

Volunteering for a Better You: Purpose, Connection, & Growth



About WIHA

- **Mission:** To improve the health and well-being of all people as we age by disseminating evidence-based programs and practices and by engaging in collaborative public health strategies in Wisconsin and beyond.
- <https://wihealthyaging.org>
- **Age Well Newsletter**



Our Speakers



- Tony Omernik, Retired from Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)



- Peggy Kurth, Volunteer Coordinator
Aging & Disability Resource Center of
Central Wisconsin

A background image showing three people, two women and one man, smiling and working in a kitchen. They are wearing aprons and appear to be preparing food. The image is slightly faded to allow the text to be prominent.

Volunteering for a Better You:

Purpose, Connection and Growth

Presenters:

Tony Omernik & Peggy Kurth

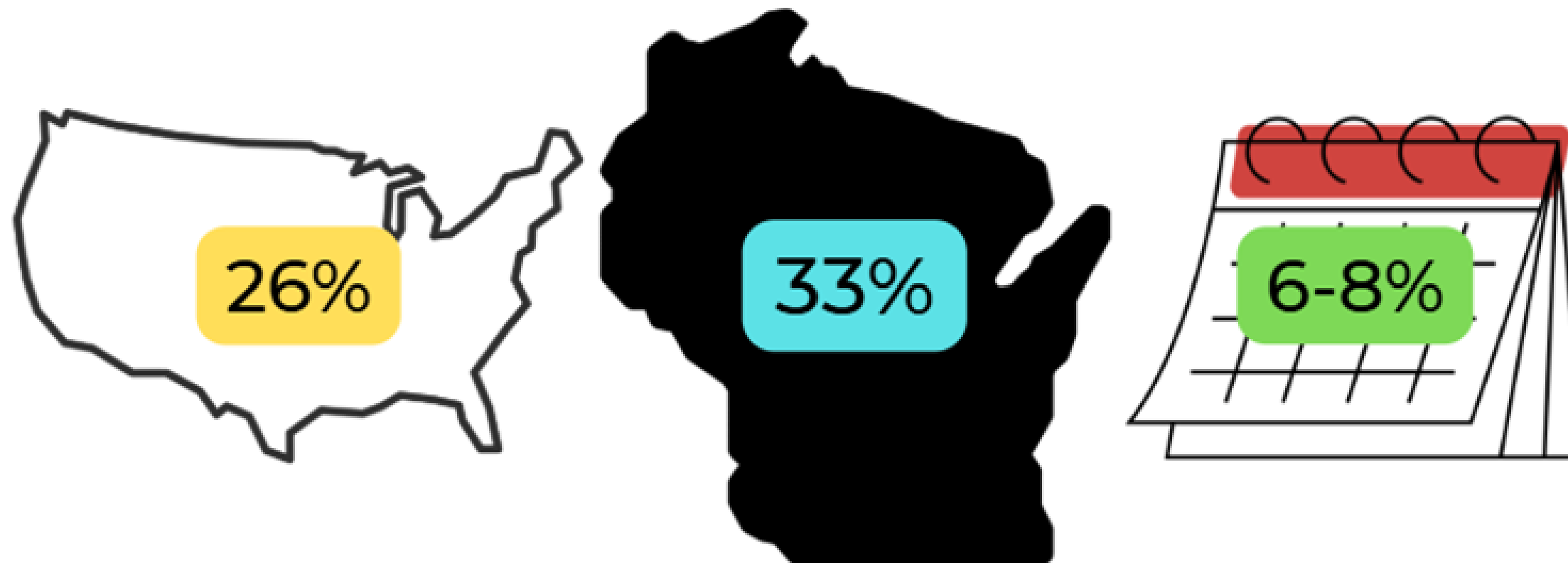
Tony Omernik

- Retired for almost 7 years
- 45-year career in nonprofit human service organizations where volunteers played a key role
- Former Certified Retirement Coach
- Creator of “Secrets of the Happiest Retirees” program
- Former Director of a county-wide Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP)
- Presenter of *Volunteering 101* programs throughout the community
- Meals on Wheels volunteer



Older Adult Volunteering

- About 26% of US adults aged 65 and older volunteer annually
- Wisconsin rate is 33%
- On any given day in the United States, around 6-8% of older adults are actively volunteering.



