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**Older People Speak Out**  
Promoting the value of older people

# LIFE TIMES

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## Put your hand up for health and happiness

*This final edition of Life Times for 2014 puts the focus on volunteering.*

You're never too old to put your hand up and help someone in need. And it could even be good for your health!

Numerous studies have examined the benefits of volunteering but the latest US research looks specifically at benefits for seniors.

According to the study, published online in *Psychological Bulletin*, older adults who stay active by volunteering are getting more out of it than just an altruistic feeling -- they are receiving a health boost!

This study is the first to take a broad-brush look at all the available peer-reviewed evidence regarding the psychosocial health benefits of formal volunteering for older adults. Lead investigator Dr Nicole Anderson, together with scientists from Canadian and American academic centres, examined 73 studies published over the past 45 years involving adults aged 50-plus who were in formal volunteering roles.

"Our goal was to obtain a more comprehensive view of the current state of knowledge on the benefits of volunteering among older adults," said Dr Anderson, a senior scientist with Baycrest's Rotman Research Institute and associate professor, University of Toronto. "We discovered a number of trends in the results that

paint a compelling picture of volunteering as an important lifestyle component for maintaining health and wellbeing in later years."

Among the key findings:

- Volunteering is associated with reductions in symptoms of depression, better overall health, fewer functional limitations, and greater longevity.
- Health benefits may depend on a moderate level of volunteering. There appears to be a tipping point after which greater benefits no longer accrue. The "sweet spot" appears to be at about 100 annual hours, or 2-3 hours per week.
- More vulnerable seniors (i.e. those with chronic health conditions) may benefit the most from volunteering.
- Feeling appreciated or needed as a volunteer appears to amplify the relationship between volunteering and psychosocial wellbeing.



"Taken together, these results

suggest that volunteering is associated with health improvements and increased physical activity -- changes that one would expect to offer protection against a variety of health conditions," said Dr Anderson. Indeed, a moderate amount of volunteering has been shown to be related to less hypertension and fewer hip fractures among seniors who volunteer compared to their matched non-volunteering peers. **See page 3 for more volunteering news...**

## LIFE TIMES

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Web: [www.opso.com.au/life-times](http://www.opso.com.au/life-times)

Look for our regular News Flashes and the Life Times newspaper editions on the OPSO website



# Fun for the Frail & Frisky



## Celebratory Games

### Easter Egg/Chocolate Santa/Lolly Hunt

Players: all

Equipment: Easter eggs etc.

Hide eggs all around the room (garden). Players then find them and bring them back to the start. Different types of lollies or coloured wrap may be used in each treasure spot.

Winner: the person who finds the most

\*\*\*\*\*

### Easter or Christmas Treasure Hunt

Players: pairs

Equipment: sweets, clues

Hide sweets in six set places. Hide enough in each place so that each player gets one! Prepare six clues, one for each pile of sweets. Hand out clues all at once, to all players. Players, in their pairs, work out the clues and go and find each 'treasure', and bring it back.

Winner: the first pair to find all six treasures and bring back a sweet from each

\*\*\*\*\*

### Secret Santa/Valentine/Easter Bunny

Players: all

Equipment: small gifts, pencil and paper

Three weeks before Christmas, St Valentine's Day or Easter, secretly allocate each person the role of a secret Santa or Valentine or Easter Bunny for another player. This may be done by putting all names in a hat and letting players draw out the name of the person to whom he will be a 'Secret Santa'. On a set day each week, for the next four to six weeks, the secret Santas will prepare and bring a small gift (worth no more than 50 cents to \$1) and a clue to their identity. These gifts are placed in a box and given out by the leader each week to each person. On the last day, after receiving the last gift, receivers are asked to write down the name of the person they think has been their 'secret person':

Winner: whomever guesses correctly

## Memory Games

### Animal, Mineral, Vegetable

Players: any number

Equipment: pencils and paper

One player thinks of something that is animal, mineral or vegetable, writes it down and hides the word from the rest. The group then asks questions, to which the player can only answer 'yes' or 'no', until someone in the group works out the answer. Then it is the winner's turn to think of a new animal, mineral or vegetable item.

