

Volunteerism can pay dividends for mental health: Scouts study

When it comes to that dreadful feeling of being overwhelmed, every little bit counts when it comes to resting a bit easier ? as a recent study from Scouts Canada has illustrated.

By BROCK WEIR

The youth organization recently ran a national survey ?for a nationwide pulse on our current world-weary woes.?

The study found that Canadians are 0.1 per cent less overwhelmed than they were in April of 2024 ? that's the little bit that counts ? and some have found an outlet for their stressors through volunteerism.

43.2 per cent of Canadians who responded to the survey said those who ?refuse? to volunteer are ?missing out on an opportunity to improve their own mental health.?

?Asked if volunteering with youth should be promoted as a way for adults to combat stress, anxiety, and loneliness, 60.9% of Canadians said ?yes!' 27.3% said ?maybe,'? says the report. ?With record levels of anxiety and depression, should Canadians be prescribed volunteering as a form of therapy? 37.9% of Canadians said ?yes,' and 46.8% said ?maybe.'?

?In many tangible ways, volunteering with Scouts Canada is a win-win for Scouts AND volunteers. Scouting volunteers benefit from more friends, mental and physical well-being, professional development opportunities, new skills and more. We're seeing from our survey that Canadians are looking for real ways to connect, collaborate and pay it forward,? said Liam Burns, CEO of Scouts Canada, in a statement.

While the report outlines the benefits of volunteerism, it also identified some barriers in the way of getting more pairs of hands out to help.

The study found that 61.8 per cent of Canadians would be more likely to volunteer if there were some form of financial incentive to do so, such as tax breaks and employer benefits. 21.7 per cent said they would be ?likely.?

A further 67.1 per cent of Canadians said major Canadian corporations should ?encourage? their employees to participate in volunteer programs, with an emphasis on youth volunteer programs.

Nearly 60 per cent ? 56.8 per cent ? of Canadians agreed that ?volunteering with youth organizations should be seen as a ?core part of Canadian identity.'?

There were also some lighthearted findings in the study, including a poll on which Canadian celebrity would make the best Scouts Canada volunteer. Coming out on top with 33.4 per cent of the vote was Keanu Reeves, who came out on top against Ryans Reynolds and Gosling.

?You don't have to be Keanu Reeves to ?thrive' as a volunteer for Scouts Canada?, added Burns. ?Whether you give back through philanthropic generosity like Keanu Reeves, bring well-rounded skills to the table like Ryan Reynolds, or just have a passion for youth development and community building, Scouts may be the ?pay it forward' match you've been looking for.?