

PA

HEALTH

ISSUE 9, SPRING 2021

YOUR GUIDE TO FITNESS & WELL-BEING

UNBREAKABLE BOND

A POWERFUL FRIENDSHIP INSPIRES A LIFESAVING GIFT.



MEET OUR NEXT LOCAL FAMILY DOCS

A WINNING (EASY) POTLUCK DISH

THIS PUP IS CUTE, CUDDLY — AND HERE TO HEAL

Find us online:
geisinger.org/PAHealth

WELCOME

Have an amazing health story to share? We'd love to hear it. And maybe we'll feature it in an upcoming edition. Send us a note:

PAHealth@geisinger.edu



Winter is finally over, and if this one felt a little longer and darker than most, this spring should bring a feeling of greater hope and renewal. We're dedicating this edition of *PA Health* to the theme of giving back — whether that's to your community, to the environment or to someone else in need.

Here, you'll meet best friends Mike Maxwell of Factoryville and Chris Joseph of Tunkhannock. When Chris learned he needed a new kidney, Mike knew his would be a perfect match. Now, with their surgeries behind them, both men have much to look forward to.

Giving back can come in many forms. Our medical students perform community service. Local friends of Geisinger give their time and skills (or provide the comfort of a pet, in the case of a few of our hospital volunteers). And if you'd rather give back while enjoying fresh air and a little exercise, why not take care of a park trail or tend a garden full of native plants that support Pennsylvania's wildlife?

Thank you for being one of our readers. If you'd like to see more of what *PA Health* has to offer, visit us online at [geisinger.org/PAHealth](https://www.geisinger.org/PAHealth) for additional stories, recipes and health and wellness tips.

I wish you and your loved ones all the best this spring. Enjoy the warming weather.

Jaewon Ryu, MD, JD
President and CEO
Geisinger

On the cover:
Mike Maxwell and Chris Joseph both love music and have a strong spiritual connection. They wouldn't let kidney failure get in the way of a great friendship.

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Give for good. Feel great.



Philanthropy powers everything Geisinger does to make better health easier for everyone:

- Geisinger Janet Weis Children's Hospital
- Henry Cancer Center
- Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine
- Telemedicine expansion

Join thousands of your neighbors to support better health, right here.

[donations.geisinger.org](https://www.donations.geisinger.org)



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'I had his kidney. I would be his match'



BY PAULA FRANKEN

Mike Maxwell of Factoryville and Chris Joseph of Tunkhannock met 15 years ago at Mill City Assembly of God, where they were on the worship team and played in the church band. Mr. Joseph was a college freshman at the time and noticed some cloudiness in his vision. His doctor checked his kidneys and said they didn't look good. He'd eventually need a transplant.

"I told him right then and there that I had his kidney," says Mr. Maxwell. "I had total confidence that I would be his match. It wasn't up to me, it was up to God. And I knew it from day one."

Ten years later, Mr. Joseph was in Los Angeles touring with a band when he got very ill — his kidneys were failing. Mr. Maxwell pulled him aside and said, "Hey, I have your kidney. I told you that 10 years ago. Nothing has changed."

Tests at Geisinger Medical Center concluded that Mr. Maxwell was indeed a good match, and surgery was scheduled for June 18. "I knew everything was going to be fine," he says.

And he was right. When Mr. Maxwell woke up after the surgery, a nurse was there to show him his friend's first urine sample — the new kidney was working perfectly.

Both men were soon out of the hospital. "Anyone considering being a kidney donor should know the recovery process isn't that bad," says Mr. Maxwell. "And when you consider that you're giving someone else the gift of life, you know it's more than worth it."

Mr. Joseph recovered well. He no longer needs dialysis and enjoys eating the things he loves again. The two men remain close and plan to celebrate every June 18 as "Chris's second birthday."



More than **270** people donated money to Geisinger in the last 5 years to make organ donation easier for our neighbors.

Mike Maxwell (left) and Chris Joseph enjoy an afternoon together. "Life has taught me that it's okay to receive help from others," says Mr. Joseph.



