

Caregivers Corner
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Healthcare Strategy: Lend a Helping Hand

On TV and in the newspapers we are being deluged with information about healthcare. The costs, the challenges and at this time of year: How to take care of your self during cold and flu season.

You know the drill: wash your hands, sneeze into your elbow, eat an apple a day—now we know that is not folk wisdom but that there is great evidence that apples are nature's best medicine—and again: wash your hands after that apple.

But now we have another important piece of health guidance. This too is one that many have intuitively known and now research is proving true: Helping other people improves your health. And it's not just that you'll feel better.

The University of Massachusetts Medical School has studied peer-support and caregiving for people with Multiple Sclerosis and for people with chronic pulmonary diseases. They began the research to measure the effect of peer-support on illness and health. They wanted to see if people with serious chronic conditions were affected by receiving peer-support calls and help from others with the same illness. The actual results were a big surprise. The people who offered support—the helpers--experienced dramatic improvements in their health—several times more than those they'd been helping. After this study, the School went on to study healthy adults who helped others and found very similar results in improved health, quality of life improvement and they found that the helpers all reported greatly increased happiness and were less depressed than the control group who were not helpers.

So, of course, we are very interested in this result at Community Caregivers. We are committed to help people of all ages to stay independent and to maintain dignity and quality of life. We know that we are successful at meeting this mission for our clients and now we know that we are also helping our volunteers to improve the quality of their lives too.

We invite you to share this experience and to give volunteering a try. Think of it as your apple-a-day in the community. We have many volunteers who drive, visit, shop and provide respite—and we also have volunteers who work in our office assisting with data entry and answering the phones, preparing correspondence and materials for our events. To learn more please come to one of our upcoming orientation sessions:

Sunday November 8 at Christ the King Church 1:30pm
Thursday December 10th At The Community Caregivers Office 2113 Western Avenue
10am.

If you prefer more festive ways of being a helper please join us for the Annual Community Caregivers Gala at Albany Country Club. Saturday November 21st. Tickets are \$100 and include a wonderful dinner, music, auctions and community.