Community Needs

- Many nonprofits depend on volunteers to deliver essential services
- When volunteer numbers drop, services are reduced or cut entirely
- The value of volunteer service is *priceless* to our communities
 - In Wisconsin (2024), volunteer time is valued at \$34/hour
 - ADRC-CW (2024):
 - 413 volunteers,
 - 26k+ hours,
 - **\$831,00 in labor**

Special Talents/Time Older Adults Provide

- Volunteers of *all ages* are essential to community programs
- Retired volunteers offer extra value
 - Weekday availability
- Older adult volunteers bring additional value:
 - Rich combination of life and job experiences
 - Valuable skills and talents
 - Reliable and dependable



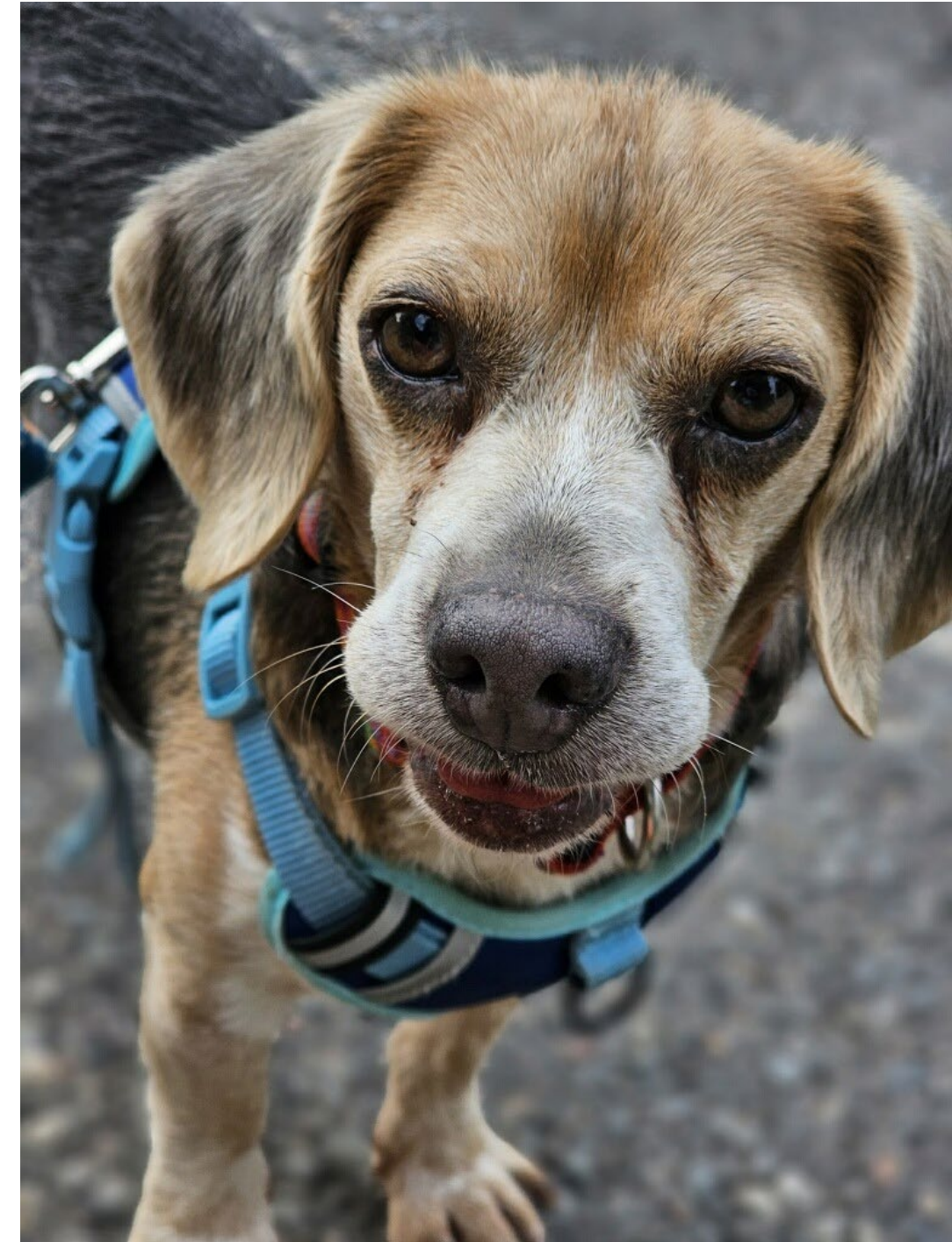
Health Benefits and Overview of Research

