

For weekly News Column
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Get a Helper's High

We've all heard the adage, 'tis better to give than receive. Many of us have had the experience of being helped by others. When we help others this effect is called the "helper's high."

Our community has dozens of places we can help and scientific evidence now supports the real "helper's high" effect. A Boston College study found that patients with chronic pain felt better when they counseled other patients who were also in pain. They felt less depression, less disability and their intense pain was reduced. Seems we think less about ourselves when we help others.

A connection between volunteerism and longevity among older people has been found in a California study by the Buck Institute for Age Research. Elderly participants who did at least for or more hours of volunteering a week lived longer than those who did no volunteering. Volunteering keeps us mentally alert and connected with others; two important aspects of aging.

I know we don't need studies to make us volunteer. We have a community full of caring citizens. But not everyone considers how much they have to offer organizations.

Feeling lonely? Out of work? Feeling of useless? Look into volunteering. Look around town to see all the areas for volunteering. From the animal shelter to the Samaritan Center to churches, the hospital and schools, there are plenty of opportunities to get out and give your time. Whether you have one hour a week or six hours a day to fill, give to others and live longer.

Besides the benefit of longevity, you'll feel better about yourself and you have the opportunity to make our community an even better place to live.