

## **Volunteering and improved health**

Among a number of studies reporting on the benefit of volunteering and mentoring upon the health of those involved as volunteers, Black and Living (2004) reported that volunteering appears to exert its effects predominantly upon mental health. Engaging in a volunteer role may help to promote psychological well-being through providing opportunities to enhance positive affect and to gain experience and skills, helping to build confidence and self-esteem. Volunteering also provided contact with other people and social support as well as opportunities for spiritual reflection and self-reflection upon purpose and meaning of life. It encouraged volunteers to feel part of community life and provide a replacement role or an additional role. These findings are supported by Garcia, Metha, Perfect and McWhirter (1997) who also reported significant improvement to the mental health of volunteer counsellors quoting the experience of learning and the trust and support of a group as well as increased self confidence and self efficacy.

### **Further details in**

Black, W and Living, R. (2004) Volunteerism as an Occupation and its relationship to health and wellbeing. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy* December 2004 67(12).

Garcia, Y.E., Metha, A., Perfect, MC and McWhirter, J.J. (1997) A Senior Peer Counselling Program: Evaluation of Training and Benefits to Counselors. *Educational Gerontology*, 23: 329 - 334