- Volunteering improves both physical and mental health
- Older adults most likely gain health benefits from volunteering
- Health benefits - 100 hours/year or 2 hours/week of volunteering
- More hours may bring some added benefits, but not a direct “double” effect



Peggy Kurth

- **Work at the ADRC-CW**
 - Volunteer Coordinator- 3 years
 - Community Health Educator- 16 years
- **Various Nonprofits - 10 years**
 - Health Education
 - Volunteer Coordination
- **Volunteer as Foster for Dog Rescue**



Mental and Emotional Health Benefits

- **Reduced Risk of Depression and Anxiety**
 - Reduces stress and increases positive feelings
 - Combats loneliness and isolation
- **Improved Cognitive Function**
 - Stimulates the brain and promote mental sharpness
- **Increased Self-esteem**
 - Boosts confidence and feeling more valued



Physical Health Benefits

- **Increased Physical Activity**
 - Enhances muscle strength
 - Better physical function
- **Improved Cardiovascular Health**
 - Lowers blood pressure
- **Improved Immune Function**
 - Release of endorphins “feel good” hormones
- **Lower Mortality Rate**

Social Benefits

- **Enhances Social Connections**
 - Meet new people
 - Strengthen existing relationships
- **Reduces Social Isolation**
- **Intergenerational Interactions**
 - Fosters mutual respect and understanding
- **Improved Communication Skills**
 - Provides environment to practice verbal and nonverbal communication



Why Should I Volunteer?



Longevity and Quality of Life

- Engage Passion, Skills and Interests
- Contributes to Your Overall Happiness
 - Volunteering rated #1 “core pursuit” for happiest retirees - passion that drives and fulfills you
- The “Helpers High” Benefit to Health
- Can you “overdose” with too much volunteering?
 - It’s important to make adjustments if feeling stressed, overwhelmed or resentful of volunteering



Retiree Bonus Benefits

- **Retirement:** Loss of the built-in meaning, purpose, and structure that work once provided
- **Many Retirees Ask:** *Who am I now? What will I do with 40-50 extra hours each week?*
- **Volunteering:** Restores meaning and purpose, adds structure to weekly routine
- **Right Volunteer Fit:** Boosts health, happiness, and overall quality of life



MYTHS



FACTS

- **Myth:** If I get involved in volunteering I'll have to give up doing some of the other things I enjoy in my life or I'll feel tied down and lose the freedom to do unplanned activities when opportunities arise
- **Truth: You can have it all!**
 - Select volunteer activities that fit your lifestyle
 - There is a range of ways to volunteer
 - 1 time events, seasonal, limited time periods, etc.
- **Volunteering your time and talents is giving a valuable gift**
 - Think of it like making a monetary donation

Getting Started - Right Fit for You

Right Fit for You, Volunteering 101 – Questions to Ask Yourself

by Tony Omernik, from Secrets of the Happiest Retirees

Meaningful volunteering is an important part of the happy retirement lifestyle for many older adults. Along with providing a sense of purpose and numerous health, social and cognitive benefits, volunteering which is the “**right fit for you**” can also energize your life. The most important thing is determining what type of volunteering experience is the “right fit for you”.

