



Marjery Cooney, David Johnson and Mark Miko have helped keep Pitt people safe during the pandemic.

SCOUR AND SANITIZE

Marjery Cooney squatted on the floor of Alan Magee Scaife Hall to paste a sticker that showed two people outlined in blue, with an arrow pushing them apart. “Observe a minimum 6 feet from person to person at all times,” it read. She used a scraper to smooth out the air bubbles, then moved to the next one. It was March 2020.

“Just to do stuff like that, knowing that the world was changing, was eerie,” says Cooney, a full-time member of the Scaife Hall cleaning crew since 2004.

As the world changed, so did the cleaners’ routines. The crew has been putting in overtime for more than a year now to ensure the safety of everyone who enters the building. Crew members disinfect railings, elevator buttons, bathroom areas and other high-touch points throughout the day with a new product that kills the virus within 5 seconds. And the staff now includes someone devoted to watching over hand-sanitizers.

They had fewer and fewer tenants, says Jamie Giovengo, “but we did more and more disinfecting to make sure everyone stayed safe.” Giovengo

directs the cleaning crew that covers Scaife Hall and Biomedical Science Towers East, West and South.

“You never thought you could clean enough or sanitize enough,” says Cooney.

Mark Miko, a member of the cleaning crew since 1988, says they try to create a comfortable environment by being visible. The custodians want to “give people as much reassurance as we can that things they use are being cleaned on a regular basis,” he adds.

Giovengo says she is proud of how her team adjusted under the uncertain circumstances; and the crew likewise says they’re grateful to their management for keeping them safe and addressing concerns like time off for childcare or sick leave.

“They were always, always there for our concerns, time out, time off,” Miko says. “They couldn’t have been any better.”

—Sarah Stager

—Photo by Tom Altany/University of Pittsburgh