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Tuesday

Woman Believes Volunteering Heals

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Speaker will share experience with multiple sclerosis and charity work

Jackie Waldman doesn't claim that volunteer work cured her multiple sclerosis, but she says it has done a whole lot to heal her spirit.

And when you feel better mentally, you feel better physically, she says.

The Dallas woman is coming to Albuquerque on Thursday to share her story with other multiple sclerosis patients and their loved ones. She will appear from 6 to 8:30 p.m. at the Albuquerque Marriott, 2101 Louisiana NE, and give away free copies of her book, "People with MS with the Courage to Give."

The entire event, which includes a physician's update on multiple sclerosis treatments, is free and open to the public.

In a telephone interview, Waldman said that she hopes some listeners "will walk away with their own courage to give."

A businesswoman, wife and mother, Waldman was hit with MS in 1991. Immobilized and fatigued, she became depressed and withdrawn until the movie "Schindler's List" inspired her with the difference one person's act of kindness can make.

She and a friend organized Random Acts of Kindness Week in Dallas, and Waldman found the success of that event made her feel better. She has since written a series of books about the "courage to give," profiling people who, by reaching out to help others, found their own lives changed for the better.

Waldman encourages people struck by a chronic illness to go to the Web site -- www.volunteermatch.org -- and see how they can find ways to give. As an example, she told of one MS patient whose hands were numbed by the neurological disease but who loved to play the piano.

Under questioning, Waldman discovered the woman enjoyed interacting with elderly people. It turned out there was an assisted living home only 10 minutes away. The woman went to play piano for the residents there, made new friends and left feeling really good about herself, Waldman said.

"That's what I call healing," she said.