Kidney donation might be easier — and safer — than you think.
[geisinger.org/transplant](https://www.geisinger.org/transplant)

Read the full story
[geisinger.org/PAHealth](https://www.geisinger.org/PAHealth)



1,000

The number of doctors PA needs to be “fully staffed.” Contributions to Geisinger Commonwealth support Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program scholarships, closing that gap.

Learning to care for — and about — their neighbors

Meet the next generation of Geisinger

BY BETH KASZUBA

Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine in Scranton was born of a grassroots movement to bring more physicians and better healthcare to northeast and central Pennsylvania. Today, the vision of seven founding community leaders is fully realized as a four-year medical school staffed by more than 1,500 volunteer clinical faculty members.

Today, the school still emphasizes community service. Future MDs all complete at least 100 hours of service with local organizations. The school also rewards some students — Abigail Geisinger Scholars — with tuition-free education, in exchange for practicing with Geisinger after residency.

For many Geisinger Commonwealth students, like these Abigail Geisinger Scholars, the school’s emphasis on public service isn’t an obligation. It’s an extension of their personal commitments to advancing the greater good.



Dream of being a family doctor who serves our region? See if the Abigail Geisinger Scholars Program is a match for you. [geisinger.edu/AbigailScholars](https://www.geisinger.edu/AbigailScholars)



Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine students clean up a neighborhood, pre-COVID.

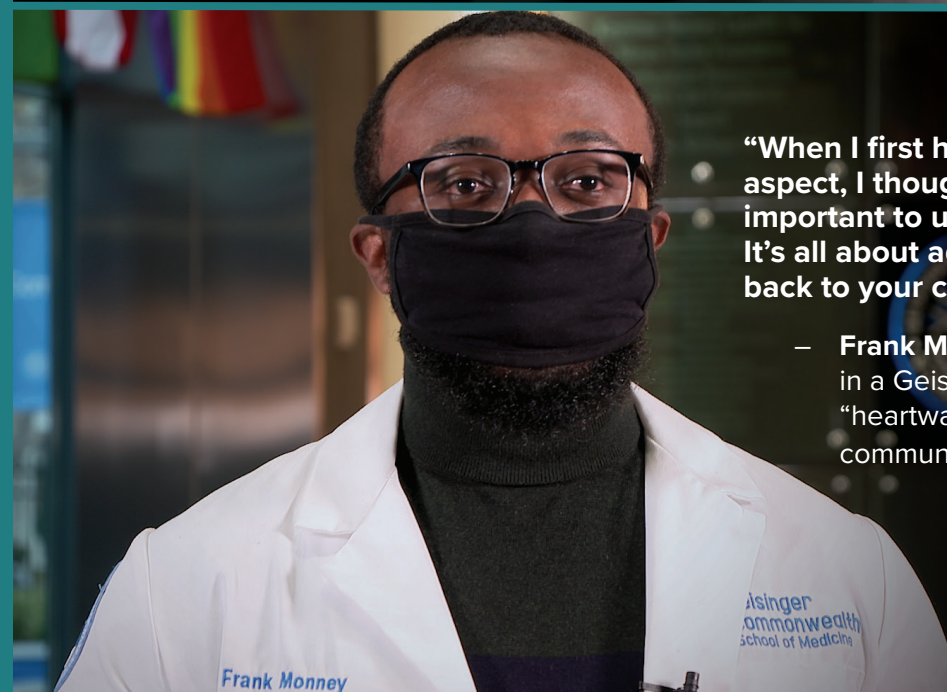
“Geisinger really stood out to me because from day one, coming here for my interview, they showed me they were walking the walk when it came to community service and engagement. Things like the Fresh Food Farmacy — if you can’t access healthy foods, you can do that with a sort of ‘prescription,’ which I think is really amazing.”

