



Volunteering: Gratitude in Action

Vince Parrish, L.C.S.W.

“To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world.”

— *Author unknown*

I thought volunteering would be a piece of cake until I encountered the macaroni and cheese. No volunteer orientation could have adequately prepared me for the culinary messiness two dozen energetic inner city preschoolers could generate when mac and cheese is on the noontime menu. Nor could I imagine the joy and satisfaction swiping tables and stacking sticky lunch trays could afford me.

Dubbed the Volunteer State, Tennessee citizens are famous for stepping up to serve. The past and present participants in the Tennessee Medical Foundation Physicians Health Program (PHP) are no exception. They give generously of their time, talent, and financial resources to support their fellow participants. Some “give back” by serving as role models and peer recovery coaches. Others with more experience lead our weekly Caduceus Club aftercare groups or visit fellow physicians in treatment. Among the most devoted of our volunteer physicians are those who serve on the PHP Board of Directors and the various committees so vital to the health and success of the program.

Across Tennessee, TMA physicians routinely and with little fanfare donate countless volunteer hours to their communities. From their hearts and capable hands flow an abundance of good will and generosity. Most never receive sufficient credit for their selfless efforts but, fortunately, they do harvest some tangible non-monetary benefits. Volunteering does, in fact, pay dividends. For some, payoff comes in the form of fun and enjoyment. For others, return accrues in new knowledge, satisfying social connections, and the discovery of hidden interests and talent. And finally, according to research, many receive abundant mental and physical health benefits in increased self-esteem, improved immune system functioning and perhaps, most importantly, the satisfaction from participating and supporting a worthy cause.

To those of you who already volunteer, thank you! To those who haven't started yet, look around. There are people and settings nearby who need you. There are spills to be mopped up, budgets to be reviewed, and vulnerable hands to be held. Whether it is a zoo, museum, shelter, school or food bank, someone awaits your call. Please make that call! It could mean the world to someone.

To make a tax deductible contribution to the Physicians Health Program, contact TMF Administrator Michael Todd at (615) 467-6411 or write to the Tennessee Medical Foundation, 216 Centerview Drive, Suite 304, Brentwood, TN 37027.

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