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LifePath
options for independence

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THE GOOD LIFE

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Volunteering Is Good for Your Health!

*By Susan White, MPH, Lic. CHW,
Associate Director of Volunteer Resources*

The healthy benefits of volunteering are proven and numerous. Volunteering is a way to increase your activity, and has been shown to build strong social connections that are known to support mental, emotional, and physical health. And, by focusing on helping someone else, we build self-resilience that helps us to cope with the daily joys and challenges of living.

Many LifePath volunteers have shared that volunteer service helps them as much as the individual they are supporting. Some people decide to volunteer after a difficult time. It may have been after an unexpected life event, the death of a loved one, or maybe a period of recovery from a health-related issue. Volunteering provides a short-term distraction and a long-term purpose. It creates natural opportunities to meet new people with similar interests and values, often leading to long-lasting friendships. Others have chosen to volunteer in their retirement because of the opportunity it provides to share skills and experiences in a low-pressure way, while realizing the cognitive benefits of remaining mentally active.

Healthy Living Peer Leader Volunteer Renee tells us, *"I really enjoy watching people grow and help each other in our LifePath Healthy Living Workshop groups. I feel like I am providing an important service to the community. I was referred to a workshop by a medical provider, attended, and received a number of health benefits from being part of the process."* Renee has been volunteering in LifePath's Healthy Living Program for over two years.



Come Join LifePath as a Volunteer
The increase in the cost of living, an often increasing sense of isolation and sense of not being valued, and the diminishment of our capacities as we age can be a frightening combination. Feelings such as sadness, fear, worry, loneliness, and other emotions can further affect us during or after difficult situations. These experiences could include dealing with the passing of a family member or friend, or experiences related to addiction, racism, or homophobia. Any of these challenges can weigh heavily on our mental, emotional, and physical well-being. There is evidence that these stresses can increase the risk of heart disease, depression, and memory loss. LifePath offers a wide-range of programming designed to tackle many of these issues, and much of that programming reaches more older adults and people living with disabilities because of our committed volunteers.

The number of older adults locally and nationally is growing at a rapid pace. Here in Franklin County, over 25% of our 71,000 residents are over the age of 65 with close to 11% of them living in poverty. As a result, there are more people in our communities needing more help to get along. Last year, close to 9,000 people accessed LifePath's services.

Volunteering and getting engaged with your community can help counter these challenges and increase your own sense of overall well-being and happiness. These days, many people of all ages have time available as they ease out of the workforce or work part-time and are looking for ways to be of service in their communities. At LifePath, we offer many volunteer options for you to decide where you want to contribute your time and talent.

How Volunteering Makes Life Better
Two of LifePath's dedicated program directors describe how volunteering has benefited them:

Ceil Moran, Director of LifePath's Money Management Program, says, *"Volunteers are the very heart of LifePath and the Money Management program. What volunteers do in service for others profoundly matters. A person's life is changed for the better. It helps people not only beat the odds, it can also **change** the odds."*

And Jane Severance, Director of LifePath's Nutrition Program, shared, *"Delivering meals is really special. It is a certain commitment you have made, a certain feeling when you are doing it. The seniors are really special. We get to know them. We care about them. Many times we come into their lives when they are nearing the end of theirs and we get to know them and their history in reverse. The longer we deliver to them, the further back in their lives we get to know them. I saw this time and again. They would share some really amazing stories. Many times as I was walking out the door from a delivery, after they had thanked me for delivering their meal, I thought 'I'm the lucky one. Truly.'"*

Long-time LifePath partner Pat Sicard, RSVP Volunteer Manager, shared

this reflection: *"My mother introduced me to volunteering when I was 12 and through the years I volunteered around my work schedule and included my children in the joy of volunteering. Through RSVP and our partnership with LifePath, I see many benefits of volunteering: health, happiness, and connections. Lonely people find friends, grieving people find peace in helping others, and many with low self-esteem gain a level of accomplishment. By sharing talents and time, volunteers often find a level of joy only found by knowing you have made the lives of others better."*

We need more volunteers to help LifePath support the growing numbers of older adults and people living with disabilities who need our services. Your choice to get involved will bring joy and comfort into your life, and the lives of others. Come join us!

LifePath Volunteers Make the Ordinary Extraordinary.

Visit www.lifepathma.org/volunteer or call 413-773-5555.

It is a great relief to have grocery shopping support for two retirees recovering from surgeries. The conversations that happen with our LifePath Volunteer remind us that the rest of the world is filled with life.
– Judi & Don Campbell