

The Giving Path

BY DOUG LAWSON

How volunteer efforts, charitable acts, and gestures of compassion can all enrich our lives.



Illustration by
Joseph Daniel Fiedler
© 1991

Happiness and self-acceptance are difficult to achieve—and even more difficult to sustain. Life is full of disappointments, frustrations, difficulties with work, family and financial stresses. People become isolated and don't share life's joys easily with one another. As people get older, enthusiasm and satisfaction with life often diminish.

But there is one kind of experience that delivers emotional and intellectual satisfaction time after time, day after day: helping other people. Volunteer efforts, charitable

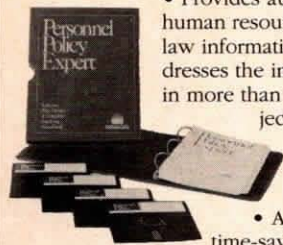
acts, generosity of spirit, and gestures of compassion all enrich and sustain our lives. Volunteering our resources without thought of gain showers benefits on us we may never have expected. The "helper's high," as some have called it, can endure long after we are finished and can be recalled over and over again in memory.

A recent Gallup survey of giving and volunteering showed that many of those interviewed sought emotional benefits, wanting to feel useful or needed. They enjoyed doing good

Personnel Policy Expert™

Software That Creates A Complete Employee Handbook

- Asks the key questions, then uses your answers to write policies tailored to the unique needs of your organization.



- Provides authoritative human resource and labor law information and addresses the important issues in more than 60 policy subjects appropriate for an employee handbook.

- A cost-effective, time-saving alternative to "model" policies. Educates you on the important personnel and legal questions and writes policies for you! Only \$495.

FREE DEMO DISK
CALL 1-800-727-1133

KnowledgePoint

1311 Clegg Street
Petaluma, CA 94954
(707) 762-0333
Fax (707) 762-0802

Requires IBM PC, XT, AT, PS/2 or compatible,
DOS 2.1 or later, 512K RAM, hard disk recommended.
© 1987 KnowledgePoint — M152

ACI 900



**NABISCO HBO
USA TODAY PEPSI**

PROCTER & GAMBLE

NBC GILLETTE

CNN THE NY TIMES

THE NFL TROPICANA

ETC.

?

THESE COMPANIES ALL HAVE

A "DIAL-900" PROFIT CENTER

CALL US
AT

1-800-BUY AC1900

(1-800-289-2249)

AUDIOTEX CONSULTANTS INC.

A COMPLETE 800/900 SERVICE BUREAU
P.O. BOX 32828 BALTIMORE MD 21208

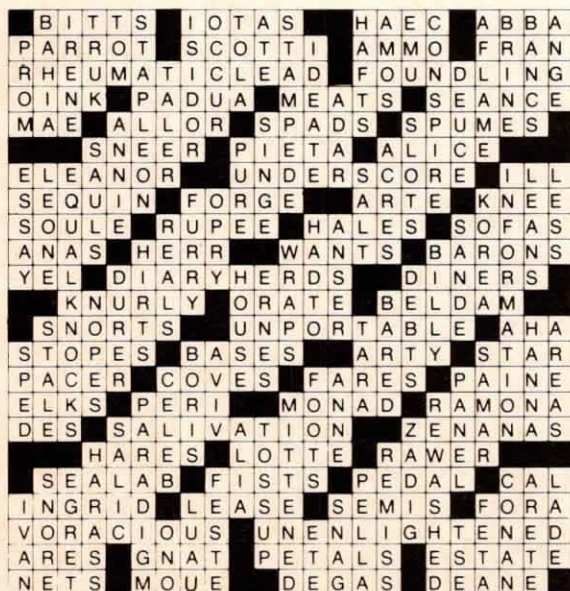
work that contributed to an enhanced, more accepting self-image. They saw their service as a special connection or bond to others seldom found elsewhere in their lives.

Volunteering and giving enhance self-acceptance, as emotional transference takes place during volunteer activity. In giving love and concern to others, we receive love, gratitude, and acceptance in return. In the recently published book *Healthy Pleasures*, author Robert E. Ornstein puts it this way: "We can get a special kind of attention from those we help. This sincere gratitude can be very [emotionally] nourishing."

