

Resources

The Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of Southwest Washington's Caregiver Corner

Volunteering helps others – and those who volunteer

With busy work lives, it can be hard to find the time to volunteer, but once you retire, you may want to invest time and energy in helping others.

But while it's true that volunteering helps people in need, worthwhile causes and the community, the benefits may be even greater for you, the volunteer. The right match can help you find friends, connect with the community and learn new skills.

Giving to others can also help protect your mental and physical health. It can reduce stress, combat depression, keep you mentally stimulated and provide a sense of purpose.

Volunteering doesn't have to involve a long-term commitment or take a huge amount of time. Giving in simple ways can improve your health and happiness.

"I volunteered on the Advisory Council for the Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of Southwest Washington for six years and for the last two years I was the chair of the council," says Arnie Dyer, a retired educator. "We were able to get several initiatives pushed forward. It was very rewarding to be able to improve the lives of older adults and work with the other council members, who are active leaders throughout Southwest Washington. They were truly the eyes and ears in each of those communities."

"I believe that when you volunteer, you should try to give it your full measure. You should try a few different kinds of things, but the biggest thing for me was the intellectual challenge and the social connections."

Dyer also volunteers with the Firstenberg Community Center, the Men's Shed and Habitat for Humanity

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ReStore, all located in the city of Vancouver.

The National Institute of Aging recently published research that shows the significant value of social connections like those found in volunteering. Consistent social connection can keep older adults physically, emotionally and mentally fit, and lead to better long-term health outcomes.

Staying socially active does not happen naturally on its own when we are older, though. Commitment, support and diligence are required to foster connections. Active volunteers like Dyer intuitively know and practice this.

For help connecting with volunteer opportunities, contact the Area Agency on Aging & Disabilities of

Southwest Washington, which connects older adults, adults with disabilities and family caregivers to community resources.

AAADSW serves adults in Clark, Cowlitz, Klickitat, Skamania and Wahkiakum counties. To learn more, visit www.HelpingElders.org. For more information and assistance, call 360-735-5720.



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