

FINAL SAY

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photo courtesy of **Lo Ballard**



This year has been defined by heroes – the “helpers” such as healthcare clinicians, first responders, grocery store workers, teachers, and electrical linemen. I’m an optimist by nature, so even with such heavy headlines this year, I’ve found myself applying the oft cited quote from Mr. Rogers: “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” I’ve focused on finding the “helpers,” our heroes, and all the ways humanity has shined – and I haven’t had to look far.

Here at Singing River, we committed to transparency in the face of crisis. Our CEO, Lee Bond, has provided hundreds of Facebook live updates to keep our community informed on the pandemic’s local impacts. We held a total of thirteen community COVID testing events, performed over 40,000 COVID tests, and while our healthcare heroes have cared for more COVID patients than anywhere else on the Coast, we have stood resolute.

In a year like 2020, it can be easy to lose focus, but the Singing River Foundation has risen to the occasion in our mission of Supporting a Healthier Coast. In response to the community’s need during COVID-19, the Singing River Foundation packed hundreds of bags of essential supplies for COVID positive patients in need and provided face coverings to local school districts, funeral homes, patients, and nonprofits. All of this in addition to our “normal” mission-driven services.

This year, the Singing River Foundation has helped 126 (and counting) locals in need of life-saving assistance, by directly providing health-related needs such as home oxygen, medical equipment and supplies, and dental work for cancer and heart patients who need it in order to proceed with their treatment or surgery. Direct assistance is also provided by the Foundation to Singing River Health System employees in need via our Employee Relief Fund. We are equally proud to continue our work of enhancing services offered at Singing River Health System with programs like PAWS Pet Therapy.

Finally, we partner and support organizations and programs that contribute to the greater good of the community such as American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Bacot McCarty Foundation, CASA, local high school health science classes, Jackson County Civic Action, Gulf Coast Center for Nonviolence, Let’s Go!

Gulf Coast, March of Dimes, National MS Society, Pulmonary Hypertension Association, United MSD Foundation, SoSo Strong Foundation, and more.

We’re proud to have stood strong in the face of this storm – and that our community has noticed. In the early days of this worldwide crisis, when so much was unknown and the world shuttered its doors, clinicians stepped forward to care for their community. And our community has given back.

I had the privilege of receiving the calls from everyone who wanted to help or donate in some way. People who found N-95 masks in their storage and wanted healthcare providers to have them. A retired nurse battling cancer who offered to answer phone calls or anything she could do to help. And the food...it’s our southern nature to respond to a disaster with food, and boy did y’all send food! You’ve sent letters, you’ve organized park and pray events and fly overs. We’ve felt the love in it all. Most of us may be happy to see the close of 2020, but when I look back on this year I will choose to remember the good – this beautiful community of helpers.