

# The Health Benefits of Volunteering

## Fact Sheet and Resource Guide

Ten thousand Americans turn age 65 every day and many of them are seeking satisfying ways to take advantage of the new longevity dividend. A person turning 50 today has over half their adult life ahead of them. Faced with this new opportunity, many seek to new ways to give back to their communities, while also finding meaning and purpose in their lives, and are discovering that volunteering enables them to accomplish both goals.

Older adults are also seeking new ways to stay active and healthy as they age. A growing body of research shows that those who volunteer for as little as two hours a week or 100 hours per year may experience improved mental, emotional and physical health. Given its history of providing innovative volunteer programs for older adults nationwide, Area Agencies on Aging and other community-based organizations offer countless opportunities for older adults to engage in their communities and stay healthy while doing it.

### Older Adult Volunteers by the Numbers

- Nearly a quarter of Americans age 65 and over volunteered during 2015 (U.S. Department of Labor); this age group also had the highest number of average hours of service per year (94) compared to any other age group.
- 76 percent of volunteers said serving in this role made them feel better; 94 percent said it improved their mood; and 25 percent said it helped them manage a chronic illness. (UnitedHealth Group)
- Older adults who volunteer at least four hours per week are 40 percent less likely to develop hypertension. (Carnegie Mellon University)
- Older adults who received community service recognition had a higher well-being index compared to those who did not receive recognition, as described in a Gallup report:

*Volunteering to improve a community can foster a sense of purpose and meaning, help volunteers build social relationships and connections, increase physical activity and provide a fresh perspective on life. Looking beyond the day-to-day struggles of one's own life and focusing externally may help decrease stress, worry and other negative emotions.*



## Doing Good is Good for You: Volunteer! Campaign

The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) launched a public education campaign about the health benefits of volunteering to make older adults more aware of the issue and to help them take action. The centerpiece of the campaign is a publication: **“Doing Good Is Good for You: Volunteer!”** which provides all of the information a prospective volunteer would need to match their interests with available opportunities in the community.

The campaign also features a public education **toolkit** that can be used by individuals and organizations interested in creating greater awareness of the issue in their area. In addition to this Fact Sheet and Resource Guide, toolkit components include a press release template, infographic, Powerpoint presentation and social media bank—all of which can be customized to include the branding of the entity participating in the campaign. In addition to the public, target audiences that may be considered for outreach efforts include, elected officials, policymakers, relevant government agencies, nonprofits, businesses and the media.

### Providing Support for Aging Network Volunteer Programs

By the year 2030, the number of Americans aged 65 and over will grow to about 70 million—up from 46 million people today. The average Area Agency on Aging (AAA) workforce consists of 167 volunteers, 41 full-time staff and 22 part-time staff. To meet the demand of the growing aging population, the Aging Network must expand its capacity by engaging volunteers to become even more active in providing programs and services in the community.

n4a’s **Aging Network Volunteer Resource Center** provides information and technical assistance to help AAAs, governments and nonprofits establish and sustain successful volunteer programs. Among the many resources offered are workshops, webinars, case studies and other onsite assistance. These resources promote volunteer recruitment, retention, and recognition along with new innovative volunteer roles and job descriptions.

The Center’s signature approach is called PowerUp!, a new paradigm of volunteer involvement that provides the boomer generation of volunteers with flexibility, shared leadership and an opportunity to learn and use their skills to address community needs. For members of the Aging Network, PowerUp! reduces the responsibilities and financial commitment associated with managing a volunteer program.

**Please call 202.872.0888 or visit [www.n4a.org/volunteercenter](http://www.n4a.org/volunteercenter) to learn more about the Aging Network Volunteer Resource Center.**

Other resources include the National Association of States United for Aging and Disabilities’ (NASUAD) Got An Hour? campaign. Visit [www.giveitbacktoseniors.org](http://www.giveitbacktoseniors.org) for more information.

## Health Benefits of Volunteering Resources

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