

Volunteering is Healthy

What you suspected has proven true: Volunteering is good for you!

That's according to a report by consultant Linda Graff, "Volunteer for the Health of It," based on findings of a health promotion grant funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health.

Graff used medical, psychological and epidemiological research to show volunteering

- ✓ improves self esteem, self worth and confidence;
- ✓ lowers heart rate and blood pressure;
- ✓ raises endorphin levels to create feelings of well being;
- ✓ boosts immune and nervous system functioning;
- ✓ reduces life's stresses and helps overcome social isolation.

Graff also asked focus groups of volunteers what motivated them to volunteer, tying their motivations into health benefits. Volunteers told her:

- ✓ **I don't have time to hurt.** "I'm usually so doggone busy, I can't figure out if I have pain or ache. I just keep right on going."
- ✓ **It helps with rehab.** Injury couldn't keep them from responsibility.
- ✓ **I have to go, they need me.** Even if they were feeling down, they knew others were relying on them, providing impetus to get on with their day.
- ✓ **Volunteering keeps the mind active, combats social isolation, gives a sense of community and belonging.**
- ✓ **It offers a normalizing situation.** Volunteers told Graff that they were accepted back to the volunteer role after a struggle and valued for the abilities they had, plus offered comfort to deal with those struggles.

Source: Linda L. Graff, Linda Graff and Associates, Inc., Dundas, ON.