

The Healing Power of Helping Others

How would you like a more optimistic and happier outlook on life? What about having abundant energy and stronger cardiovascular health? Or perhaps feeling connected and engaged with the people in your life, rather than feeling lonely or helpless? You can have all of this and more. And this isn't an exaggeration. There's growing evidence that acts of kindness, from you to another person(s), can improve your own life in all of these ways.

Most Canadians are generous and caring people. According to Statistics Canada's 2007 Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating, of those Canadians aged 15 and over:

- 84% (23 million people!) made a financial donation to a charitable or nonprofit organization and the same percentage of people provided direct help to others who live outside their household (and not through an organization).
- 46% (12.5 million people!) volunteered their time. That's a lot of volunteered time.

At its heart, helping others is not about doing something for your own benefit. But it's a great bonus. Here are just a few ways that you can make a difference in the world... and perhaps improve your well-being.

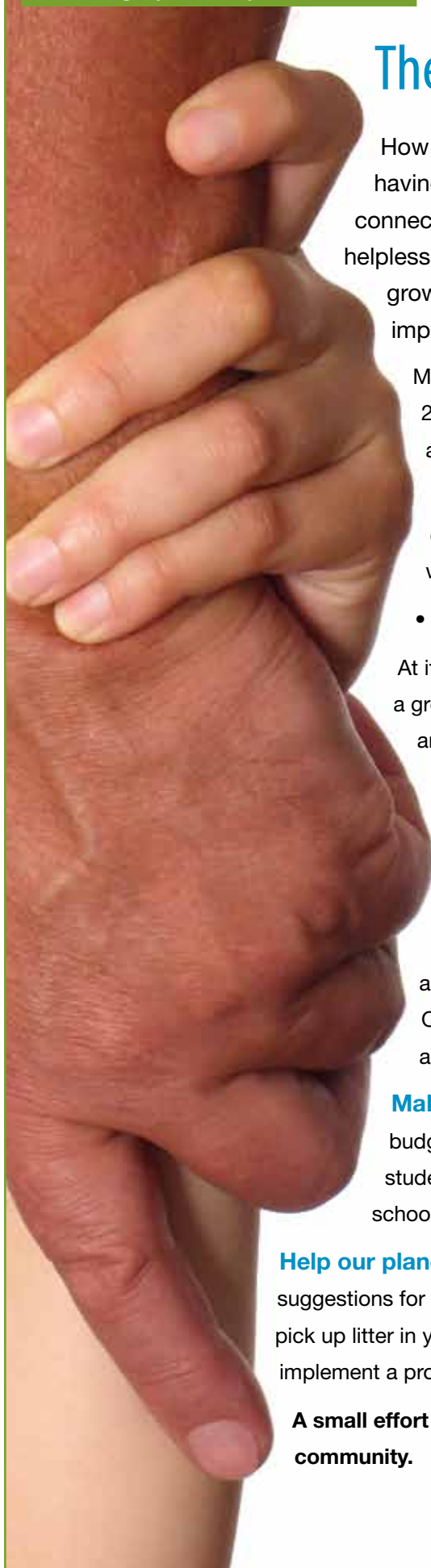
Volunteer. Don't know how to start? Visit www.volunteer.ca to find a Volunteer Centre near you. Need a little incentive? Volunteering for a day in 2010 can earn you a one day admission pass to a Disney theme park.

Do something for someone less fortunate. Consider sponsoring a child through an agency (e.g. World Vision or Plan Canada) or donate to a world aid agency (e.g. the Canadian Red Cross, Oxfam Canada, or Doctors Without Borders). Or do something as simple as donate your used eyeglasses (many optometrists will accept the donation and distribute them accordingly).

Make a difference at your child's school. In these days of shrinking school budgets, parental involvement is needed to help schools do the best they can for their students. Join your PTA, participate in a career fair, use a vacation day to help out on a school field trip.

Help our planet's environment. There are hundreds of websites that provide great suggestions for helping the planet. Here are three suggestions: organize a group of people to pick up litter in your community; help your workplace develop a strategy to go "paperless;" or implement a program to make your household "carbon neutral."

A small effort on your part can make a huge difference in this world that is our shared community.



Make a change!

A random act of kindness is a selfless act performed by a person or persons generally for no other reason other than to make people smile, or be happier. This month, perform some random acts of kindness. Besides making a difference in someone's life, you'll benefit. Again, it's not about being kind in order to get something back yourself. It just happens. So if for no other reason than to punctuate your day with feelings of happiness and a sense that you can make a difference in someone's life, go for it!

- Deliver a bag of groceries to an elderly or ill neighbor.
- Send an e-mail each day telling someone how much they are appreciated, or thank them for something they did for you.
- Have everyone in your household drop all their loose change into a jar and every six months donate it to a worthy cause.
- Stop and take time to speak with a homeless person.
- If you see some litter, put it where it belongs: in a trash can or recycling bin.
- Pass along your favorite book to a struggling friend or co-worker.
- Send someone a small gift anonymously.
- Compliment a work colleague for their excellence.
- Buy a lottery ticket for a stranger.
- Give up your seat for someone, not just an elderly person.
- Smile at someone!



And what better month to perform an act of kindness than December? May your holiday be filled with kindness and joy...kindness and joy that you give to others!

Keep in touch



We want your questions, comments, and suggestions.

E-mail us at changetohealth@humansolutions.ca.

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