

## Media Backgrounder

### Volunteering and Happiness: The Facts

5 December 2014

1. Volunteers are happier, healthier and sleep better than those who don't volunteer – doctors should recommend it<sup>1</sup>
2. 96% of volunteers say that it “makes people happier”<sup>2</sup>
3. 95% of volunteers say that volunteering is related to feelings of wellbeing<sup>3</sup>
4. Volunteering results in a “helper's high,” a powerful physical and emotional feeling experienced when directly helping others.<sup>4</sup>
5. Just a few hours of volunteer work makes a difference in happiness and mood<sup>5</sup>
6. Sustained volunteering is associated with better mental health.<sup>6</sup>
7. Altruistic emotions and behaviours are associated with greater well-being, health, and longevity<sup>7</sup>
8. A strong correlation exists between the well-being, happiness, health, and longevity of people who are emotionally kind and compassionate in their charitable helping activities.<sup>8</sup>
9. The experience of helping others provides meaning, a sense of self-worth, a social role and health enhancement.<sup>9</sup>
10. Volunteering is highly associated with greater health and happiness.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Watson, C. 2012, 'Volunteering is so good for you that doctors should recommend it, experts say' *The Australian*, 30 September <<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/volunteering-is-so-good-for-you-that-doctors-should-recommend-it-experts-say/story-e6frg6n6-1226484913565>>

<sup>2</sup> Post, S. G. 2011, 'It's good to be good: 2011 5<sup>th</sup> annual scientific report on health, happiness and helping others', *The International Journal of Person Centred Medicine*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 814.

<sup>3</sup> Volunteering ACT, 2013, 'Selfless Service: The State of Volunteering Report in the ACT 2013', p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Luks, A. 1988, 'Helper's high: Volunteering makes people feel good physically and emotionally', *Psychology Today*, vol. 10, no. 10, p. 39.

<sup>5</sup> Post, S. G. 2011, 'It's good to be good: 2011 5<sup>th</sup> annual scientific report on health, happiness and helping others', *The International Journal of Person Centred Medicine*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 816.

<sup>6</sup> Musick, M. A. and Wilson, J. 2003, 'Volunteering and depression: the role of psychological and social resources in different age groups', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 56, p. 267.

<sup>7</sup> Post, S.G. 2005, 'Altruism, Happiness, and Health: It's Good to Be Good', *International Journal of Behavioural Medicine*, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 66.

<sup>8</sup> Post, S.G. 2005, 'Altruism, Happiness, and Health: It's Good to Be Good', *International Journal of Behavioural Medicine*, vol. 12, no. 2, p. 73.

<sup>9</sup> Post, S. G. 2011, 'It's good to be good: 2011 5<sup>th</sup> annual scientific report on health, happiness and helping others', *The International Journal of Person Centred Medicine*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 814.

<sup>10</sup> Borgovni, F. 2008, 'Doing well by doing good. The relationship between formal volunteering and self-reported health and happiness', *Social Science and Medicine*, vol. 66, p. 2331.