



SPONSORED CONTENT



Editor, Janis Merrell
GoodLife@LifePathMA.org
(413) 773-5555 x2255

THE GOOD LIFE

Find past editions on www.LifePathMA.org

www.facebook.com/LifePathMA



The Healthy Benefits of Volunteering

By Susan White, MPH, Associate Director of Volunteer Resources

We are hearing a lot these days about the healthy benefits of volunteering. The topic is gaining momentum as our nation's population of adults ages at a rapid pace. The healthy benefits of volunteering are proven, and numerous. Volunteering is a way to increase your activity and get out and about. Volunteerism is shown to build strong social connections that are known to support mental and physical health. And, focusing on helping someone else builds self-resilience that helps us to cope with the joys and challenges of daily living.

A frequent comment from a number of our volunteers is that their service helps themselves as much as the individual on the receiving end, but just in a different way. Many of our volunteers have come to us after a difficult time or life event. It may have been a time of recovery, or after the death of a loved one. Volunteering not only provides a short-term distraction, but also a long-term purpose. It helps by creating natural opportunities to meet new people with similar interests and values, often leading to long-lasting connections. Others have chosen to volunteer in their retirement, giving them an opportunity to share their skills and experiences in a low-pressure way, while realizing the cognitive benefits of remaining mentally active.

LifePath's 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."* Now, Renee is volunteering to help others in the Healthy Living Program.

"A significant number of adults across our Franklin County region report feeling lonely, unsafe, unsupported, socially isolated, and a lack of ways to engage in social support networks, intergenerational, and volunteer activities."
—Age Friendly Regional Action Plan - Franklin County and North Quabbin, 2024-2028

The Need for Volunteers

The combination of increasing living expense concerns and an increasing sense of isolation, coupled with the diminishment of our capacities as we age, can be frightening. Feelings such as sadness, fear, worry, loneliness, and other emotions can affect us during or after difficult situations. These experiences could include dealing with losses from the COVID-19 pandemic, the passing of a family member or friend, or experiences related to addiction, racism,

or homophobia. Dealing with any of these challenges can weigh heavily on our mental health, and our emotional and physical well-being. There is evidence that they can also increase the risk of heart disease, depression, and memory loss. LifePath offers a spectrum of programming designed to tackle many of these issues, and much of that programming is possible because of our committed corps of volunteers.

Here in Franklin County, close to 11% of our 71,000 residents live in poverty and over 25% are over the age of 65, and this number is growing (www.census.gov 2022). 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.



"Social connectedness is the degree to which people have a desired number, quality, and diversity of relationships that create a sense of belonging and being cared for, valued, and supported."
—www.cdc.gov/emotional-wellbeing

Volunteering and getting engaged with your community can help counter these challenges and increase your sense of overall well-being and happiness. These days, many individuals and couples have more time available as they ease out of the workforce, and they are looking for new ways to be engaged in their communities. At LifePath, we can help individuals decide what could be a good fit for each individual.

Choosing to Volunteer

The following are two of LifePath's dedicated program directors describing how volunteering has benefited them.

Jane Severance, Director of LifePath's Nutrition Program: *"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."*

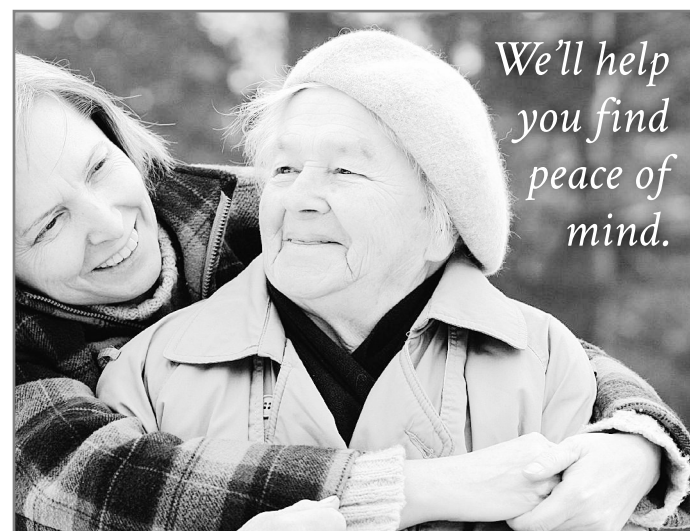
Many times we come into their lives when they are nearing the end of theirs and we get to know them and their history in reverse. The longer we deliver to them, the further back in their lives we get to know them. I saw this time and again. They would share some really amazing stories. Many times as 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.'"

Ceil Moran, LifePath's Program Director of Money Management: *"Volunteers are the very heart of LifePath and the Money Management program. What they 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."*

Long-time LifePath partner Pat Sicard, RSVP Community Action of Pioneer Valley Volunteer Manager, shared this memory and 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."*

As we enter a new year, LifePath is making a special request of you to engage in a volunteer experience. Your involvement will extend our capacity to reach those in need in Franklin County and bring joy (and a healthy benefit!) into your life and the lives of others. Brenda, a dedicated LifePath Grocery Shopping Volunteer says, *"Being a Grocery Shopping Volunteer helps me to get to know my neighbors and my community!"*

LifePath Volunteers Make the Ordinary Extraordinary.
Come Join Us Today!
Visit www.lifeathma.org &
Click on "Support Our Mission,"
or Call 413-773-5555



You care so wholeheartedly and do so much, but sometimes it's hard to do it all.

413.773.5555 | 978.544.2259 | 800.732.4636
Info@LifePathMA.org | LifePathMA.org



Reach thousands of existing and potential clients with an advertisement in The Good Life.

GREENFIELD RECORDER
recorder.com
Your community news 24/7

For more information, contact:
Elizabeth Coté or **Suzanne Hunter**
203-912-4680 or 413-772-0261 x 228
ecote@recorder.com shunter@recorder.com

NE-388448

NE-374367