

AAJ MEMBERS IN MOTION

10,000 Small Acts

BY MAUREEN LEDDY

On the front line.

Lewisville, Texas, attorney Colleen Carboy, whose first career was medical-surgical nursing, didn't hesitate when she heard that hard-hit New York and New Jersey were suffering from health care worker shortages this spring. With the support of her clients and opposing counsel, the sole practitioner put her cases on hold and reached out to a traveling nursing company to see how she could help. Carboy took a six-week assignment at a hospital in Englewood, N.J. The first few chaotic weeks were the toughest, Carboy said—resources were thin, and the nurses hardly had time to keep patients' families updated. But Carboy, who received AAJ's Trial Lawyers Care Award for 2020 for her efforts, was happy to help: "It would have been so much harder to stay home than to go and help my nurse colleagues during the crisis."

A safe place to rest.

When Winter Park, Fla., attorney Fay Olga Pappas heard that her ICU-physician brother was having difficulty isolating from his family to avoid infecting them with the coronavirus, and that many of his colleagues were having the same or greater trouble, she acted quickly. Pappas contacted the Central Florida Disaster Medical Coalition, Florida House Rep. Benjamin Diamond (D), and the Florida Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds to connect health care workers with free housing for no less than 30 days at more than 70 RV parks and resorts across the state beginning in early April. "These health care workers should not have to worry about protecting their families from themselves," Pappas said. She said the RV parks offered free housing for medical personnel if a second wave emerges—and this time on a national scale.

Connecting patients with loved ones.

Chad McLain and Rachel Gusman, partners at Graves McLain in Tulsa, Okla., reached out to area hospitals to see if they could help during the pandemic. They learned that patients—including those who did not have the coronavirus—were not allowed to see their families in person, even if they were dying. Overwhelmed nurses were using their cell phones to try to connect families. McLain and Gusman heard heartbreaking stories of families being unable to say goodbye to their loved ones before they passed away. Graves McLain then donated 25 iPads to four local hospitals to help patients communicate with loved ones. And the impact is lasting—when COVID-19 hospitalizations were down in late spring, one hospital's psychiatric unit began using the iPads for telemedicine visits with nearby nursing home patients.

10,000 small acts.

When schools closed in March, Pittsburgh attorney Eric Chaffin thought first of the children who would go hungry without school meals. His firm, Chaffin Luhana, connected with a national deli meats distributor, a bakery, and other businesses with the goal of providing 10,000 sandwiches to Pittsburgh children in need. An area DJ and the media brand Sparkt promoted the effort, and soon a dairy company and national snack food company joined to provide more complete meals. Once the event began, Chaffin quickly realized that it wasn't just kids who were in need but also seniors who couldn't leave their homes. So local residents were encouraged to grab meals and deliver them to seniors. When Pittsburgh began to reopen, Chaffin Luhana partnered with another area law firm and Sparkt to provide 10,000 masks to residents. Chaffin said that he hopes to inspire others and that these "10,000 small acts can create a movement."



Maureen Leddy is an associate editor for *Trial*.