

February 2020

Live. Life. Well.

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Heart Your Community

Beyond the Holidays: Year-Round Volunteering

After the holidays, many charitable organizations seem to disappear as quickly as the decorations. While some groups may be more active during certain seasons, there are plenty of year-round volunteer opportunities to help you stay connected to your community.

Volunteerism has been [associated](#)¹ with numerous health benefits, including reduced risks for depression, improved self-esteem, and an enhanced sense of purpose and meaning. One study showed that individuals who volunteered at least 200 hours over the past 12 months had lower blood pressure, highlighting the importance of being consistent with healthy behaviors when it comes to improving your health.

Whether you choose to volunteer your time or donate money, investing in giving back has the potential to improve not only your health, but the health of your community as well.

Here are a few ideas to help you connect with year-round volunteer opportunities in your area:

Food Banks

Check with your [local food pantry](#)² to see if they need additional help. Many food banks rely on volunteers to help restock shelves, make deliveries, and ensure that food is stored safely.

Hospice

[Hospice volunteers](#)³ support patients who are in the final stages of life, along with their families. Since there are both direct care and non-direct care opportunities available, you do not have to have a background in healthcare to help.

Animal Rescue Shelters

Animal shelters and rescue organizations like the Humane Society International ASPCA have a wide variety of volunteer roles, from advocacy activities to field operations.

Habitat for Humanity

Building homes with [Habitat for Humanity](#)⁴ offers an opportunity to be physically active while you simultaneously connect with those in your community.



1. <https://mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/helping-people-changing-lives-the-6-health-benefits-of-volunteering>

2. <https://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank>

3. <https://hospicefoundation.org/Volunteer>

4. <https://www.habitat.org/volunteer/nearest-you/find-your-local-habitat>

An Eco-Friendlier Home

Put simply, [eco-friendly](#)⁵ homes are designed to have a limited impact on the [environment](#)⁶. That means they focus on renewable energy resources and are sensitive to the ecological consequences that come with building and maintaining a household. One of the most notable health benefits of eco-friendly products is that they create less waste, which means the positive impacts are seen far beyond the single-family home.



If you have been thinking about making your home more eco-friendly, here are a few [ways](#)⁷ to get started:



Batteries

Consider using rechargeable batteries to keep them out of local landfills, where they can break down and leak into the soil and drinking water.



Grocery Bags

Bring your own grocery bags to the supermarket to reduce the number of plastic bags that end up in the garbage. Similarly, mesh produce bags are washable and easier to use than the plastic bags found in most produce sections at the grocery store. They also come in handy at the farmers' market.



Straws and Water Containers

The sad truth is that [91%](#)⁸ of plastics are not recycled. That is why opting for reusable straws and refillable water containers instead of plastic straws and bottles help keep harmful plastics out of our oceans and landfills.



Water-Saving Shower Heads

Most individuals use about [2 gallons of water per minute](#)⁹ taking showers. If you love taking long showers, that number can grow dramatically. One way to reduce water consumption is to install a water-saving shower head, but you could also install a simple timer to set limits on how much time you spend there.

5. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eco-friendly>

6. <https://sustainablelivingassociation.org/the-rise-of-eco-friendly-homes/>

7. <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/energy-saving-tips-to-make-your-home-more-eco-friendly>

8. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2017/07/plastic-produced-recycling-waste-ocean-trash-debris-environment/>

9. <https://www.home-water-works.org/indoor-use/showers>

Steps and Veggies at the Farmers' Market

It is no secret that healthy eating and physical activity are integral to good health. Farmers' markets offer a trifecta: healthy food, physical activity, and an opportunity to deepen connections with those in your community. While you are stocking up on nutrient-dense fruits and vegetables, you can simultaneously accumulate some steps while you visit with local growers and crafters.

To maximize the health benefits during your visit to the market, consider these strategies:

Wear comfortable shoes

Having the right footwear can make all the difference if you plan to cover some serious ground at the market. While many markets take place in parking lots, others are held in parks with uneven pavement or hilly areas, so having the right attire is key.

Track your steps

Using a pedometer or app to track your steps is a great way to maintain a consistent physical activity routine. It might also give you a boost of motivation to work in those last few steps before the end of the day or take another lap around the market.



Freeze it

If you happen to find some irresistibly good-looking produce, do not be afraid to stock up. When you get home, simply pop whatever you do not plan to use for the week in the freezer. Surprisingly, frozen produce often surpasses fresh produce in terms of nutrient quality. That is because the fresh produce found in supermarkets often spends a lot of time on a truck before it arrives at the store. In contrast, the produce found at farmers' markets is harvested the morning of, or just a few days before, market day.

