

Volunteerism Spotlight - Earl Stewart Jr.

Helping Others to See, So They Can Become

Earl Stewart Jr. M.D., FACP, an internist with Wellstar Medical Group* in Atlanta, credits mentors in his hometown of Augusta with setting him on his career path. Now, he continues to pay it forward by mentoring others exploring or pursuing a career in medicine.

Why is mentoring so important to you?

It is my way of giving back because it was done for me. Growing up in Augusta, I was in a health sciences and engineering-focused high school, which afforded me the opportunity to get out of the classroom and spend time with physicians directly. I believe in the notion that what we see we will become. So, to become a physician, you have to see it. If a young Black man desires to become a physician, he has to see a Black male physician.

How are you able to incorporate mentoring into your career?

Throughout the journey to where I have been fortunate to be today, I have been extremely committed to mentoring. In residency, through the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs at Brown University I was able to participate in mentoring African American and Latin X

medical students. When I returned to Georgia, I was practicing in Thomaston and Griffin and I was able to mentor students interested in health care at Columbus State and Gordon College and Southern Crescent Technical College. In the last year, when I arrived at Wellstar, I joined the subcommittee of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council on provider engagement. We have begun thinking about forming a mentoring program.



Is there anything you specifically learned from your mentors that you are now doing?

These men all showed me that it is possible to be very, very involved in your community as a physician. They are very upstanding, very well respected, and they are also very integral members of their church and their communities. They taught me you must strive to be excellent in every endeavor in which you involve yourself, but they also taught me about the importance of being involved. And that is not just within your institution, not just within your hospital or your medical office, but being visible in the community.

Why do you think it is particularly important for physicians to volunteer?

I see it that my practice of medicine extends beyond the examination room. You must get out in the community; you have to give talks at churches. You must speak to community groups, or the Rotary club. By participating in these initiatives to keep the community healthy, it impacts your ability, especially in primary care, to keep your patients healthy. It actually takes very little effort and there are many avenues out there to become involved in volunteering.



**The views here are those of Dr. Stewart alone and do not necessarily reflect the views or opinions of Wellstar.*