



Nurses and staff at the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie sport the designer caps made for them by Prof. Philip Sparks of the School of Fashion. (Photo: submitted)

# Fashion professor puts polka dots in nurses' caps

## Designer headgear brings cheer to local hospital

May 14, 2020

 **Chat with Sam!**

Patients at the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie were in for a surprise recently when the ER nurses and staff showed up with polka-dot caps instead of their customary baby-blue headgear.

"People had fun when we came in as a group with our green and white polka-dot caps," said Prof. Tania Killian, School of Health Sciences (</school/health-sciences.html>), who works as a registered nurse in the emergency room at the health centre. "Otherwise, we are always in the same old blue gowns, blue caps and yellow gloves. The polka-dot caps gave us a bit of a personality."

The caps, a gift of gratitude to front-line workers, were designed and produced by Prof. Philip Sparks, School of Fashion (</school/faculty-of-communication-art-and-design/school-of-fashion.html>), and Seneca graduate Craig Renaud who works for him. Mr. Sparks, a leading menswear designer, used the cloth from his studio to create 120 caps in three different materials for the nursing staff.

Mr. Sparks said the project took off after he found out from Ms. Killian that the health centre where she worked was facing a shortage of caps.



**Chat with Sam!**





The nursing caps are designed to support front-line workers during the pandemic.



**Chat with Sam!**



"I have a studio outside Seneca and we do custom tailoring," he said. "The people I share the space with were already making caps and masks for other hospitals. As soon as the winter semester ended, Craig and I decided we wanted to do this as well and help our nurses."

In addition to bringing cheer to the hospital, the caps are also more comfortable to wear than the standard-issue paper ones.

"We have to wear hospital scrubs and the stuff is often quite horrible," Ms. Killian said. "The thin, papery caps we get are really very uncomfortable and as our PPE supplies are running low, we are reaching out to the community to meet the shortfall."

Ms. Killian said the caps are symbolic of the community support front-line workers have been receiving during the pandemic.

"People drop off coffee and treats for us. It is probably the first time since SARS that we are being appreciated so publicly," she said. "For me, I'm just doing my job the way I've always done, but now there is gratitude for my work which wasn't there before. The pandemic is changing our society."

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