

Doctor's Advice: Spring is here so Volunteer

By James McGuinness, M.D.

April brings warmer weather, April showers, and spring flowers. April has many notable themes and holidays such as Passover, Easter, and Earth Day. It also reminds us of Child Abuse Prevention, Autism, Parkinson's disease and Sexual Assault Awareness.

April is also National Volunteer Month and is dedicated to promoting, encouraging, and celebrating volunteerism. National Volunteer week is April 18-24. Volunteering had to change for many of us due to the Covid pandemic. Some volunteers had to move online and many people have looked for volunteer opportunities online. Some people may not realize how they might volunteer. Designing templates, flyers, or social media graphics, making phone calls to check-in with people in your community, organizing files or data in the cloud, drafting, editing, and/or proofing documents (my wife helps me with this), are just some of the ways we can volunteer. You might also donate your time or make a contribution to a volunteer organization (e.g., the Parker Family Health Center). Volunteers come in all shapes and sizes and are always needed! They pick a cause and make a difference in someone's life. Volunteering can help us feel better about ourselves.

As a volunteer myself, I often reflect on the awareness, impact, and empathy that I am able to experience from volunteering. I am always struck by the conditions of the homeless people when I examine them and speak with them. Some of them had a good life but then things changed, or some people never got to experience a 'good' life. I sometimes get teary-eyed after leaving the JBJ & PBC Hope & Comfort Warming Center in Red Bank when I reflect on what I experienced. The contrast between where I am in life and where they are is mind boggling. We should all count our blessings.

Based on current improving COVID-19 trends, the Department of Health and Human Services is planning for the federal Public Health Emergency for COVID-19, to expire at the end of the day on May 11, 2023. Specific details regarding what will change regarding medications, programs, etc. are still being addressed. By now we all know the drill. Continue to practice social distancing, proper hand washing, and wearing a mask from three years and up when appropriate. Get enough sleep, stay hydrated and eat properly.

We have all adjusted our lives since the Covid pandemic. We now do things and have routines that we would not have thought about a few years ago. Many of us have reached out to friends and family and formed new bonds. We are all better for these changes.

Go for a walk in the warm Spring weather, stay hydrated and be safe.

The natural healing force within each one of us is the greatest force in getting well. – Hippocrates

James McGuinness, M.D., is a family physician in Middletown, and is the Medical Director Emeritus of the Parker Family Health Center in Red Bank