— **Sophia Costan, MD** Class of 2024, who looks forward to developing long-term relationships with patients as a primary care doctor



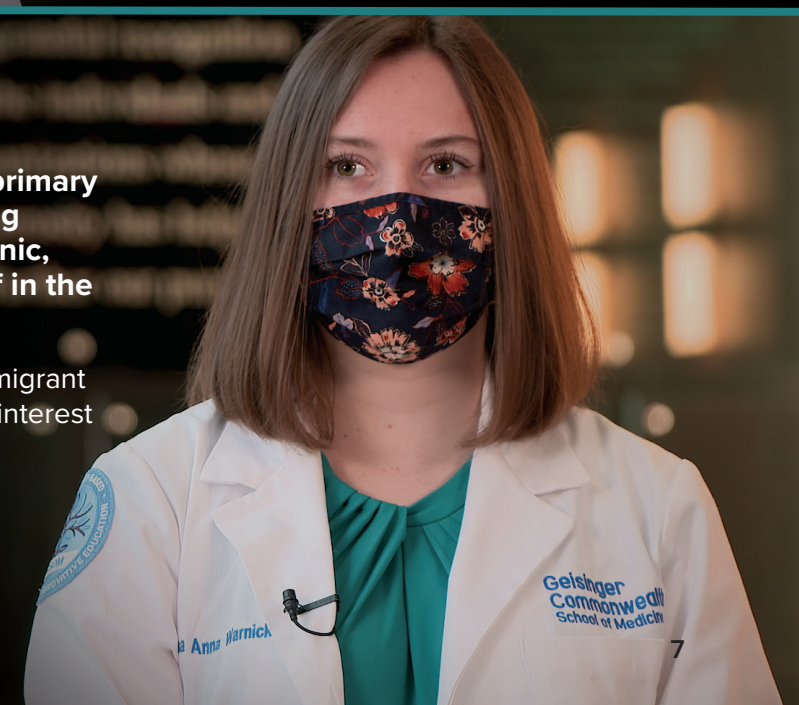
“When I first heard about the school’s community service aspect, I thought it was a little strange. But I think it’s important to understand why we’re embarking on this career. It’s all about advocating for your patients. It’s all about giving back to your community.”

— **Frank Monney, MD** Class of 2024, whose participation in a Geisinger Commonwealth-sponsored food drive was “heartwarming” proof of the school’s genuine commitment to community service



“In my interview process, I saw that the school had an unparalleled commitment to community medicine and primary care. And that’s what I wanted after experiences working as an English-Spanish interpreter at a migrant health clinic, which was a primary care setting. I definitely see myself in the future working with an underserved population.”

— **Justine Warnick, MD** Class of 2024, whose work with migrant workers at a clinic near Gettysburg helped cement her interest in community service and primary care





Healthier environment, healthier you

BY BETH KASZUBA

A chance to commune with nature. Trails we traverse to get fit. Lots of space for cooped-up kids to blow off steam. Whatever your reason for visiting, state and local parks offer us a lot.

So why not give back while you boost your mental and physical health? Pennsylvania's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is always looking for volunteers to maintain state parks.

If you're into hiking, you can help create and maintain trails, improve wildlife habitats or clean and stabilize stream banks.

Handy or have a green thumb? Volunteers are also needed to plant flowers, repair footbridges, make recreation areas more accessible and install park signs, among other tasks.

Serious about conservation — and social, too? Join a “friends group” or create one with like-minded buddies.

Lace up your hikers and hit the trails:
dcnr.pa.gov/GetInvolved

Hint:

A quick search of environmental blogs will help you plan a fun, successful cleanup.



Geisinger Commonwealth School of Medicine students dig deep into community service, pre-pandemic. You'll be smiling, too — safely behind masks, of course — when your group's garden starts to bloom.

Gather the gang for a cleaner neighborhood

Community cleanups are a fun way to make your little part of the world prettier — and safer. Because critters who carry disease don't like clean neighborhoods.

Just pick a priority, like litter collection, flower planting or river cleanup, and rally your troops. (And be sure to get any necessary permits or permissions.)

Don't forget...

- Trash bags
- Shovels and rakes
- Gloves
- Wheelbarrows
- Gardening materials



The perks of Pennsylvania perennials

BY PAULA FRANKEN

Gardening is a great way to get out in the fresh air and get a little exercise while you're at it. It's good for you and it's good for the environment. But why choose plants that are native to Pennsylvania?

For one thing, they're easier to care for because they really like our climate. They also require little or no fertilizer or pesticides to thrive. But best of all, they help preserve our state's biodiversity.

