

# Hospital helpers

Local businesses stepped in to help hospital during worst of the freeze

**L**osing water at any time is inconvenient. Losing water during a winter storm becomes concerning. But losing water at a hospital during a winter storm can quickly turn urgent.

When Hill Country Memorial lost its city water supply for 20 hours during Winter Storm Uri, HCM Chief Executive Officer Jayne Pope and her team quickly reached out to community partners.

The water stopped flowing at 4 a.m. The hospital was full with patients, along with 20 staff members who couldn't get home because of ice accumulation on the roads.

While there was sufficient bottled water for patients, and onsite potable water storage, the quantity was not enough to last the predicted duration of the storm, according to Pope.

Her team started making calls.

"We called Opa's Smoked Meats and asked if they had any water," she said. "They said, 'We're going to go see and if we have water, you can have as much as you need.'"

Opa's quickly brought over cases of bottled water from their storage facility, along with non-potable water.

The team asked Fischer & Wieser the same question. That local company sent in a team to clean out food-grade barrels, fill them with water, and deliver them to the hospital.

"This all happened so quickly," Pope noted. "So, we had sufficient water to drink and water to sustain critical hospital operations."

The community largesse did not stop. As word spread of the hospital's situation, more businesses stepped up, responding to every request Hill Country Memorial made.

- Culligan and Garrison Brothers Distillery showed up with more fresh water.

- Holy Ghost Lutheran Church brought over five-gallon paint buckets for Wellness Center team members to use to haul water out of the swimming pool.

- Allen Keller Company invited HCM Home Care and Hospice staff to bring their cars over and fill them with fuel so they could continue to check on patients, as all the gas stations were empty.

## Staff issues

While the hospital had empty patient rooms able to house team members, because of number the people it takes to keep the hospital running and the difficulty of travel, additional accom-



Hill Country Memorial was awash in donated water from local businesses after word got out that the hospital lost water service during Winter Storm Uri. – Submitted photo

modations were needed for physicians and team members.

"We reached out to the Hoffman Haus and Inn on Barons Creek, and they ensured we had rooms for our team," Pope said.

Another concern was food. While patient meals were never at risk, Emma & Ollie's and Friends of Kindred Fiber Farm made sure there were substantial meals for the HCM Team.

While the hospital also lost city power during the episode, its backup generators worked as designed, switching over to keep key power systems operating.

Pope was also grateful for some services that she hadn't asked for. Laughlin Homes and Restoration brought over equipment to clear the entire parking lot of ice and snow.

Internally, HCM team members — from medical staff to maintenance and support — all pitched in to move supplies around and make sure patients were well care for.

Even while dealing with its own needs, Hill Country Memorial was able to step up and assist the community.

HCM had recently conducted its annual blanket drive and food drive for the Thrift Shop. When the community shelter opened at the school, HCM workers delivered extra food and blankets for those seeking emergency shelter.

The community outreach and response was even more special, as it happened during a very auspicious time for the hospital, Pope said.

"Hill Country Memorial turned 50 on Valentine's Day," Pope said. "We are all so grateful that five decades later, the community that made the hospital possible continues to partner with us and sustain remarkable care for the Hill Country."

"It was really an incredible week of our community coming together and making sure the hospital could continue to operate under unexpected adverse conditions," she added.