Wellness Ambassador of the Month – February 2017

Ashley Odell

How long have you worked at UC Davis?
I have worked at UC Davis for 5 years.

What does wellness mean to you?
Wellness is about both body and mind. I focus on standard wellness practices such as healthy eating (and exercising when I can), but I believe wellness incorporates happiness and a mental or emotional state that helps you thrive in your daily life.

Why did you become a wellness ambassador?
I was at a point where I delved into personal exploration of my wellness. I was trying to manage my own stress through meditation, yoga and eating well. At that time, I met the previous wellness ambassador in my department, and I got really interested in the program.

How long have you been a wellness ambassador?
I have been a Wellness Ambassador for a little less than 2 years.

What has been rewarding or positive about your experience thus far?
Some of my most positive experiences are when I'm brainstorming new ideas for my department. I get to be creative while helping people, and coming up with and unique ideas is exciting. It is truly wonderful seeing my coworkers get excited about them too! About a year ago, I asked everyone to submit their favorite recipes and I used them to create an E-book with pictures. I organized a potluck where my department members brought their favorite dishes and we had a showcase for the book. This was one of my favorite experiences.

Also, I was involved with mindfulness (previously called the Meditation Ambassador Program) because of the wellness ambassador program. Currently I run a group meditation session every week, where sometimes I lead it, and other times we follow guided videos.

What are some of the challenges you face as a wellness ambassador?
People are busy, so working with everyone's schedules can be difficult. When my department received the mini grant, I started a wellness library with yoga mats, an under-the-desk bike, and aromatherapy and essential oil diffusers. My coworkers can now check out items and use them during the work day. This worked well because it is easily accessible, and wellness is incorporated into their daily life, even when managing schedules is tough.

What is one piece of advice you would like to share with new wellness ambassadors?
It is important to have a diverse group of offerings, but try to find activities that mean something to you. For example, I'm not the best about exercise, so I promote meditation. As my enthusiasm for it is naturally present, it really pulls people in. Lastly, wellness is not just about healthy eating and exercise! There's a lot more to it!

Staff and Faculty Health and Wellbeing aims to build an environment that makes the healthier choice the easier choice, while providing staff and faculty with the required support to make UC Davis the healthiest community. How do you feel you have contributed to our mission?
The wellness library and my lunch time brown bag sessions have made everyone start talking about health and wellness more. The library is very easily reached and items are easily available. Sharing information regularly has created a culture of wellness too. As a Wellness Ambassador, I've made sure that my director sees my section of the newsletter about health and wellness. Being open and visible about wellness has started to change the work culture. In addition, organizing jump rope parties, coloring, financial wellness workshops, fruit and vegetable swap days as well as documentary screenings has made the topic of health and well-being much more prevalent in my department.

What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?
In my free time, I am working on building a house from scratch. When I'm not doing that, I love spending time with my friends and exploring new places to eat and hang out in the Sacramento Area. I also like to be outdoors and I enjoy yoga, meditation and reading.

To be part of wellness initiatives with Ashley Odell please email arodell@ucdavis.edu.