

Be the Difference: Is it really better to give than to receive?

By Karen Delaney, Santa Cruz Sentinel

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As a child, I remember my Nana telling me how it is better to give than to receive. No matter how often she and my mom repeated that thought, it seemed silly. I have come to appreciate the power of generosity and I have repeated the saying to my own kids.

A new report offers stunning proof that Nana was right, and not just in terms of good values and feeling good. More than 30 rigorous studies have found specific, measurable health benefits to those who give their time volunteering.

"The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research" has found a significant connection between volunteering and good health. The report shows volunteers live longer, feel healthier, have lower rates of depression and less incidence of heart disease. These health benefits are regardless of race, income or education level.

"There is now a convergence of research leading to the conclusion that helping others makes people happier and healthier. (see link below) So the word is out -- it's good to be good. Science increasingly says so," said Dr. Stephen Post, a professor at the Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine and co-author of the forthcoming book "Why Good Things Happen to Good People: The Exciting New Research that Proves the Link Between Doing Good and Living a Longer, Healthier, Happier Life."

If you are one of the many people thinking about cutting back giving this holiday season due to the sluggish economy, think about giving your time. It's a gift that

will benefit you, as well as your community and the recipients of your generosity.

We have added a holiday volunteering button to the home page of our website, www.scvolunteercenter.org, to make it quicker and easier to find these special opportunities. Most of the options listed welcome families and groups volunteering together as well as individuals. Many of the Thanksgiving meals happen throughout the week, and some fill up, so don't wait until the last minute to choose a project.

If you love to cook, decorate and serve for Thanksgiving, check out Community Connection, 763-8985; Loaves and Fishes, 722-4144; Watsonville Salvation Army, 724-3922; or the Friends of Thanksgiving event at the Civic, 458-6020x206. If you like to organize, have office skills or can drive, consider helping with Adopt A Family, 427-5070; Walnut Avenue Women's Center Turkey Drive, 426-3062 ext. 206; or Valley Churches United, 336-8258.

These are just a few of the many ways to give that we can connect you with, either through our website or by calling our centers at 722-6708, or 427-5070. You'll feel great!

Karen Delaney is executive director of the Santa Cruz County Volunteer Center. Her column appears monthly. For information about volunteer opportunities, visit scvolunteercenter.org or call 427-5070 or 722-6708.

<http://www.actsofkindness.org/benefits/1> additional article...

<http://www.values.com/> another good resource site...