Banner Health

For Immediate Release

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Two West Valley Banner hospitals each discharge 1,000th COVID-19 patient

Banner Thunderbird & Banner Estrella Medical Centers celebrate saved lives

PHOENIX (Sept. 14, 2020) – Banner Thunderbird Medical Center in Glendale and Banner Estrella Medical Center in West Phoenix each recently discharged their 1,000th COVID-19 patient this past week.

Brian Aguayo returned home to Yuma after a 12-day stay at Banner Children's at Thunderbird. The 17-year old was treated in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit for most of his stay, which included five days connected to a ventilator. The teen was the 1,000th COVID-19 patient to be discharged from that hospital

"Oh yeah, I am ready to go home," Aguayo said.

While in the hospital, Aguayo was diagnosed with Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome in Children, a rare but serious complication associated with COVID-19 where different parts of the body including the heart and brain can become inflamed.

At Banner Estrella Medical Center, Maria Castillo-Gutierrez of Phoenix, became the 1,000th COVID-19 patient discharged from that hospital. Staff celebrated her release by lining the hallways of the hospital and cheering as she left to return home to her family.

"I had a headache and I had nausea, but I didn't know what I had," said Castillo-Gutierrez. "I thought I needed to come to the hospital and immediately."

Castillo-Gutierrez spent five days at Banner Estrella. As a result of COVID-19, she will need to   use oxygen to help with her breathing until her body is fully recovered from the effects of the virus

"We are exceptionally happy for Maria and exceptionally proud of the hundreds of doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists and other team members who've helped us save more than 1,000 lives from this disease," said Dr. Eric Katz, chief medical officer of Banner Estrella Medical Center.

"To know that you have saved 1,000 lives makes it so meaningful and makes it feel like your work was worth the effort that you put into it," said Debbie Flores, chief executive officer of Banner Thunderbird Medical Center.

As Arizona continues to see a drop in new confirmed cases of COVID-19, Flores encourages the public to remain vigilant.

"Keep you, yourself, and your family safe by masking up, washing your hands, keeping your social distancing, said Flores. "In a time when it feels like it might be over, people tend to get a little lax, so important that we continue to stay consistent."

As one of the largest nonprofit health care systems in the country, the team at Banner Health is committed to ensuring all Banner locations are a safe place for care. Headquartered in Phoenix, Banner Health owns and operates 28 acute-care hospitals and an array of other services, including: Banner Imaging, Banner Telehealth and Banner Urgent Care. Team members are dedicated to protecting the health and safety of patients, be it a routine checkup, elective surgery or an urgent health service. Waiting room and employee workstation layouts maintain proper social distancing; screenings are conducted at hospital entrances to verify that all employees and visitors are well; and, all Banner physicians are equipped to visit patients remotely. Learn more about Banner's commitment to safety at bannerhealth.com/safecare.

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Editors' Note: Interviews and transcript available for both patients. Brian Aguayo is Spanish only; Maria Castillo-Gutierrez is English through a Spanish-English interpreter.