

## Volunteerism Spotlight

### Northeast Georgia Medical Center – Internal Medicine

The American College of Physicians Georgia Chapter recently spoke to Holly Stewart, director of graduate medical education wellness at Northeast Georgia Medical Center, about the health system's efforts to get residents involved in the community.

#### **Tell us about the Holiday Hero program.**

Holiday Hero is a program to purchase Christmas gifts for the children of Northeast Georgia health system employees who are in need. This is something that we do every year as a department, and this was the first year that we were able to get the residents involved.

Given the residents' interest, we signed up to help a larger family. The family that internal medicine adopted had five kids, but across all our residency programs, we served five families and 14 children. I created a sign-up sheet, and the residents selected the gift they wanted to buy from the wish list. Some of these items included big stuff like bicycles, technology devices, and Air Jordan's. We hosted a wrapping event that we did as team bonding and then we took the gifts to the drop-off point for distribution.



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### Can you speak about the larger effort to get residents more involved in community engagement activities?

Residency is so demanding that the residents just don't have a lot of time for this kind of stuff. Even if they have the desire, there are not always enough hours in the day. We want to provide opportunities that are in-house as part of their day, where they can jump in and serve and give back. Holiday Hero is one of those readily available service opportunities. Other activities include providing health and diet education at the local farmers' market.

We have a whole wellness department for our graduate medical education program. We try to take care of the residents holistically and that means paying attention to their mental health, but it also means getting them engaged socially in the community and helping them put down roots here. The Holiday Hero program ties into our overall wellness mission to support well-rounded residents and to get them invested in their community.



### Holiday Hero Program

This is a representative list of the many participating Internal Medicine residents, faculty, and staff from Northeast Georgia Medical Center.

### Residents:

Sheena Bhushan, Olivia Peralta, Paige Gwynn, Hadia Ahmad, Sahil Parag, Martin Herrera, Nicole McGuire

### Faculty/Staff:

Jim Kruer, Nikeva Johnson, Brad Pierce, Kiera Hodge

### What was the reaction of residents who participated?

Around the holidays and especially with COVID, there is just so much need and so many families that are struggling. This opportunity to give back gave people a good feeling and some hope. It also raised awareness. Some of the wish-list items were basic, like socks. This was eye-opening for some of the residents to see the basic needs that these kids were asking for. I am hopeful that by seeing what is needed, the experience encourages the residents to continue to give back to their community.