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FEATURED

Port Orange resident honored for Ukraine work

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James Marcum, a physicians assistant, talks to a Ukraine couple about their healthcare needs.

Photo courtesy of James Marcum

Port Orange resident James Marcum, 61, helps people every day through his work as a licensed physician assistant working for Family Practice On The Go medical group.

But his compassion and caring includes two months volunteering earlier this year, assisting people throughout war-torn Ukraine. As a result of his efforts, CountrySide Lakes Senior Living in Port Orange will be presenting him a Salus Award.

Marketing Director Peter Pakuris stated CountrySide Lakes has been involved in the community for years. "We encounter ordinary citizens throughout the county who do extraordinary things for the greater good and welfare of others."

So, CountrySide Lakes decided to create the Salus Award for exemplary achievements in community welfare and public service, and Mr. Marcum is the first recipient.

Mr. Marcum has numerous patients at CountrySide Lakes, who affectionately call him "Dr. James."

Altogether he visits about a dozen assisted/independent living facilities and one skilled nursing facility.

Mr. Marcum is a U.S. Coast Guard veteran with extensive emergency room experience at Halifax Health and AdventHealth hospitals.

He had been wanting to do something to assist people in Ukraine and found information online about Global Care Force whose volunteers have been traveling to Ukraine for three weeks every month since the war started. Volunteers raise their own funds to make the trip. He extended his stay beyond the initial three weeks to work with orphans as well as displaced families that were living in homes provided by the group "Go Ukraine."

The medical teams also maintained their own pharmacy with donated medications, said Mr. Marcum, who was part of a team of assorted medical personnel. "We started in Kiev and then we went to a few of the larger cities in the east and southeast and several small towns and villages. We would set up in a local clinic they had or school, and people would come with predetermined appointments and new people as well. We'd examine them and give them prescribed medications, prescription refills. Most all these people were refugees or displaced people or they were people that were left in the town liberated from the Russians and hadn't received medical care in close to a year."

Travel throughout the country could be difficult as some of the roads were mined and some back roads were on open battlefields where tanks were present with rockets stuck in the ground and trenches everywhere. Some villages had heavy damage with people still living in their basements.

"A lot of them had just been able to get back to what was left of their homes" he said. "They were very grateful and surprised we came, to say the least."

As much as he enjoyed helping the Ukrainians and wants to go back next year, atrocities he witnessed along with graphic surreal stories he was told by survivors he will never forget. "The Russians were terrible to these people. Just terrible. These people that I spoke to were like our moms and dads and our grandmas and grandfathers that I was taking care of. Things in the country are much worse than (people) see on TV," Mr. Marcum said.

He added, "These people are very appreciative what we are doing for them. Everyone was very pleasant and welcoming. It makes you feel good. The Ukrainian people are great people. The country is beautiful. When they found out there were Americans in town, these people walked to the clinic. Some of them just wanted to come in and tell us their stories. (Some) kids had such severe PTSD. We're really lucky the kind of country we live in. We are very fortunate. We need to help them get their country back. "

Winning the Salas Award "was really nice," he said.

Mr. Marcum and wife, Sheri, have two adult children, Dane and Kendra. He also is a crossfit instructor, surfer and international obstacle course racing competitor. Both his parents taught at local schools.

A banquet with about 50 of his patients expected to attend will be Aug. 29 at CountrySide Lakes where he will be presented the award.

For more information or to donate to Global Care Force, visit globalcareforce.org/.