



Volunteering Tasmania Inc.

Strengthening Communities

HEALTH BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Research shows that volunteering can have a significant impact on your physical and mental health.

Volunteering can:

- Improve the well being of individual volunteers by enhancing support networks. It is well known that people with strong social support networks have lower premature death rates, less heart disease and fewer health risk factors;
- Increase opportunities for close interpersonal relationships and strengthen a sense of belonging;
- Improve self esteem;
- Heighten a sense of well being, improve insomnia, strengthen the immune system and hasten surgery recovery time;
- Offer people the opportunity to participate in fulfilling activities;
- Make a difference in the lives of others;
- Older adult volunteers live longer than non-volunteers. Studies report that engaging in regular volunteer work increases life expectancy because social interaction improves 'quality of life'.

References:

Fact sheet: *Volunteering as a Vehicle for Social support and Life Satisfaction*, Public Health Agency of Canada.

Graff, L (1991) Volunteer for the Health of it, Etobicoke, Ontario

Wilson, J & Musik, M "The Effects of Volunteering on the Volunteer" in *Law & Contemporary Problems*, Autumn 1999

Hemphill, ML "Volunteer for your Health" in *Peer Counselling Perspectives*, April 2003

Websites:

<http://www.wcwc.org/volunteer.htm> - the benefits of volunteering: personal health, skill building and community

http://www.ehealthmag.com/w98/ptr_mm.htm - 'continued engagement with life' is crucial