

## Utah's Culture of Volunteerism

The culture of service and volunteerism in Utah is part of what makes our state so unique. Individuals throughout the state feel a deep desire to reach out to their neighbors and communities in both religious and non-religious capacities.

Research in 2012 by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) through the Volunteering in America 2012 report ranks Utah as the #1 volunteering state in the nation with 40.9% of adults volunteering. This volunteering rate is significantly above the national average of 26.8%. On average, Utah's volunteers dedicate 144 million hours of service per year which is equivalent to 69,000 full-time employees with an estimated economic contribution of \$3.7 billion annually. In addition to being ranked the #1 volunteering state in the nation, Utah ranked #1 in eight other categories, including:

- Volunteer Hours per Resident: 89.2 hours (National Average: 33 hours)
- Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964): 47.6% (National Average: 29.2 %)
- Generation X (born 1965 to 1981): 47.0% (National Average: 23%)
- Millennials (born in/after 1982) 37.6% (National Average: 21.6 %)
- Parents: 52.0% (National Average: 33.9%)
- Men: 40.1% (National Average: 23.3%)
- Women: 46.0% (National Average: 29.8%)
- Favors for Neighbors: 76.7% (National Average: 65.1%)

What does that mean for employers in Utah? While a list of benefits for employee, corporation and community cannot be comprehensively covered, here we share a few key findings.

### Health Benefits

- High volunteer rates in the state are connected to lower health problems. The Corporation for National and Community Service used data from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Center for Disease Control to determine that "states with a high volunteer rate also have lower rates of mortality and incidences of heart disease. When comparing states, a general trend shows that health problems are more prevalent in states where volunteer rates are lowest." Source: [http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07\\_0506\\_hbr\\_brief.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr_brief.pdf)
- Volunteering leads to greater life satisfaction and lower rates of depression. Evidence indicates that volunteering has a positive effect on social psychological factors, such as a personal sense of purpose and accomplishment, and enhances a person's social networks to buffer stress and reduce disease risk. (Herzog et al., 1998; Greenfield and Marks, 2004; Harlow and Cantor, 1996) According to one study, when older adults volunteered in 1986, they experienced lower rates of depression in 1994. (Musick and Wilson, 2003). Source: [http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07\\_0506\\_hbr\\_brief.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr_brief.pdf)
- Volunteering and physical well-being are part of a positive reinforcing cycle. A study of longitudinal data from the Americans' Changing Lives survey found that those who volunteered in 1986 reported higher levels of happiness, life-satisfaction, self-esteem, a sense of control over

life, and physical health in 1989, while those in 1986 who reported higher levels of happiness, life-satisfaction, self-esteem, a sense of control over life, and physical health were more likely to volunteer in 1989. (Thoits and Hewitt, 2001). Source:

[http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07\\_0506\\_hbr\\_brief.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr_brief.pdf)

- Individuals who volunteer live longer. Several longitudinal studies have found that those individuals who volunteer during the first wave of the survey have lower mortality rates at the second wave of the survey, even when taking into account such factors as physical health, age, socioeconomic status and gender. (Sabin, 1993; Rogers, 1996; Musick et al., 1999) Researchers have also found that when patients with chronic or serious illness volunteer, they receive benefits beyond what can be achieved through medical care. (Arnstein et al., 2002; Sullivan and Sullivan, 1997). Source: [http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07\\_0506\\_hbr\\_brief.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/07_0506_hbr_brief.pdf)
- 92% of people who volunteer through their workplace report higher rates of physical and emotional health. <http://www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/resources/businesscase.jsp>

#### Business Benefits

- 66% of employees reported a greater commitment to the company as a result of their experience volunteering. Source: <http://www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/resources/businesscase.jsp>
- Employees who volunteer tend to experience greater job satisfaction, and improved morale. This, in turn, leads to a more positive attitude which constructively impacts job performance, teamwork and many of the other intangibles that make good companies better. As a result, the companies doing this see both improved employee retention and productivity. Source: <http://www.triplepundit.com/2012/06/roi-employee-volunteering/>
- 88% of employee volunteers report volunteering provides networking/career development opportunities. Source: <http://www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/resources/businesscase.jsp>
- Another study found the following benefits to the employer: Improves performance; Increases job satisfaction, attitude, and morale; Encourages teamwork; Promotes leadership and skill development; Improves communication between employees and their supervisors, and across departments. Source: <http://www.volunteermatch.org/corporations/resources/businesscase.jsp>