

SCRIPT – PRINT – THE LONG ROAD HOME

COVID Positive Patient Grateful to be Alive

When Jose Barraza developed a headache, cough, sore throat and chills, he wasn't sure what was wrong with him. He just knew he was sick. But it wasn't until he began experiencing shortness of breath, that his wife insisted he seek medical care immediately. That decision, his family says now, most likely saved his life.

The Ogle County resident was rushed to OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center in Rockford, where it was determined Jose was COVID-19 positive. He was intubated and spent the first 10 days in the critical care center (CCC). He was extubated on May 3 before moving to a COVID unit on May 4, which happened to be his 54th birthday.

Jose spent 18 days in the hospital before being reunited with his family, who couldn't visit their father during his stay.

"The experience has been real hard for us for the reason we couldn't be with him every second of his COVID-19 journey," said his daughter, Brisa Barraza. "It was mixed emotions, lots of tears because we couldn't comfort our mom because of where she lives because we couldn't be near here. So it was a little bit disheartening to be away from your loved ones during this pandemic and crisis so the experience was very difficult and hard for us."

Jose speaks Spanish, and his family worried about a language barrier, especially with them not being present. But thanks to the OSF Saint Anthony staff and technology, Jose was able to communicate not only his needs, but his family was also well informed.

"The communication with the staff was amazing, from the case management to the doctors and the nurses," said his daughter, Brisa Barraza. "We kept an open line of communication the whole time. Everything they were doing with my father they would be sure to communicate with me and that brought me a little bit of comfort."

And while his family couldn't be there to celebrate his birthday, Jose was treated to a festive party thanks to the nurses on the COVID unit. The nurses drew balloons on his windows, decorated the room with streamers, and sang "Happy Birthday."

"I thank God my dad landed in this hospital because we do not have anything but good things to say about this hospital," said his daughter, Brisa Barraza. "From the nurses to the doctors to the people who would pick up the phone when I called in to get to the nurses stations. Lots of great things and I think my father could say the same thing about the hospital. He loved all the nurses and the attention they gave him.

The celebration had special meaning for his nurses too.

"It was very happy. Seeing that I cried a little bit myself," said Calli Gorsuch, RN. "It's awesome to see people recover like that. Also very humbling too."

As for Jose and his family, they are grateful for a successful outcome. They celebrated the good news with a healthy meal. Jose's daughter said her father is a wonderful cook.

“He wants to give thanks to the medical staff,” said his daughter, Brisa Barraza. “He wants to thank God for letting him come to the hospital, that he was able to save his life. He is very grateful for all the staff that took care of him. Their attention - it was very nice of them.”