



North Vancouver Recreation Commission

## MEDIA RELEASE

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April 22, 2014

### **Volunteering for the health of it – volunteers improve their health while helping in the community**

**North Vancouver, B.C.** – The North Vancouver Recreation Commission is looking at research showing that volunteering has a big impact on individual health in addition to benefiting our community. Currently, 238 active volunteers between the ages of 11 and 85 contribute over 8,000 hours volunteering each year with the Commission.

This research, which is presented in a report titled “[The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research](#),” has established a strong relationship between volunteering and health: those who volunteer have *lower mortality rates, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression* later in life than those who do not volunteer.

Findings indicate that volunteers who devote a “considerable” amount of time to volunteer activities (about 100 hours per year) are most likely to exhibit positive health outcomes.

Two independent studies in 2000 and 2002 found that volunteering two hours per week (100 hours annually) is related to positive health outcomes, including good self-rated health, fewer limitations in daily living and lower mortality rates.

In another study, people with chronic pain who volunteered as peer counselors found that their pain, disability and feelings of depression all lessened from volunteering.

Comparisons of the health benefits of volunteering for different age groups have also shown that older volunteers are the most likely to receive greater benefits from volunteering, whether because they are more likely to face higher incidence of illness or because volunteering provides them with physical and social activity and a sense of purpose at a time when their social roles are changing.

Furthermore, a 2008 study in a long-term care setting revealed residents who participated in volunteer activity experienced slower health deterioration than those who did not volunteer. “Retirees who give of their time to others experience better health than those who don't,” points out Dr. Ben Gottlieb, a University of Guelph psychology professor who has been researching the positive health benefits of volunteering among seniors. “Some of the health benefits include better cardiovascular function, less arthritis pain, lower stress, anxiety and depression and overall increased self-esteem and sense of value.”

“We always promote the social and skill development benefits of volunteering and now we want the community to know they can also achieve significant health benefits from volunteering, “ says Meh Najak, Volunteer Resources Programmer with the Commission. Volunteer roles include supporting and enhancing a variety of programs including: aquatics, daycamps, providing 1:1 support, general recreation and more. The Commission is currently recruiting for summer camp volunteers aged 14 years and older.

For more information on volunteering with the North Vancouver Recreation Commission, visit [www.northvanrec.com](http://www.northvanrec.com) .

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NOTE: photos of active volunteers of all ages are available.

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