Winner: none

\*\*\*\*\*

### Trivial Pursuit

Players: teams of four, who sit together at a table

Equipment: five sheets of paper and a pen per table

The pieces of paper have a category (history, geography, sport, literature, current affairs) and a list of numbers, 1-10. (For a longer game add more categories.) The compere has a list of 10 questions in each category. Questions are read out from history first, allowing plenty of time for team members to discuss their answer to each question and write it on the appropriate sheet of paper, against the appropriate number. At the end of each game, read out the answers and allow tables to tally the number correct on that card. Altered answers are not allowed.

Winner: the team with the highest number of correct answers

\*\*\*\*\*

### Memory (Kim's Game)

Players: any number, teams of three, or pairs

Equipment: a collection of objects on a tray

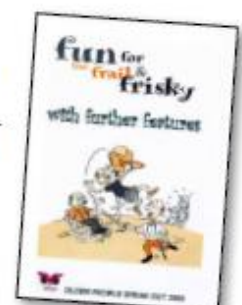
Players have two minutes (or longer) to look at the tray and commit the objects to memory. Take the tray away and have the players write down as many objects as they can remember.

Winner: whoever remembers the highest number of things

## Want more?

This is an excerpt from *Fun for the Frail & Frisky* (48 pages) – available for \$12 (incl. P&P) – send your address and cheque or money order to:

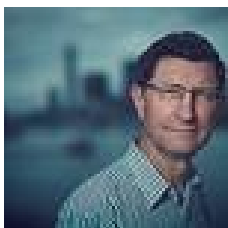
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# What is the secret to happiness?

*A medical practitioner specialising in child health, Dr Robert McGregor has made an outstanding contribution to Queensland's community.*



*Bob has devoted nearly four decades to his role as consultant paediatrician at Ipswich Hospital. Many of his current patients are the children or even grandchildren of former patients. Bob was the long-time chair of a hospital fund which raised more than \$110,000 for medical equipment, child-friendly nurses' uniforms and toys for the special care nursery. He has been involved in community outreach programs to prevent child abuse and has presented many papers at medical conferences. He is equally dedicated to his community, working in a number of voluntary roles for local schools and Lions clubs. A keen cyclist, Bob was the inspiration and driving force behind the Heritage Bank Ipswich100 Bike Ride fundraising event. By 2013, the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Bike Ride attracted nearly 1,000 riders and raised \$100,000 for the Ipswich Hospital Foundation, local charities and Lions' projects.*

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*Bike Ride fundraising event. By 2013, the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Bike Ride attracted nearly 1,000 riders and raised \$100,000 for the Ipswich Hospital Foundation, local charities and Lions' projects.*

**Dr McGregor, also National Finalist Australian Senior of the Year 2014, was a keynote speaker at the OSPO Media Awards, held in September. Among other topics, Dr McGregor gave a passionate plea for volunteering:**

"Everybody wants happiness. It's there to grasp if you go about it in the right way but unfortunately a lot of people seem to have lost their way; they have become disconnected with their community. Really, the secret to happiness is to be connected. But in this day and age people have become disconnected, disengaged. They are relating to people via the internet, social media, social dating is now common place - people say they haven't got the time to meet people in person. We are starting to see - in fact it's

been going on for a little while - that people want a 'quick fix'; they want happiness in dollops. So we see the emergence of virtual reality, even things like pornography are 'quick fixes'. We see the continued burgeoning of designer drugs and other illicit substance abuse and of course the old war horses of gambling and alcohol.

The answer is so obvious to me that it seems almost silly to talk about it. The answer is in maintaining engagement, not allowing yourself to be divorced from your community and, in particular, in volunteering. I'm very lucky in my job that I've been able to involve myself with young families and their children. And so every day I get positive

reinforcement and a real sense of fulfilment just out of the work that I do, so I don't really need volunteering. But I've got to say that some of greatest moments of happiness that I experience are in the company of other volunteers helping other people.

***"The pursuit of happiness in our community is pervasive."***

There's something about volunteering. I'm strongly in favour of volunteering and certainly of maintaining engagement. I think so many of our older folk are rather lonely and missing out on one of the important things in life, which is maintaining engagement in the community."



**For information on how you can volunteer, visit the Volunteering Queensland website [www.volunteeringqld.org.au](http://www.volunteeringqld.org.au)**

## Old Bird's Eye View of the World: *on the battle between the retail Davids and Goliaths*



This photo (above) of the display in front of a small fruit shop somewhere in Italy is just luscious. Our chances of seeing its like in Australia are fading fast.

