

Will All the Volunteers Please Stand Up?

Anyone who has ever visited a Dharma center, church, or temple has witnessed the importance that volunteers play in keeping the wheels of community worship turning. Extending well beyond the spiritual domain, the world at large has a major debt to pay to volunteers. As the American volunteer organization, the Points of Light Foundation, writes, "Serious social problems aren't simply prevented or solved with private funding or government programs. It requires the human connection established by volunteers. The cost of solving serious social problems without volunteers would be astronomical. In fact, today's US volunteer workforce represents the equivalent of over nine million full-time employees whose combined efforts are worth \$225 billion."

Communities and cultures around the world are embracing the value of volunteering on both social and individual levels. The government of Thailand recently announced that civil servants will be given five days' leave per year to do volunteer work. A 2006 report by the Corporation for National and Community Service unveiled new research which shows that volunteering leads to better health. The findings interestingly show that such health benefits occur to a greater degree in the volunteer than in the one receiving social service – in the Buddhist context, we

FPMT SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE ENCOURAGES A VOLUNTEER TO KEEP GOING ...

Thank you very much for the great service you have been doing. This organization is to benefit not only human beings/sentient beings in this world, but also sentient beings equaling the limitless sky, who are obscured and suffering. This is the best method: providing service for the teachings of the buddhadharma, the complete and stainless path to enlightenment – the peerless happiness. What greater life is there than this? Please continue. ☸

With much Love and Prayers, Zopa

CHARITABLE DONATIONS

By using brain-imaging technology, a team of researchers from the University of Oregon found that giving to charity triggers the same "warm glow" that people experience when they sate their hunger or socialize with friends. Participants were given \$100 and examined as they watched their money go to a local food bank in a mandatory tax-like contribution. The result: that warm glow. But when they gave their cash away voluntarily, they got an even bigger charge.

The scientists found that people had two different motives for giving money – "pure altruism" and "warm glow altruism". People who are motivated by pure altruism



The Four Harmonious Friends, drawing by Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

could say this beautifully illustrates one of the benefits of bodhichitta.

Mandala dedicates this installment of The Giving Tree to "The Volunteer." You who clean the gompas, visit a prisoner, staunch a wound, organize a puja – you who have committed yourself to the path of enlightenment for the benefit of others. You are a precious example of how to change the world: by understanding that serving others is the most meaningful way to serve ourselves. ☸

THANK YOU