

The Health Benefits Of Volunteering

The health benefits of volunteering are not a new revelation. However, much is still unknown about the relationship between giving time and personal health.

Certainly, the question “does volunteering make you healthier, or do healthier people volunteer?” has been repeatedly posed. As has its corollary question: “are there health benefits to volunteering that working for pay cannot provide?” A new survey released earlier this month may offer some insights to these provocative questions.

A report released this month by UnitedHealthcare, a United Health Group company, and VolunteerMatch, as a result of a survey conducted jointly by these organizations, provides compelling evidence that volunteering enhances volunteers’ physical and mental health, in addition to the survey surfacing other employer/employee benefits.

Among the key findings:

- * More than 68 percent of those who volunteered in the past year report that volunteering made them feel physically healthier.
- * 29 percent of volunteers who suffer from a chronic condition say that volunteering has helped them manage their chronic illness.
- * 89 percent of volunteers agree that volunteering improved their sense of well-being.
- * 73 percent of volunteers feel that volunteering lowered their stress levels.
- * 92 percent of volunteers agree that volunteering enriches their sense of purpose in life.

More than three-quarters of volunteers who participate in service activities through work report that they feel better about their employer because of the employer’s involvement in their volunteer activities.

The survey also showed that volunteering provided some higher levels of life satisfaction, including a greater sense of meaning, purpose, and higher levels of optimism:

- * 92 percent of volunteers agree that volunteering enriches their sense of purpose in life.
- * Volunteers are significantly more likely (72 percent) to characterize themselves as “optimistic” compared to non-volunteers (60 percent).
- * They are also significantly more likely (36 percent) to rate their overall satisfaction with their lives as ‘very good’ compared to non-volunteers (26 percent).
- * Volunteers are significantly more likely (42 percent) to say they have a “very good- sense of meaning” in their lives, compared to non-volunteers (28 percent).
- * Volunteers are significantly more likely (40 percent) to say they have a ‘very good’ sense of purpose in their life, compared to non-volunteers (27 percent).

For nonprofits, the report is a reminder about the healing, happiness, and role nonprofits play for volunteers. Few experiences in modern life can be so trans-formative — and only a very few can have

such a lasting and sustained impact on personal health. Nonprofits can help this healing process.

There is a magic that comes from linking with, supporting, and nurturing a cause. A good fit between a volunteer and an organization can literally open a world of possibilities for both sides. When it is right, volunteers can develop a renewed sense of purpose, create deep connections with other people, and benefit from increased physical and mental activity.

We appreciate and thank all those volunteers that contribute their time so generously to make Yolo County a better and healthier community for themselves and others.

For individuals, if you haven't already, find a nonprofit you can support, and get involved for better health.

— José Martinez is the Food Bank's executive director. For information on the Food Bank visit www.foodbankyc.org or give them call (530) 668-0690.

Share this: [✉ Email](#) [f Facebook](#) [🐦 Tweet](#) [0](#) [👤 Reddit](#) [🖨 Print](#)

Short URL: <http://www.davisenterprise.com/?p=36943>