Volunteer

Another way to get involved with your local farmers' market is to volunteer. Whether you support a grower, a nearby community garden, or help out with logistics at the event itself, you will have even more opportunities to cultivate meaningful relationships with your community.



10 small steps for better heart health



Change is an important part of living with heart disease or trying to prevent it. A jump in blood pressure or cholesterol earns you a lecture on healthy lifestyle changes. Heart attack and stroke survivors are often told to alter a lifetime of habits.

Some people manage to overhaul their exercise pattern, diet, and unhealthy habits with ease. The rest of us try to make changes, but do not always succeed. Instead of undertaking a huge makeover, you might be able to improve your heart's health with a series of small changes. Once you get going, you may find that change isn't so hard. This approach may take longer, but it could also motivate you to make some big changes.

Here are 10 small steps to improve your heart health.

- 1. Take a 10-minute walk.** If you do not exercise at all, a brief walk is a great way to start. If you do, it is a good way to add more exercise to your day.
- 2. Give yourself a lift.** Lifting a hardcover book or a two-pound weight a few times a day can help tone your arm muscles. When that becomes a breeze, move on to heavier items or join a gym.
- 3. Eat one extra fruit or vegetable a day.** Fruits and vegetables are good for everything from your brain to your bowels.
- 4. Make breakfast count.** Start the day with some fruit and a serving of whole grains, like oatmeal, bran flakes, or whole-wheat toast.
- 5. Stop drinking your calories.** Cutting out just one sugar-sweetened soda or calorie-laden latte can easily save you 100 or more calories a day. Over a year, that can translate into a 10-pound weight loss.
- 6. Have a handful of nuts.** Walnuts, almonds, peanuts, and other nuts are good for your heart. Try grabbing some instead of chips or cookies when you need a snack, adding them to salads for a healthful and tasty crunch, or using them in place of meat in pasta and other dishes.
- 7. Sample the fruits of the sea.** Eat fish or other types of seafood instead of red meat once a week. It is good for the heart, the brain, and the waistline.
- 8. Breathe deeply.** Try breathing slowly and deeply for a few minutes a day. It can help you relax. Slow, deep breathing may also help lower blood pressure.
- 9. Wash your hands often.** Scrubbing up with soap and water often during the day is a great way to protect your heart and health. The flu, pneumonia, and other infections can be very hard on the heart.
- 10. Count your blessings.** Taking a moment each day to acknowledge the blessings in your life is one way to tap into other positive emotions. These have been linked with better health, longer life, and greater well-being, just as their opposites—chronic anger, worry, and hostility; contribute to [high blood pressure](#) and heart disease.

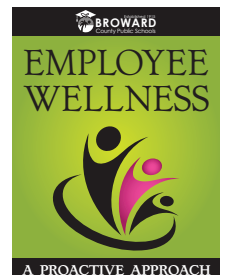
Join us and wear red on.

FEBRUARY
7, 2020
AMERICAN
HEART
ASSOCIATION



IN CELEBRATION OF
GO RED

★ **FOR WOMEN** ★
AWARENESS MOVEMENT



Recipe

Chicken Vegetable Soup

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 cup chopped celery (1 stalk)
- 1/2 cup sliced leek or chopped onion
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced carrot (1 medium)
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine softened
- 14 ounce reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 1/4 cup all-purpose flour
- 2 cups milk
- 1 tablespoon snipped fresh thyme or basil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups chopped chicken or turkey (about 8 ounces)
- 1/4 cup dry white wine or reduced sodium chicken broth
- Cracked black pepper

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a large saucepan, cook celery, leek or onion, and carrots in hot butter until tender. In a medium bowl, gradually stir the 14-ounces of chicken broth into the flour; stir into vegetables in saucepan. Add milk, dried herb (if using), and salt. Cook and stir until slightly thickened and bubbly; cook and stir for 1 minute more.
2. Stir in chicken, wine or the 1/4 cup chicken broth, and fresh herbs (if using). Cook about 2 minutes more or until heated through.
3. To serve, ladle into soup bowls. Sprinkle with pepper.

Total Time (Cook & Prep):

35 minutes

Servings: 4



NUTRITION INFO

(per serving)

Calories: 254

Fat: 10 g total fat (5 g sat. fat)

Cholesterol: 68 mg

Sodium: 560 mg

Carb: 16 g

Fiber: 1 g

Protein: 23 g

Source:

Navigate Wellbeing Solutions Recipe Library



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