

## Pediatrician uplifted by generosity of public, patients during pandemic

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Alyson Sulaski Wyckoff, Associate Editor

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**Editor's note:** As the COVID-19 pandemic enters its third year, Monique Soileau-Burke, M.D., FAAP, is one of six pediatricians reflecting on what keeps her going, the lessons she's learned along the way and she hopes for the future. To read all six reflections, click [here](#).

Teamwork, flexibility and AAP connections are helping the staff at The Pediatric Center in Columbia, Md., meet the challenges posed by the pandemic. But days like Dec. 27, 2021, tested their mettle.

The practice, operating with a reduced staff due to the holidays, received 100 calls an hour. When they couldn't keep up, a front desk person took messages and handed them to a nurse or pediatrician to handle.



Dr. Soileau-Burke

It was insane, recalled Monique Soileau-Burke, M.D., FAAP, who responded to 50 triage calls that day.

They managed to see 150 patients and administered 104 COVID polymerase chain reaction tests.

Dr. Soileau-Burke, a partner in the privately owned practice, said the staff has learned to pivot to provide the best possible care for patients. The office even has vaccinated and tested parents when these services were scarce in the state.

Everyone has risen to the challenge, combining their individual strengths.

"I think it's all taught us an incredible amount of flexibility. ....And I hope that will be something we continue to take with us after the pandemic is gone."

Her roles as vice president of the AAP Maryland Chapter and a member of the state health department's pediatric workgroup have been helpful for the practice, which includes five pediatric partners, three more pediatricians and four nurse practitioners.

Up to 75 chapter members meet almost every month to share information on topics like testing, telemedicine and vaccination of children.

Expanding use of social media has been beneficial, as well. The office created a video to communicate new procedures and protocols while encouraging everyone to return in person.

When personal protective equipment was difficult to acquire, the practice put out a call asking families of patients and staff members — wherever they were in the country — if they could help procure supplies.

Parents working as painters and contractors brought in N95 masks.

“It was one of the reasons we were able to stay open,” Dr. Soileau-Burke said.

She is uplifted by the generosity of the public, including young patients.

“One of the most beautiful things that I see in my patients is them learning to care about their community,” Dr. Soileau-Burke said. “We talk so much about vaccinating and wearing your mask — all the hard things that have come out of this and the mental health crisis we’re seeing in our kids. I think they’re learning about community and ... the greater good. Sometimes it’s difficult ... but doing the right thing for other people is the right way to go.”

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