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Published November 12th, 2008

Volunteering-An Exchange of Goodness

Submitted by Kay Schroeder



Volunteer Eileen Kempker helps with a fundraising mailing Photo provided

For men and women 55 years old and more, volunteering could be one of the most valuable choices you make. You probably volunteer informally by helping friends or family. Many of us grew up in neighborhoods where volunteering was called "helping out." Now, we live in a new environment where many neighborhoods are not so social and cohesive. We are now part of many different neighborhoods - our family, our friends, our cities, our counties and our social organizations. But by all of us helping out in small ways, our lives will be enriched.

Volunteering allows you to step up and help out your "neighborhood." And, surprisingly, volunteers benefit as much as those they help. There's an exchange of goodness that benefits all parties. There is exciting research from more than 30 studies that show individuals who volunteer just two hours a week enjoy significant health benefits. Volunteering is an important tool in our strategy to promote health and prevent disease," says Josefina G. Carbonell, Assistant Secretary for Aging at the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services. Volunteering leads to improved mental and physical health.

Volunteering is a great way to build new friendships. Senior men and women

begin to experience losses as they age. Losing close family members and friends is distressing, and a bit frightening. Volunteering is an easy and fun approach to senior life. Consider bringing a friend with you to enjoy the experience. The buddy system adds to the fun, sharing the gas and doubles the positive impact you can make on your community.

Eileen Kempker has been volunteering for several non profit organizations for the last three years. She says, " For me, activity keeps my lifestyle functioning. I have made new friends in all my volunteer activities. I started volunteering when my husband died. The reward for volunteering far exceeds my own effort and the variety of opportunities is endless."

For those recently retired, volunteering is a great way to keep up your spirits and stay current. Jim Larkin, a volunteer at the American Cancer Society, used his corporate background and skills to develop and implement a new educational program for them.

He says, "My thought is that working with people of different ages is a critical piece of well being in our world. I recently worked with a 27 year old and it was such an interesting experience to be working along with a younger person. By experiencing people of all generations, an older person can increase social skills. They don't have to feel left out of multi-generational conversations."

The word is out-it's good to be good. Good for those you help. Good for your own health and happiness. Whatever your reasons for volunteering, there are hundreds of different ways to help. The Volunteer Center for the East Bay sponsors a program, RSVP, specifically designed to help retired and senior volunteers find the right match given their passions, skills, and schedule. If you are 55 or older and want to volunteer, contact RSVP at 925-472-5769.

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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