

# WELLNESS CONNECTION

LIVE WELL. WORK WELL.

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## HEALTHY HARMONY - Make Giving a Year-round Part of Your Life

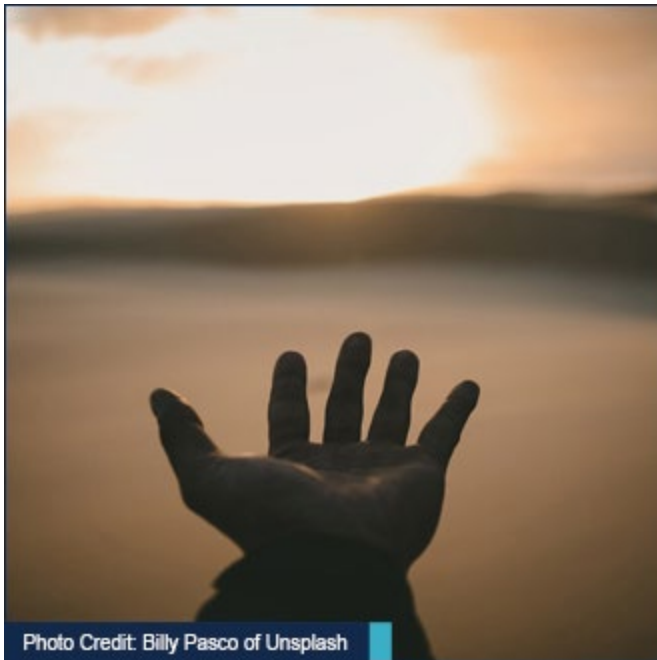


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*By Jackie Billhymer*

*"You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give." Winston Churchill*

You have likely heard the story of Ebenezer Scrooge, one of the main characters in Charles Dickens' "A Christmas Carol." He hoarded his money and rarely went out of his way to help others. Then one night, three visitors changed his perception of himself and he woke up a changed man! Realizing the error of his ways, he became a generous and jolly man with everyone he met from that day forward. What is it about helping and giving to others that makes us feel so good?

There are many benefits to helping others. Similar to the effects of physical exercise, when we help others our body releases dopamine and endorphins in our brain. This makes us feel good and motivates us to continue the behavior. The holidays are a time of year that often cause us to think more about helping others, but we should consider the benefits of doing this all year long.

Two examples of helping others are volunteering and "paying it forward." Volunteering is a win-win because it has a positive effect on those receiving the generosity, while increasing the self-worth, social skills, and sense of purpose in the volunteer. Many communities have programs and

events that provide ways to be more generous and connect with each other as humans. Volunteering for social services organizations (e.g., soup kitchens, homeless shelters), purchasing gifts for children from Angel Trees, and making cards for the elderly, veterans, and active service members overseas, are all ways to benefit the well-being of ourselves and others. You can explore opportunities to volunteer in your community on the [System Office Wellness website](#) under the Social Wellness section.

“Paying it forward” means responding to someone’s kindness to you by being kind to someone else. It takes just one simple act of kindness to create a domino effect that lasts well beyond the initial action. This can be something as simple as opening a door for someone or paying for the person behind you in line at a drive-up window or sitting at a table next to you in a restaurant. The happy surprise when a total stranger pays for your coffee plants the seed of giving in your own heart. One person’s positive actions increase the potential for exponential giving when we make generosity a year-round part of our life.