Here are some **Questions to Ask Yourself Before Volunteering:**

- Why do you want to volunteer? In addition to the mission of helping others.
- What causes are important to you? Who do you want to help?
- Is it important for you to interact with the people/animals you serve, or are you happy to support them without interaction?
- Which skills do you want to use?
- Which skills do you want to learn?
- What do you NOT want to do as part of your volunteering?
- What is your time availability? Once a week, month, seasonally, occasionally, etc.
- How much time can you give each time? 1 hour, 2 hours, 4 hours, etc.

Getting Started - Right Fit for You

Cause you want to help	Weekly	Monthly	Occasional	Seasonally	One-time events
Arts					
Animals					
Children					
Elderly					
Environment					
Homelessness					
Hunger					
Healthcare					
Sports					
Disabilities					
Literacy					
Politics					
Faith/Church					
Disaster Relief					

What personal goals do you want to achieve as part of your volunteer experience?

____ To be active

____ To be social

Getting Started

- “Right Fit For You” Questionnaire
- Local volunteer agency
 - United Way or other resources
- Nonprofit Organizations websites list volunteer opportunities
- You can always call - share your interests, find out their needs



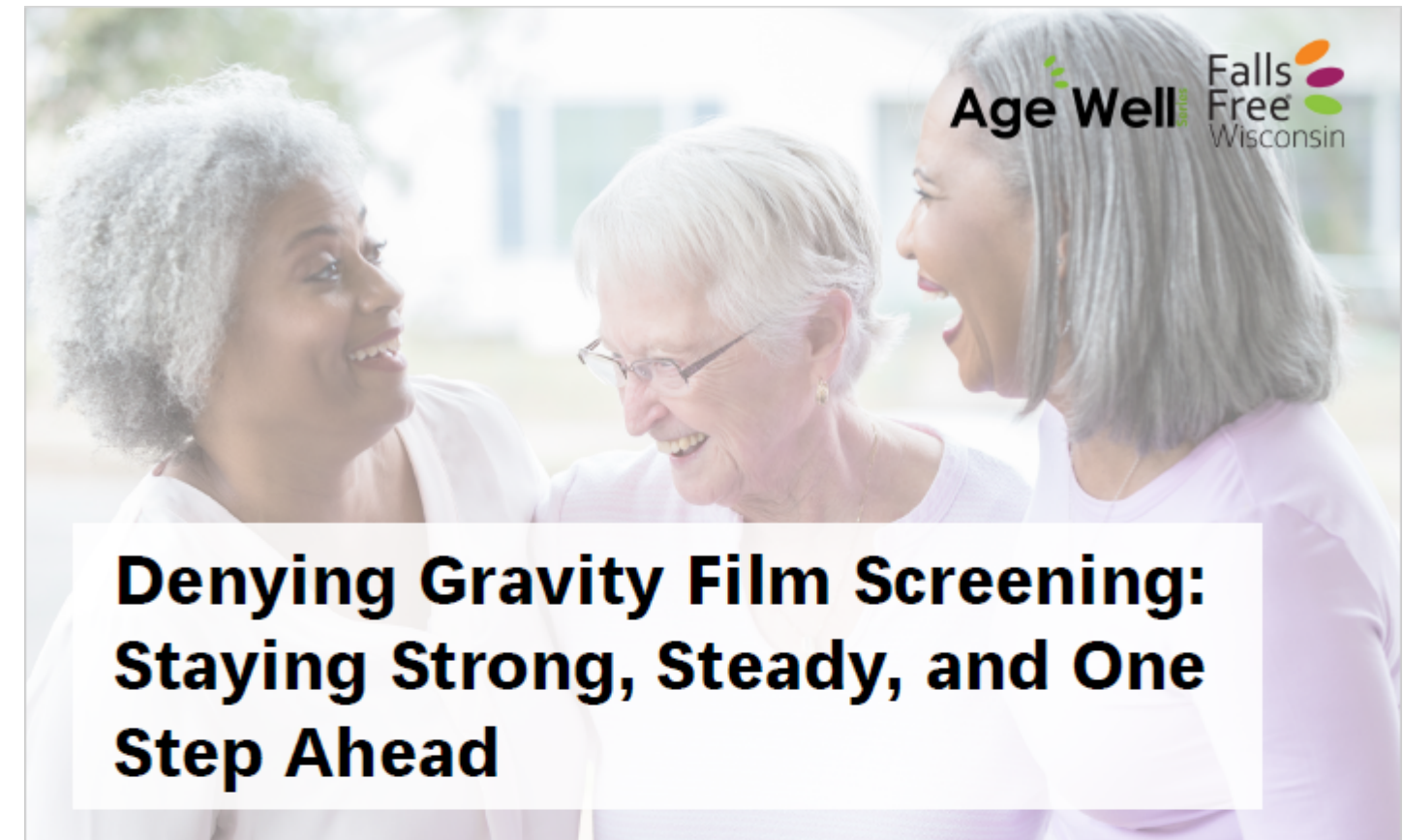
Feedback

- Upon exit of zoom, please share your thoughts
- Those who complete the eval live will be entered to win a t-shirt!



Next for Age Well Series

- September 9, 12:30-2:00pm
- NO RECORDING



Denying Gravity Film Screening: Staying Strong, Steady, and One Step Ahead

Join the Wisconsin Institute for Healthy Aging and the Falls Free® Wisconsin Coalition for a special screening of **Denying Gravity** — a powerful, entertaining play that follows Claire, a vibrant retiree whose life takes an unexpected turn after a series of falls.

**Tuesday,
September 9
12:30 - 2:00 p.m.
Virtual on Zoom**

Stick around after the film for a lively discussion with guest expert panelists who will share tips and insights on staying strong, independent, and confident as we age. Panelists include:

- Deputy Chief Jeff Dostalek, Fitch-Rona EMS District
- Dr. Doubara Stucki, UW-Madison
- Dr. Ben Weston, Medical College of Wisconsin

