



Heroes Beyond the Mask

Hank Schoggin “THE Captain Hulk”



Modified from screenrant.com

I am a paramedic on the Medical Special Operations Unit with the San Antonio Fire Department, a husband, and a father to two young boys.

“There are people out there who are struggling whether pandemic or not, quarantine or not, and you shouldn’t be afraid to help them in any little way you can because it helps. – Hank”



As a paramedic on the MSOU with SAFD, I support all of the specialty teams in San Antonio, helping with any kind of technical rescue, hazmat, SWAT, federal teams in the area as their medical support team, whole blood calls, helo teams, ultrasound, and infectious disease. I am proud of my team, my SAFD, and the response we have been able to provide even before COVID was a pandemic. We’ve had guys at Lackland and a lot of paramedics step up. On all calls, we are wearing appropriate PPE and re-usable facemasks, and only one medic evaluates the patient while the other remains outside. For probable COVID calls, patients receive a mask and we have a medic officer who helps us such as with MEDCOM to navigate hospitals so we don’t overwhelm them. My team and I were also tasked with deconning (decontaminating) the units (ambulances) after all calls so our fellow paramedics could decon. Currently, I no longer work with COVID patients as there are not many specialty teams and SAFD is trying to keep us healthy and functional so we can continue to assist with special emergency rescues and operations.

Nevertheless, I’m inspired by how the medical community came together, is responding to the ever-evolving COVID situation, and is sharing information. I am reading up on COVID and am staying up-to-date through my SAFD. I’m also sharing this knowledge with my family, friends, and neighbors and staying connected through facetime and phone. The general population, especially the older population, is more in the dark in terms of information and, like my dad, many do not know how to use a computer really well. All they have is the news, and they have a lot of fears because they are vulnerable. Talking with them helps them to stay sane and safe. I am also helping my neighbors by giving them some of the supplies like hand sanitizer. For my elderly neighbor who lives by herself, if I’m already going to the store, I’ll ask her if she needs anything so she doesn’t have to go out.

To cope with the stress and to keep myself well, I’m exercising as much as I can. Being at home with my small immediate family also helps me decompress. It’s a big worry and I stress a lot about getting my family infected, so it’s nice I have a support system in my SAFD and we have people we can bounce questions off of. It’s a big relief I can do that and keep a look out for those signs and symptoms as my 1 ½ year old is getting teeth and thus sometimes gets a low-grade fever. I am also eating well, washing my hands more, trying not to be complacent, using my time wisely, sleeping when I can, not drinking as much, and keeping my body as healthy as I can. Additionally, I’m not running errands unless I absolutely need to and only one parent is going to the store without our kids. It’s not fun – I would absolutely love to go camping or hang out with my friends for lunch, but I recognize this is not a long-term problem. If I stay at home now, then I will be able to do the things I like to do and want to do, but if I continue to do those things now, it will prolong the quarantine.

Overall, I am grateful for how our medical community has responded. It is overwhelming to see how people are willing and able to go and help out and it is crazy we have to have this crazy pandemic for communities to come together and help each other out. We have had this sense of community I feel we have lost over the years, and I am hopeful, once this is over, we can continue to help our neighbors a little more. I also hope people will be more cognizant about being healthier for themselves and for others and about washing their hands. Even after this pandemic ends, your sanitary practices should not end. My 4-year-old can wash his hands; you can still wash your hands. Just remember to take care of yourself, your family, your neighbor. It will be over soon enough and we will be back to normal life. Enjoy the family time now you don’t normally get, make the best of things, and, when this is over, take the good you have learned and use it.