

The Benefits of Helping Others

People who help others are healthier and live longer.

That was one of the conclusions of a team headed by Stephen G. Post, professor of bioethics at Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, which evaluated 50 scientific studies of volunteers.

The findings are reported in an article by Jeanie Lerche Davis entitled *The Science of Good Deeds*, published on WebMD.com.

One of the studies, from Cornell University, spent 30 years following 427 women who were married and had children. Researchers found that only 36 percent of women who regularly volunteered had experienced a major illness, while 52 percent of those who never volunteered had a major illness.

Other studies indicated that those who volunteered their time lived longer than those who didn't. Frequent volunteers had a 44 percent reduction in early death when compared to non-volunteers.

Scientists also identified precise areas of the brain that are highly active during empathetic and compassionate emotions.

“These brain studies show the profound state of joy and delight that comes from giving to others,” Post said. “It doesn't come from any dry action – where the act is out of duty in the narrowest sense, like writing a check for a good cause. It comes from working to cultivate a generous quality – from interacting with people. There is the smile, the tone in the voice, the touch on the shoulder. We're talking about altruistic love.”



We have long valued and recognized the wonderful contributions of the volunteers who share their time, their talents, and their compassion with the people we serve in our centers around the country. We have believed that although they are not paid for their work, they reaped rewards in other ways, as confirmed by these studies.

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And let us not forget the altruistic love practiced every day by our associates and the personal and professional benefits they receive because of their divine calling.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter