

Script – Print – On the Road Again

OSF King Care-A-Van Returns to Provide Care to Rural Communities

The OSF King Care-A-Van is back providing vital health care to rural communities in Bureau, Henry, LaSalle, and Putnam counties.

Over the past 1 ½ years, COVID-19 brought many challenges to the way health care is delivered: the re-emergence of telehealth medicine, the temporary postponement of elective surgeries and staffing issues, to name a few. The pandemic also meant taking the OSF King Care-A-Van off the road for several months.

The OSF King Care-A-Van is a mobile health center that has been serving rural areas since 2019. Operated by OSF HealthCare, the OSF King Care a-Van offers screenings, immunizations and health education to primarily rural residents who might not otherwise have access to care.

“The King Care-A-Van gives us the opportunity to get out into rural communities and serve community members that has the barrier of transportation,” says Lauren Theis, director of community engagement for OSF HealthCare. “This is a unique opportunity that we get to go and serve them, rather than they come to a brick and mortar building that might not be close by or they might not be able to access. The King Care-A-Van is on the road to care for our community members where they’re at.”

Theis says it was a difficult decision to suspend operations, but the OSF King Care-A-Van was put to good use during the downtime.

“We wanted to make sure to serve these populations as safely as possible,” she says. “We did take it off the road for a few months and re-evaluated it and asked ourselves how can we get out there and serve our communities. Last summer, we supported a partnership with the Community Health Partnerships of Illinois to provide COVID testing to migrant workers. We did that for quite a few months and then we were able to secure PPE and get specific guidelines to make sure we were keeping ourselves and patients safe on the van and at that point we decided to get back out there and start this program back up again.”

The OSF King Care-A-Van was made possible in coordination with the OSF HealthCare Foundation and a generous donation made by Don and Val King of Manlius, in Bureau County, Illinois. The King family has a passion for rural America. Over several generations, members of the family have experienced a few life-saving situations, which led to a special relationship between the Kings and OSF HealthCare. Don and Val donated the funds to purchase and equip a mobile health center.

“We are so grateful to the King family for providing the OSF King Care-A-Van,” Theis says. “It has really given us the chance to break down the barrier of transportation and get out into the community and provide care to the underserved and community members that we might not have seen before. We are very fortunate to have this type of care. It’s something we don’t have everywhere and it’s a great opportunity for us.”

OSF HealthCare works with community members to find the best locations to utilize the OSF King Care-A-Van including housing authorities, homeless shelters, employers, schools, churches and other community organizations.

“When we can get the King Care-A-Van out in the community it’s always a special event, no matter how many people we see,” she says. “We’re always out there finding different populations and underserved community members.”

For more information about the OSF King Care-A-Van or to request a visit, [visit OSF HealthCare](#).