‘Dealing with the monster again’

We do what we can as long as we can. But eventually there’s not going to be enough of it.

Ruthie Newcomer rubberstamps through Parkland Memorial Hospital nurses unit. Judy Herrington’s description of the struggle to find enough bedside caregivers to keep them — even just barely — off the right side of physical and mental breakdown.

Sharon Gregory

tuesday, the day before we left, had been one of Herrington’s worst in a long time. As weary patient numbers overwhelmed staff and space — forcing Parkland to declare a capacity disaster — Herrington’s most creative solutions fell short.

“We were putting plugs in holes that wouldn’t fill,” the unit supervisor said for assistance services told me. “We had to make sure you had an RN in the room. Everybody was mad.”

Like hospitals across the country, Parkland faced both an unprecedented pandemic and unprecedented nursing shortages.

Too many nurses take early retirement rather than face another COVID-19 variant. Others can’t find child care that they trust will keep their kids safe from the virus.

Many are leaving by high-dollar travel agencies, which offer big boosts to nurses willing to do temporary, short-term gigs. “It’s a cash cow out there right now to be willing to do temporary gigs,” a travel nurse said.

From nurses giving up because they have given up all others. Increasingly, they are burning out not COVID-19 but various demands.

For example, this year, Herrington’s most creative solutions fell short. They were putting plugs in holes that wouldn’t fill, the unit supervisor said for assistance services told me. “We did our best to give our staff all the help they could have,” she said.

One of the things we are doing is trying to engage the public in our work. For example, we have a program called ‘OK, anything I find, I keep.’

See nursing Page 28

South Dallas

City to sell property on Bexar Street

Our state’s going to mug all of us

Dave Lieber

As nurses leave Parkland, those who remain fight PTSD, wonder how long they’ll endure

Neiman Marcus executive to lead Family Place

Fink, CEO since 1997, finds someone to ‘take us to the next level’