

Habitat Happenings

A monthly newsletter for our volunteers, families,
donors and friends

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Affiliate News

Volunteering Produces Health Benefits

Washington, D.C. – Volunteers help themselves to better health while helping others, according to a study released today by the Corporation for National and Community Service that reviews a compelling collection of recent scientific research.

The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research has found a significant connection between volunteering and good health. The report shows that volunteers have greater longevity, higher functional ability, lower rates of depression and less incidence of heart disease. The report is available in the Research and Policy section of the Corporation's website at http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact_performance_research.asp#HBR.

"Volunteering makes the heart grow stronger," said David Eisner, CEO of the Corporation. "More than 61 million Americans volunteer to improve conditions for people in need and to unselfishly give of themselves. While the motivation is altruistic, it is gratifying to learn that their efforts are returning considerable health benefits."

The Health Benefits of Volunteering documents major findings from more than 30 rigorous and longitudinal studies that reviewed the relationship between health and volunteering, with particular emphasis on studies that seek to determine the causal connection between the two factors. The studies, which were controlled for other factors, found that volunteering leads to improved physical and mental health.

"I commend the Corporation for National and Community Service for its timely focus on health and volunteerism. These findings complement the Administration on Aging's ongoing efforts to harness the power of prevention and wellness for all older Americans. Volunteerism is an important tool in our strategy to promote health and pre-

vent disease," said Josefina G. Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Research suggests that volunteering is particularly beneficial to the health of older adults and those serving 100 hours annually. According to the report:

- A study of adults age 65 and older found that the positive effect of volunteering on physical and mental health is due to the personal sense of accomplishment an individual gains from his or her volunteer activities.
- Another study found that volunteering led to lower rates of depression in individuals 65 and older.
- A Duke study found that individuals who volunteered after experiencing heart attacks reported reductions in despair and depression – two factors that have been linked to mortality in post-coronary artery disease patients.
- An analysis of longitudinal data found that individuals over 70 who volunteered approximately 100 hours had less of a decline in self-reported health and functioning levels, experienced lower levels of depression, and had more longevity.

Two studies found that volunteering threshold is about 100 hours per year, or about two hours a week. Individuals who reached the threshold enjoyed significant health benefits, although there were not additional benefits beyond the 100-hour mark.

"This is good news for people who volunteer," said Robert Grimm, Director of the Corporation's Office of Research and Policy Development and Senior Counselor to the

CEO. "This research is particularly relevant to Baby Boomers, who are receiving as well as giving when they help others. Just two hours of volunteering a week can bring meaningful benefits to a person's body and mind."

Last month, the Corporation released *Volunteering in America: 2007 State Trends and Rankings in Civic Life*, a report that includes numerous measures on volunteering and civic engagement. The Health Benefits of Volunteering report builds on that by showing states with higher volunteer rates also have better health and that there is a significant statistical relationship between states with higher volunteer rates and lower incidents of mortality and heart disease.

"There is now a convergence of research leading to the conclusion that helping others makes people happier and healthier. So the word is out – it's good to be good. Science increasingly says so," said Dr. Stephen Post, a professor at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and co-author of the forthcoming book "Why Good Things Happen to Good People: The Exciting New Research That Proves the Link Between Doing Good and Living a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life."

This follow-up report issued today brings more evidence that volunteering produces significant health benefits. Those who gave social support to others had lower rates of mortality than those who did not – even when controlling for socioeconomic status, education, marital status, age, gender, and ethnicity, the report stated.

"Civic Engagement and volunteering is the new hybrid health club for the 21st century that's free to join," added Thomas H. Sander, executive director of the Saguro Seminar at Harvard University. Social capital research shows it miraculously improves both your health AND the community's through the work performed and the social ties built."

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Mark Your Calendar

Dates to Remember and Upcoming Events

14th Annual Golf & Tennis Classic

Thursday, Aug. 30 – Friday, Aug. 31 2007
The Ritz-Carlton, Laguna Niguel & Monarch Beach Golf Links, Dana-Point, CA

This incredible event begins on Thursday, August 30th, with a Reception, Silent Auction, Opportunity Drawing tickets \$25.00 (chance to win 2 First Class Tickets to Hawaii, with a 7 Night-Stay at a Five Star Resort) and delicious

Buffet Dinner at The Ritz-Carlton.

The Golf & Tennis Tournaments will be held on Friday, August 31 at the Monarch Beach Golf Links and The Ritz-Carlton Tennis Courts. The Classic will culminate at the Pacific Promenade Lawn with a B.B.Q. luncheon, awards presentation, and a check presentation to HFH.

For more information contact Jeanne Pedersen: jpetersen@habitatla.org

Interested in volunteering with us? Then attend a **Volunteer Orientation:**

Tuesday, August 7 at 6:30pm

HFH GLA Offices
17700 S. Figueroa St.
Gardena, CA 90248

Friday, August 24 at 12pm

HFH GLA Offices
17700 S. Figueroa St.
Gardena, CA 90248

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Are you looking for a reason to participate in the Long Beach International City Bank Marathon on Sunday, October 14, 2007? If so, choose to run for Habitat For Humanity of Greater Los Angeles! With your support we are one step closer to achieving our goal of eliminating poverty housing and making decent, affordable homes a reality for all families.

To Join Team Habitat:

- Register now at www.active.com/donate/habitatla07
- Designate Habitat For Humanity as your charity
- Not running? You can still get involved to raise money or donate

Join Team Habitat Today!

Go to www.active.com/donate/habitatla07

Racing to change lives in our neighborhoods!

Events Include:

Marathon, Half Marathon, Bike Tour, Wheelchair Marathon, and 5K

For more info please email jpedersen@habitatla.org
or call (310) 323-4663 ext. 137