

MCCHS' Tippin continues to serve others in difficult times

By **Jacy Lewis**, August 29, 2020



Four days into his tenure as the CEO and president of Medical Center Health System, Russell Tippin would be standing outside of the emergency department addressing the media after the mass shooting on Aug. 31.

Earlier that day he was in Lubbock watching his son play football when he got the call and returned to Odessa as fast as his family could.

"I was in the car with my wife and my kids and we actually stopped and pulled over on the side of the road," he said. "We all held hands and said a prayer for the victims and for the families and believe it or not for the shooter and his family. In all the chaos that somehow people could see Jesus and God and the people who are helping." When he got back to Odessa, he walked into a situation that was functioning well, he said.

During debriefing sessions after the events of Aug. 31, 2019, Tippin said hospital leadership worked on changing some protocols for how staff respond during an active mass shooting situation.

“As hurt people were coming in, it was an active-shooting situation, so nobody knew if the car pulling up screaming was the shooter or a victim,” he said. “Everybody was playing their part, but it has made us look at how we respond. We started thinking if there is an active shooter maybe we don’t need to be running outside.” After the active shooting situation was contained, MCH staff, including Chief Operations Officer Matt Collins, Dr. Sudip Bose and Tippin, held multiple press conferences outside the emergency department.

“We wanted to relay good information about how many we had, how we were treating them and what the situation was at the hospital,” he said. “Because we needed blood and everything that we needed ended up being met. Communicating through the press at that time was a good way to let people in the community know what was happening.”

He said he vividly remembers community members coming to the hospital to donate Chick-fil-A sandwiches, handmade blankets and O negative blood, which is a universal blood type.

He said he has witnessed that type of support continue in this unprecedented time. During the pandemic, MCH and Tippin have been hosting virtual press conferences to keep the community informed about the coronavirus situation at the hospital. At the end of each Zoom meeting, he shares a Bible verse with viewers and attendees. Tippin, who attends First Baptist Church in Andrews, believes that if God’s love is inside him then it’s his responsibility to show that to other people. His father passed away from a sudden heart attack when he was 42, and Tippin always goes back to a verse that is on his father’s headstone.

“On his headstone there is a verse, it is Mark 9:35, and in the Bible it talks about Jesus’ disciples arguing with each other about how to become the best and who is No. 1,” he said. “Jesus told them it’s very simple that if you want to be the best you have got to put yourself last.”

He said he treasures that verse in his life because it reminds him that no matter what it says on his name badge, his job is to serve other people. MCH marked the shooting anniversary last week with moments of silence and by displaying yellow ribbons on trees around the hospital. He said everyone knew the anniversary was coming but it’s time to remember the victims and focus on the victims’ families.

https://www.mrt.com/special_reports/article/MCHS-Tippin-continues-to-serve-others-in-15524499.php