Our wilderness is shrinking and being replaced by lawns and gardens filled with plants from other regions. This means our native insects have less to feed on — which may not seem like a bad thing. Remember, though, that insects are major pollinators and food sources for native birds and other wildlife.

A few native PA plants to consider:

| Name | Height | Blooms | Notes |
|--|--------|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Columbine <i>Aquilegia canadensis</i> | 1-2' | April–June | Partial shade to sun |
| Butterfly weed <i>Asclepias tuberosa</i> | 1-2' | June–July | Full sun; attracts butterflies |
| Wild bleeding heart <i>Dicentra eximia</i> | 1-2' | April–September | Partial shade to sun |
| Joe-pye weed <i>Eupatorium fistulosum</i> | 2-7' | July–September | Partial shade; attracts butterflies |
| Dwarf crested iris <i>Iris cristata</i> | 4-12" | April–May | Partial shade to sun |
| Virginia bluebells <i>Mertensia virginica</i> | 1-2' | April–June | Shade to partial sun |
| Beebalm <i>Monarda didyma</i> | 2-3' | July–August | Sun to partial shade |
| Summer phlox <i>Phlox paniculata</i> | 3-4' | June–August | Sun to partial sun |
| Black-eye Susan <i>Rudbeckia fulgida</i> | 1-3' | July–October | Full sun |
| Showy goldenrod <i>Solidago speciosa</i> | 1-5' | August–September | Sun to partial sun |

Source: Penn State Extension



At Geisinger, a Lab visit doesn't always mean a blood draw.

Drake, a certified therapy dog, has been visiting with patients through Geisinger's volunteer program since he was 2 years old. His humans, Jim and Connie Hepner of Sunbury, weren't sure he was cut out for it at first because he was a high-energy puppy. "But now that he's 5, he's usually the calmest dog in the group," Mr. Hepner laughs.

Dogs remain on their leads and with their handlers so patients can pet the dogs as much as they want. And if they're under 40 pounds, the dogs can be placed right on patients' beds (atop disposable mats) to make the interactions easier. "The dogs are great icebreakers," Mr. Hepner says. "Most conversations are about them in the beginning. Then, patients often talk about themselves and what they're going through. You know you're doing good for them just by listening. It's always richly rewarding — the dogs help patients forget why they're here."

Unfortunately Drake hasn't been able to visit patients in nearly a year because of COVID-19 restrictions. In early February, he, along with the Hepners and another dog therapy team, paid a visit to Geisinger staff to get the dogs reacquainted with the hospital. "Everything went extremely well," Mr. Hepner says. "We're all looking forward to getting back to our regular routines. In the meantime, my wife and I are volunteering as couriers, delivering flowers and gifts. But they don't bring out the smiles like Drake does."

If your dog is certified by either the Alliance of Therapy Dogs or Therapy Dogs International, you're welcome to apply for the volunteer pet therapy program at Geisinger.

Read the full story
and meet another
type of volunteer
[geisinger.org/PAHealth](https://www.geisinger.org/PAHealth)



Slow cooker peanut stew

When serving the community involves serving up a tasty dish — think charitable dinners and church potlucks — this savory stew will wow the crowd. It's a different twist on familiar flavors, and you can make it vegetarian or add some boneless, skinless chicken. Best of all, you toss everything in a slow cooker, so you can finish the rest of your to-do list while it simmers.

Ingredients:

- 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 4 cups vegetable broth
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- ½ teaspoon ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- 15-ounce can diced tomatoes with juice
- 4 cups (about 2) sweet potatoes, diced
- ½ cup peanut butter
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 tablespoon grated ginger
- 4 cups fresh spinach or kale, chopped

Directions:

Add all ingredients except spinach/kale to a slow cooker and cook on low for 8 hours or high for 4 hours. Use a masher or wooden spoon to mash the potatoes until the mixture is thickened to your liking. Stir in the spinach/kale and cook for another 20 minutes.

"You can garnish this with chopped roasted peanuts right before serving," says Geisinger dietitian Emily Newhard, RDN. "This recipe also freezes well, which makes it even more convenient. And the peanut butter gives you a boost of protein and heart-healthy fats."

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