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Volunteer Edmonton

Need a boost?

Help for health and well-being

Maintaining a healthy lifestyle is easier said than done sometimes. An evening on the couch might seem like a great way to wind down after a stressful day, but consider skipping a night with the TV and spending some time volunteering. It's a simple step that could improve your health and well-being.

Canada, volunteering offers a number of health benefits. Feeling good physically, emotionally and spiritually, along with making new friends, developing new skills and setting a good example for your family members are just a few of the many positive outcomes of volunteering.

According to the Public Health Agency of

Studies show that social participation, like volunteering, promotes health by positively affecting thoughts, emotions and behavior. Other notable benefits include developing social networks, enhanced confidence, self-esteem and improved coping abilities – all of which contribute to reduced blood pressure, healthier lifestyles and lower mortality.

The Canadian Mental Health Association featured similar findings in a 2007 edition of *Balance* magazine. The article found that focusing on someone other than yourself interrupts usual tension-producing patterns and reduces stress-related hormones.

It's important to keep in mind that quality of life isn't always measured by the physical state, especially when community participation provides volunteers with proven benefits – a sense of identity, belonging and confidence.

These are factors that are key to a happy and healthy you.

To reap these benefits, you don't have to follow a strict volunteer regime that requires you to devote your evenings and weekends.

A few hours a week or month, or whatever you can spare, is all it takes. Extend these health and well-being benefits to the rest of your family by getting involved in the community as a group.

For parents, volunteering can have a substantial impact on their child's development.

A report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information identified five key "assets" that help determined a teen's overall health quality, feelings of self-worth and likelihood of being involved in risky behaviour.

Of the five cited, youth who volunteer showed better health, higher self-worth and less likelihood of using drugs, alcohol or tobacco.

Involvement in the community through volunteering even benefits the broader social environment.

Social participation through volunteering is an important factor to healthy, vibrant communities because of the interaction between community members.

For more information or suggestions for story ideas, please contact Evelyn Pham, communications co-ordinator, at epham@volunteeredmonton.com, call 780-732-6655 or check out www.volunteeredmonton.com.

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