Register Here

wiha
Wisconsin Institute
for Healthy Aging
<https://wihealthyaging.org>



Next for Age Well Series

- September 24, 10:00-11:30am
- In-person
- NO RECORDING



Join us for a special viewing of **Negando la Gravedad** — a fun and exciting play about a lively retired woman whose life changes in surprising ways after she has a few falls.

Wednesday, September 24
10:00 - 11:30 a.m.
United Community Center
Senior Center
730 W Washington St.
Milwaukee, WI 53204

Stick around after the film for a talk with guest experts who will share tips on how to stay strong, independent, and confident as we age.

Sponsored by:



<https://wihealthyaging.org>



Next for Age Well Series

- October 22, 1:00-2:00pm

Age Well

Oral Health & Healthy Aging

Building Strength
from the Inside Out



Taking care of our mouths is about much more than keeping a bright smile—it's an important part of staying strong, independent, and engaged as we grow older. This presentation will highlight how good oral health supports nutrition, overall health, and social connection, and why it's never too late to build healthy habits. Together, we'll explore simple, effective ways to care for our teeth and gums, helping us continue to live with comfort, confidence, and vitality at every age.



Presenter: Dr. Patti Sigl,
Algoma Family Dentistry

October 22
1-2pm
FREE WEBINAR

[Register Here](#)





Questions?

**Get the answers and resources you
need, contact us today!**

888-486-9545

www.adrc-cw.org



References

[Helping people, changing lives: 3 health benefits of volunteering](#)

[Help others, help yourself? Why volunteering can be good for you](#)

[Volunteering and Subsequent Health and Well-being in Older Adults: An Outcome-wide Longitudinal Approach - PMC](#)

[Press Release: Volunteering Reduces Risk of Hypertension In Older Adults, Carnegie Mellon Research Shows - News.](#)

[Featured Article The relationship between volunteering and cognitive performance in older adults: A systematic review](#)

[Helping Others Shown To Slow Cognitive Decline | College of Natural Sciences](#)

[Volunteering and Mental Health | Psychology Today](#)

[VOLUNTEERING CAN PROVIDE A BOOST TO YOUR MENTAL HEALTH](#)

[2007 The Health Benefits of Volunteering: A Review of Recent Research](#)