

KCC graduate caring for COVID-19 patients at BBC



By Simon Thalmann
KCC Marketing Dept.

Alyssa Wilkerson graduated from the Kellogg Community College Nursing Program in 2017 and went on to earn her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Western Governors University in 2018.

Today she's a registered nurse in the intensive care unit at Bronson Battle Creek and is a clinical instructor for the KCC Nursing Program.

She's also among the thousands of KCC Nursing graduates now relying on their training and experience as they work on the front lines of the coronavirus outbreak worldwide.

"As a critical care nurse I am taking care of very ill patients on a daily basis," Wilkerson said. "Whether they are on the ventilator for respiratory failure or on a medication drip to keep their blood pressure within normal limits, there is a lot that goes into our everyday work."

Patients that have tested pos-

itive for COVID-19 have shown a wide variety of symptoms, she said, some needing a ventilator while others need minimal oxygen support.

Health care providers at Bronson are trying to conserve what personal protective equipment they can in the event they see a surge of patients, she said, and have a "surge plan" for each floor ready to implement if and when that time comes.

The scariest part of it all is just the unknowns, Wilkerson said.

"In critical care we usually know what is going on and what steps need to be taken next," she said, "but with this you just don't know what to expect. All we can do is roll with the punches."

Wilkerson said her heart goes out to the KCC Nursing students impacted by the coronavirus shutdown.

When classes were transitioned to online-only instruction last month, many students were

concerned about fulfilling their required clinical experience, which traditionally involves face-to-face, hands-on instruction.

But recently announced regulatory updates to such requirements have alleviated some of those concerns, allowing current students to complete all of their remaining clinical requirements online and allowing qualified RN graduates to work as a general nurse for up to a year after graduation before sitting for their NCLEX licensing exam.

Wilkerson is seeing firsthand what such students are going through and the tough choices they're having to make at such a stressful time, and said she applauds them for their resilience working through the pandemic and "rolling with their own punches."

Nursing school wasn't easy, she said, but it was a joy.

"I wouldn't trade going to nursing school at KCC for anything," Wilkerson said. "The



outpour of support from the community, including from KCC, has been amazing, and it makes me extremely proud that I am a nurse.”

Nursing grad Alyssa Wilkerson is fighting on the front lines against coronavirus as a critical care nurse at Bronson Battle Creek. *(Photo via KCC courtesy Alyssa Wilkerson)*