

# Alzheimer's Association Northeastern New York

## Volunteering Benefits Your Health and Community

The first part of the year is traditionally the time to take stock of our health and make some resolutions for the months ahead. Gyms and fitness classes often fill up as people start new habits. If you are thinking about ways to improve your health in 2025, you might consider volunteering.

A growing amount of research shows that volunteering offers benefits for our mental and physical well-being and can keep us sharp as we age. And volunteering is also good for brain health.

"We know that people find purpose and meaning when they volunteer, but research suggests it can also be an important part of healthy aging," shares Erica Salamida, Director of Community Outreach for the New York State Coalition of Alzheimer's Association Chapters. "And volunteering has benefits that can reduce the risk of dementia."

- Research released in 2023 at the Alzheimer's Association International Conference® found that, in older adults, volunteering improved executive function and episodic memory. In simpler terms, it means the ability of the study participants to recall events and experiences, plan, and problem-solve was better. Those who volunteered several times a week saw the most benefit.
- A study published in 2018 found that volunteering, especially volunteering that directly helps other people, reduced feelings of depression, increased life satisfaction, and improved social ties in adults of any age. The researchers included previous studies that found volunteering also increased happiness, reduced stress, and improved self-esteem.
- Mayo Clinic recently noted that volunteering releases dopamine in our brains, which makes us feel more relaxed and happier.

All these benefits of volunteering—improved memory, better mental health, stronger social connections, less stress—contribute to improved brain health and a reduced risk of dementia.

If you are thinking about volunteering, it is important to find the right fit to reap all the benefits. The most important consideration is what matters to you. Find an organization that matches your values and the things you care about. Also, think about the amount of free time you have and your skills and expertise.

It is not surprising that Alzheimer's is a cause near and dear to many of our hearts. Whether you have seen the devastation brought on by this disease directly in a loved one or indirectly through friends, neighbors, or patients, it is clear that Alzheimer's is robbing us of our families, our futures, and our finances. At the Alzheimer's Association, we work relentlessly to advance world-class research, ensure access to gold-standard care and support, and engage mission-driven volunteers who make it all happen.

Our seven local chapters of the Alzheimer's Association offer a variety of ways to volunteer and help people in your community. Opportunities include helping to plan one of our signature fundraising events, like our local Walk to End Alzheimer's; educating the public about Alzheimer's disease, including its risk factors and warning signs; facilitating a support group; or using your voice to advocate and push forward bipartisan legislation to make Alzheimer's a national priority. Visit [volunteer.alz.org](https://volunteer.alz.org) or call Erica at 518-675-7197 to learn more. ■