At the time of writing this, we are getting newspaper and magazine articles expressing concern at the uber-cheap prices for loaves of bread offered by one of the major supermarkets here, and the impact – presumably deliberate – that such loss-losers are likely to have on nearby bakeries. More generally, as Fiona Scott-Norman has summed up in a recent issue of the *Big Issue* magazine (Ed #468), about Coles and Woolworths, “these two grocery godzillas, locked in mortal combat, are crushing individual operators out of existence and forcing primary producers into contractual servitude.”

So, while they are locked in mortal combat with each other, they can also be seen as Goliaths trampling on a lot of feisty but potentially doomed little retail Davids. And if they lose, we lose, on choice and diversity, having then to accept whatever range of products the big guns deem we should have. Not to mention the loss of

the charm of having the personal attention of shopkeepers, and the colourful street scenes that only a variety of individual shops can offer.

Consequently, I am not the only person whom I know, who has made it a deliberate policy to buy everything possible in the small businesses, and who only uses the big supermarkets for items that we can't get outside them. It is our small way of fighting back to preserve the multiplicity of brand choice that is gradually being eroded by those supermarkets in various ways, not just in lower pricing, but – as Scott-Norman has also pointed out – in stacking their shelves with items designed to be such close copies of those of other manufacturers that one often has to look closely to make sure that the “home brands” aren't picked up by mistake.

The more people who are able to resist cheaper pricing (tempting though they must be, especially to those who are struggling financially) and do as we do, the more likely we are to be able to protect small businesses from the carrot-and-stick bullying tactics of the big players. Especially since you've got to wonder just how long the cheap prices would last if they did end up being the only games in town.

*Anne Ring © 2014*

### Need someone to talk to?

Seniors Enquiry Line is a state-wide information and referral service. For the cost of a local call, Seniors Enquiry Line gives Queensland seniors, their family, friends, grandparents and carers access to information on topics of interest to seniors.

One call will put you in touch with information on: concessions, social activities, household assistance, retirement accommodation, financial and legal matters, health, education, transport and many other issues.

For further information, phone **1300 135 500** (Interstate callers please call 07 3867 2500)



# Beating in the heat



*By Dr Mark Elcock*  
**Queensland Health  
Acting Executive  
Director, Chief Health  
Officer Branch**

Summer is a great time of year in Queensland. It's a time to get together with family and friends to enjoy the great outdoor lifestyle that Queensland's tropical climate allows.

However, when temperatures start to climb, it's important to be aware of the very real danger that hot weather can pose, especially to the frail and elderly, children and babies, women who are pregnant or breastfeeding, people with mobility problems or disabilities, and those who work outdoors.

Remember, it's very easy to dehydrate and suffer from a heat-related illness in these hot conditions. The best way to reduce your risk this summer is to make sure you stay cool by drinking plenty of water and keeping your body as cool as possible.

You should aim to drink 2-3 litres of cool water (avoid very cold drinks) a day in hot weather, and don't wait until you're thirsty to drink. When the weather is warmest, try to drink one and a half cups of water every half an hour.

It's a good idea to stay indoors on very hot days, preferably in air-conditioning or in a room with good air flow. Remember to turn on fans or open windows, try

eating smaller cool meals such as salads, and avoid drinks that have high levels of sugar, caffeine or alcohol. If you are feeling hot, keep yourself cool with a wet towel, have a cool shower (not cold) or put your feet in some cool water.

If you don't have access to an air-conditioner or your home is not well ventilated, why not plan an excursion to an air-conditioned public venue such as a shopping centre, cinema or library?

Something that is really important on very hot days is to remember to check on friends, neighbours and relatives who might be in one of the 'at-risk' groups. It can often be those who are most in need of assistance who are least likely to ask for help.

If you suspect someone is suffering from a heat-related illness—an extremely high body temperature; red, hot and dry skin; a rapid pulse; or headache and confusion—seek medical assistance straight away by dialling triple zero (000).

It's important you cool them down quickly with a cool shower, bath or sponge. Loosen their clothing and have them rest in a cool place, and provide them with water, but only if you're confident they can swallow properly.

So let's all check on each other this summer, and take care in these hot conditions. Visit the [Queensland Health website](#) for more tips on staying safe and healthy this summer.

Also, don't forget to check on your pets and make sure they are coping in the heat too. The [RSPCA](#) has some excellent advice for keeping your family companions safe and healthy in hot weather.

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