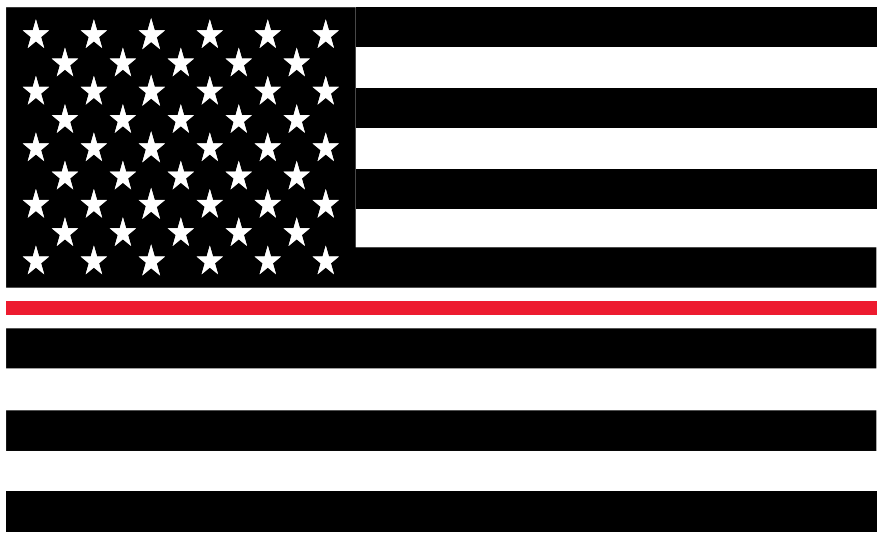


FRONTLINE HEROES



By **LAUREN MCDONALD**
THE BRUNSWICK NEWS

Frederica Academy nurse, athletic trainer play vital roles in keeping campus healthy

Health care workers have since March put themselves in harm's way, risking exposure to COVID-19 as they work to protect others.

Nikki Pope had been working for months to protect and care for the students and staff at Frederica Academy, where she serves as school nurse, when she caught the virus. Pope, fortunately, has had a reliable partner in her efforts to limit coronavirus spread on campus in Frederica Academy's head athletic trainer, Adam Norman. The pair have been on the frontline of the significant effort that has gone into creating successful protocols that keep the school's community safe and healthy.

When Pope had to quarantine with the virus, Norman stepped up and covered her on-campus responsibilities as well as his own. Their strong collaboration and constant communication since March made this a seamless temporary transition, and their dedication to the important role they both play as school health care workers during a pandemic meant no one at Frederica lost any amount of care during Pope's short absence.

"We are just in constant contact with each other," Pope said. "We have such a great working relationship."

Before the fall semester, a health and wellness committee came together to craft Frederica Academy's plans for how to bring students back to campus and promote health and safety as much as possible amid the pandemic. Pope and Norman lent important perspectives to that discussion and have since been responsible for much of the work that goes into keeping the school's COVID-19 numbers low.

Every morning, Pope screens each person — student, parent, staff member — who arrives on campus. She completes a verbal screening and checks temperatures daily.

Norman not only cleans the sports equipment and locker room spaces but also keeps close track of every student-athlete's health and potential exposures to the coronavirus by completing screenings and staying in touch with families.

Other precautions in place on campus include a strict mask policy, spaced-apart desk arrangements in classrooms and social distance monitoring throughout each day.

"Safety protocols at Frederica Academy would consistently adapt with the changes that were implemented by the CDC and Georgia Department of Public Health," Norman said.

Pope said she's able to always trust that Norman has a firm grasp of the most recent information from the CDC and public health department.

"He keeps track of all that, and he's just very up to date," she said.



Adam Norman is Frederica Academy's head athletic trainer. (Provided photo)

Both recognize that students are naturally social, and they understand they must repeatedly remind everyone to stay socially distanced.

"Teenagers in particular are very social creatures," Pope said. "At break, at lunch, they want to be together. Six feet is not together to them." Pope and Norman also continuously push out the message that everyone must follow precautions as best as possible when off campus as well.

"There is never one true answer on how you contact COVID, so utilizing the safety protocols on the campus and the health safety recommendations out in the community has consistently assisted in maintaining the campus staying open," Norman said.

Effective communication with the school's community is a responsibility both Pope and Norman have taken seriously.

"The amount of consistent emails, reminders and

getting the proper information to make sure that the protocol is followed correctly is rather challenging at times," Norman said. "That leads to some late nights and several phone calls, but that is a sacrifice willingly taken to maintain a healthy functioning campus."

Pope and Norman were both complimentary of each other, noting that each makes the other's success at the job possible.

"School nurses are essential in maintaining a healthy and safe environment on a daily basis even without COVID," Norman said. "Adding COVID on top of the tasks they are already maintaining has been no small task. Nikki stepped up during the summer to lead the health and wellness subcommittee for Frederica Academy and help draft the reopening plan for Frederica Academy. She even put together a tracking list for any COVID cases from August to present in addition to compiling frequently asked ques-

tions to help assist with understanding of the safety protocols. This is all on top of the countless students seen during the day with other illnesses."

Pope, who is in her first year as the full-time nurse at Frederica after many years working for Southeast Georgia Health System, said Norman's reliability and expertise have been a huge asset this year.

"He's just amazing," she said. "He really is probably one of the smartest people I've ever met."

Keeping students and staff safe has been a daunting task, Norman noted, but he and Pope have tackled every challenge together. "It's no easy task, and there have been times where we are the bad guys, but ensuring safety for a campus of up to 400 students, 100 faculty/staff/administrators and then community coaches who come on campus versus sending one to 12 people home is a win-win in my

book," he said. "Nikki and I contact each other and consult on every potential COVID case on Frederica Academy's campus, send emails to families, inform the campus of isolation/quarantine time frames and continue to follow the safety protocols to make sure that we are doing the due diligence needed for a continued safe open campus."

When Pope contracted the coronavirus, she was able to stay home and feel confident that the school's community was in good hands.

But she didn't stop, even then, doing what she could to support Norman in whatever way possible.

"One major thing that some forget is that health care workers can contract this virus, and when Nikki did get that, she continued to work from home taking calls, sending emails and doing everything to make sure the campus maintained the safety required for prevention of a COVID outbreak," Norman said.



Nikki Pope serves as the school nurse at Frederica Academy. (Provided photo)

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FREDERICA ACADEMY

200 Murray Way
St. Simons Island, GA 31522

912.638.9981
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NIKKI POPE
FA SCHOOL NURSE



ADAM NORMAN
FA HEAD ATHLETIC TRAINER

A special thanks to our dedicated School Nurse, **Nikki Pope**, and Head Athletic Trainer, **Adam Norman**, for always going above and beyond to keep our school FAmily safe!

