

Your Best New Year's Health Resolution: Volunteer!

Especially as we get older, many of us use the turning of the year to resolve to be healthier. We promise ourselves to eat less of the wrong things and more of the right things, to exercise, go for those walks, and take up Yoga. Maybe we even resolve to watch less television!

But there's one activity that doesn't cost a cent, doesn't deprive you of good things, and still makes you feel better and be healthier. It's volunteering, and it's good for your soul AND your body.

Studies show that volunteers are healthier and more active than non-volunteers, and that they have a more positive outlook on life.

That's the word from Americorp, part of the Corporation for National and Community Service. They are the umbrella group for volunteering that is represented in Lake County by RSVP/Lake County – Retired and Senior Volunteer Program. RSVP matches senior volunteers with nonprofit agencies to create satisfying volunteer experiences and effective work for the community. Americorp also says:

“...older volunteers are the most likely to receive greater benefits from volunteering ... volunteers who devote a “considerable” amount of time to volunteer activities (about 100 hours per year) are most likely to exhibit positive health outcomes.”

They aren't the only ones saying so. The prestigious INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF VOLUNTEER ADMINISTRATION, in analyzing more than a dozen reports, identified at least seven health benefits of volunteering:

- reduced anxiety and depression
- improved self-esteem
- lower mortality rates
- better weight control
- reduced blood pressure
- speedier recovery time from surgery.
- improved immune systems

Cristen Kane, Director of RSVP Lake County, says,

"It's amazing how volunteering gets people going. They become enthusiastic, energized, and committed to something bigger than themselves. Volunteering adds meaning to lives, both for the person volunteering and the person they are helping. It's a great cure for being down in the dumps, and it gets you connected more."

Ms. Kane says that a good way to start is to attend an RSVP orientation session to find out what level of interest is right for you. Or, visit the website at www.rsvplc.org.

Contact: RSVP Lake County/440-269-3015