One Year of COVID-19 Battle

Albany, Ga. – Phoebe hosted a Day of Remembrance Wednesday to mark the anniversary of the beginning of its COVID-19 fight. On March 10, 2020, Phoebe was notified that a patient who had recently been transferred from Phoebe’s main hospital tested positive for COVID-19 at another hospital in Georgia. Phoebe opened its incident command center and, the following day, identified its first presumptively positive inpatient. The number of COVID-19 patients treated by Phoebe rose rapidly in the days and weeks that followed.

“By the time we identified our first patient, we had been preparing for a couple of months – ordering extra shipments of personal protective equipment and holding regular planning and strategy sessions with our Coronavirus Task Force, but our fight began in earnest on March 10. No one could have predicted southwest Georgia would be hit so early and so hard by the pandemic, but our reality certainly changed that day, and the Phoebe Family has been leading the charge against the virus ever since,” said Scott Steiner, Phoebe Putney Health System President & CEO.

Each of Phoebe’s hospital campuses held special events Wednesday to recognize the region’s healthcare heroes, thank community members for their support, encourage southwest Georgians battling COVID-19 and honor those whose lives were taken by the virus. Events included tribute walks along paths lined with signs highlighting COVID-related milestones over the last year and Day of Remembrance ceremonies featuring remarks from patients, community leaders and healthcare workers who have been on the frontlines of the COVID-19 battle.

To ensure proper social distancing, the public was not invited to the walks and ceremonies. Members of the community in Albany, Americus and Sylvester were invited to attend drive-through luminary events at each hospital campus Wednesday night. Luminaries lit up the hospital driveways and areas of each campus were illuminated in red in honor of

healthcare heroes. At the main campus, a laser light show flashed messages of thanks, support and unity on the side of one of the medical towers.

“We definitely wanted to find a safe way to include our communities in our commemorations, because they have been so supportive of the Phoebe Family and so vital to all we have been able to accomplish over the last year. We thought this was a great way to thank them and to allow them to express their condolences to families who have lost loved ones and to show their support for our staff and current patients,” said Joe Austin, Phoebe Putney Memorial Hospital Chief Executive Officer.

“It has been a difficult year for the people of Sumter County and the surrounding area that we serve, but they have shown their determination and strength as we have battled this pandemic together. We are so appreciative of the great support they continue to offer our team at Phoebe Sumter,” said Brandi Lunneborg, Phoebe Sumter Medical Center CEO.

“Phoebe Worth is a small critical access hospital. While we provide vital services to our community, we certainly never anticipated having to create a unit in our hospital to care for patients impacted by a global pandemic. Our team did that and provided quality, compassionate care to our local COVID-19 patients. I’m proud of the work they did, and I am grateful for the many ways the people of Worth County lifted us up,” said Kim Gilman, Phoebe Worth Medical Center CEO.

The number of COVID-19 patients hospitalized in the Phoebe system has steadily dropped over the last five weeks, but the fight against the virus is not over yet. “We believe and hope the end of this pandemic is in sight, but we cannot celebrate yet. I have seen amazing acts of bravery, compassion, ingenuity and persistence over the last year, and I am incredibly grateful for all the Phoebe Family has done and continues to do to serve the people of southwest Georgia,” Steiner said.







