Improving the Quality of Life for All Generations

Independent research sponsored by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) shows that Senior Corps volunteers are healthier, less depressed, and more connected compared with those who do not volunteer regularly.

Through its Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) and Senior Companion Program (SCP), Senior Corps provides national service opportunities for adults age 55 and older with low incomes. This is a group that is racially, educationally, and financially diverse; is at risk for poor health outcomes; and is often underrepresented in traditional volunteering opportunities – and they are making a difference in their communities:

- 22,000 FGP volunteers help more than 149,000 children each year
- 11,000 SCP volunteers provide 35,000 individuals with independent living services

Through a survey of more than 1,200 first-time FGP and SCP volunteers, the study found that:

- 80 percent of the volunteers report a household income of less than $20,000 per year
- 16 percent have a college degree
- 34 percent have a condition that limits their physical ability

Lack of physical activity, depression, and social isolation are often associated with older adults, and can contribute to a variety of negative health outcomes. However, the study found that after two years of volunteering with Senior Corps, participants had notable improvements:

- 62 percent reported that their health was stable, and 22 percent improved over a two-year period
- 78 percent of the volunteers reported fewer symptoms of depression
- 88 percent reported decreased feelings of isolation

Volunteers reported high satisfaction with their volunteer experiences, with most saying that they would recommend the program to a friend. Senior Corps volunteers also were likely to continue serving:

- More than 75 percent of Senior Corps volunteers continue serving after their first year compared with 63 percent of other volunteers nationally

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