

BROADCAST- Comfort Through Connection During COVID-19: A Patient's Story

"It is very scary and it is very real."

That's how recovering COVID-19 patient Steve Looney of Kewanee reflects on his journey. Looney diagnosed just three days after his wife tested positive.

The 57 year-old Looney is a healthy, active guy and despite sticking to safety protocols, he was diagnosed a few days after his wife Beth tested positive for the novel coronavirus in August after returning from a short trip in August.

After he was diagnosed, immediately signed up for a program he knew provided in-home digital support and care for COVID-19 patients – [OSF OnCall Connect](#) (called the Pandemic Health Worker program at the time). The program is available at no cost under a state of Illinois government contract and has been used by hundreds of people across the state, including students, faculty and staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

SOT-Steve Looney, COVID-19 Patient & regional director of facilities and operations, OSF HealthCare

"I had a lot of anxiety the first part of it and actually for three or four days. You worry, 'How bad is this going to get?' So that was a lot of peace of mind and I really appreciate that. I would recommend the OnCall program (OSF OnCall Connect) for anybody, especially if you are anxious or nervous or concerned about it (a COVID-19 diagnosis) because it really does ease your mind." (:27)

OSF OnCall Connect provides free two-way communication apps and twice-a-day symptom monitoring. It allows COVID-19 positive patients with mild symptoms the ability to stay at home and recover where they are most comfortable. Looney says everything he needed was available through free apps he could download on his phone.

SOT-Steve Looney, COVID-19 Patient & regional director of facilities and operations, OSF HealthCare

"We always have our cell phone with us and it was really easy. I did not have a tablet. It was offered to me. I said, 'No I can do everything on my phone.' It worked out great." (:13)

He really looked forward to the second check-in, later in the day, when he usually started feeling worse.

SOT-Steve Looney, COVID-19 Patient & regional director of facilities and operations, OSF HealthCare

"Because I love the outdoors, I did sit in my garage a lot in a lawn chair and just sit and stare outside. I would lay on the couch most of the time. It was really weird though because in the mornings when I would get up I would feel really good for about two hours and then it would be a total decline the rest of the day." (:24)

In addition to a bad headache, at the height of the infection Looney also suffered what he called really bad body aches, fatigue, sore throat, congestion, nausea and diarrhea. He appreciated recommendations from his OnCall Connect care team.

SOT-Steve Looney, COVID-19 Patient & regional director of facilities and operations, OSF HealthCare

"As I got worse and some of my symptoms got worse, they would send me back recommendations of 'Have you tried this over-the-counter medication?' then again at 7 p.m. they would ask me the same questions." (:22)

Looney felt comforted knowing someone with medical knowledge of the novel virus would be checking in.

With plenty of time to reflect while he was stuck in his house, Looney started thinking about how this kind of isolation would affect others, say someone diagnosed when they were away from home, living alone and far from family, or even the college student away from home held up in a dorm on their own.

SOT-Steve Looney, COVID-19 Patient & regional director of facilities and operations, OSF HealthCare

“You might not have your prescriptions, you might not have your groceries. You know, the OnCall program did offer and say, ‘Is there anything we can help you with,’ and that was important.” (:13)

Looney’s recovery allowed him to return to work after standard quarantine. He feels lucky he didn’t require any medical intervention besides over-the-counter medicine and that he has no lasting impact. His wife Beth says she’s feeling great but now has a greater understanding of the physical and emotional toll COVID-19 can take.

People who have tested positive or who suspect they have been infected can be referred to OSF OnCall Connect through their health care provider or through the 24/7 nurse hotline.

If you are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and it is not an emergency, use one of the digital care options offered by OSF. You can connect through Clare, a digital assistant available through the [OSF website](#), or by calling the 24/7 nurse hotline at 833-OSF-KNOW (833-673-5669).