To improve life and enhance self-worth, people need to improve their experiences. No one can buy happiness or contentment—they are not commodities. They emerge from what we do. Drinking, taking drugs, and overeating often lead to self-loathing and emotional and physical illnesses. Generosity and benevolence, on the other hand, lead to satisfaction and emotional and physical health. We all struggle with both constructive and destructive forces in our personalities. Acts of generosity enhance our feelings of self-worth, which in turn generate greater emotional harmony. A harmoniously ordered mind is the key to a deeper, richer, more enjoyable life.

To have a more balanced life, people need to increase their power to generate emotional rewards. Philanthropy and volunteer work are actions we can take right now to change the direction of our lives. In an age when personal control over circumstances is ever more difficult, an act of sharing gives us a way to direct and shape events.

We all need appreciation—the more driven among us are often eager for it—but many of us receive little sincere approval as we go through our regular schedules. Volunteer activity for the benefit of others can lead to the sort of genuine approval that benefits us emotionally as well. Most Americans are people-oriented and enjoy having people pay attention to what we say and do. Volunteer effort fosters emotional well-being by building esteem and by putting our beliefs into practice.



ANSWERS TO CROSSWORD ON PAGE 104

In his recent book, *Power of the Plus Factor*, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale writes, "There is no doubt in my mind that people who care for other people and show that caring in loving, unselfish ways most invariably have a strong, deep current of the Plus Factor. What we are describing is a person who has discovered the key that unlocks the door to real happiness."

Many people yearn to commit themselves to a cause, to give themselves to something worthwhile. Few people accomplish this completely. But in addition to saints, there are millions of ordinary people who have made important contributions through dedicated service. You don't need great expertise or sacrifice to produce results. You do need devotion, commitment, and willingness.

In *The Broken Heart: The Medical Consequences of Loneliness*, Dr. James Lynch of the University of Maryland School of Medicine says, "Love your neighbor as you love yourself" is not just a moral mandate. It's a physiological mandate. Caring

is biological. One thing you get from caring is that you are not lonely, and the more connected you are to life, the healthier you are." Community and connectedness have long been acknowledged as important influences on mental health by the medical and psychiatric professions.

In *Dr. Dean Ornish's Program for Reversing Heart Disease*, self-centeredness, the habitual use of the pronoun "I," and emotional isolation are cited as destructive to emotional and physical health. People need good relationships with other people all their lives. Newborn infants do not survive if they are not loved and nurtured, nor do the elderly. Even during our middle years, when we are most self-reliant, we are vulnerable. Giving and sharing not only help others, but they also give us life.

When we give our time, our money, our talent, our concern, and our compassion for others to a cause, we receive more than we give. Our hearts, our immune systems, and our general health all improve. Our minds are clearer and

more focused, we have a more positive picture of ourselves, and we are better able to sort out and meet the competing demands of our lives. We feel better about ourselves: We know we are loved, and we can love all the more in return. We change for the better when we help other people, and at the same time we change their lives and the world.

Without the gift of life from our parents, we would not exist. Without their nurture when we were infants, without help from society as we went to school and grew in stature and knowledge, without the help of others (often strangers to us) as our careers and lives unfold, we would have no life. Everything we are and everything we have is a gift. What little we have earned—and it can never be enough to pay back the entire gift given us—we all have the opportunity to reinvest in each other. □

Dr. Douglas M. Lawson is a speaker and author of the new book, Give to Live: How Giving Can Change Your Life (Alti Publishing).

TRIPLE* YOUR USAir MILES

Stay At One Of These GREAT RADISSONS



Radisson Hotel Newark Airport



Radisson Hotel Philadelphia Airport

- Radisson Hotel Newark Airport
- Radisson Hotel Islandia - Long Island
- Radisson Plaza Hotel Melville - Long Island
- Radisson Hotel Woburn - Boston

- Radisson Hotel Philadelphia Airport
- Radisson Hotel Detroit Airport
- Radisson Hotel Orlando Airport
- Radisson Hotel St Louis Airport - Opening Mid September, 1991

*Fly USAir, stay at Radisson and you will triple the 500 Frequent Traveler miles you normally earn. This will give you a total of 1500 miles. This offer is good only at these Radissons listed above from July 1, 1991 thru December 31, 1991. Standard restrictions apply. Show your ticket and boarding pass upon check-in at the hotel.

RESERVATIONS WORLDWIDE 800-333-3333

OR CALL YOUR TRAVEL PLANNER

HOTELS INTERNATIONAL
Radisson

*A Welcome
ChangeSM*