Wellness Ambassador of the Month – June 2018
Emily McDaniel

How long have you worked at UC Davis?
I have been working at UC Davis for 6 years, since 2012.

What does wellness mean to you?
Wellness means finding a balance between work, life and your health. The balance is different for everyone, but it takes practice and time to figure out what that is. For me, it is being motivated and doing the work I enjoy, and making sure I can take care of myself through exercise as it makes me happier. Exercise coupled with a good social life and eating healthy are balance for me.

Why did you become a wellness ambassador?
I was talking to a friend in the Staff and Faculty Health and Well-being Program (Stacey Brezing) and I remember sharing that I wished the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department had initiatives that help staff take care of ourselves. Working in a very service driven profession, many of us do not realize that we do not dedicate time for ourselves. The Wellness Ambassador program helps promote a greater sense of community. That motivated me to try to spread wellness because many of us shared common goals!

How long have you been a wellness ambassador?
I joined the program recently and I have been a Wellness Ambassador since March this year.

What has been rewarding or positive about your experience thus far?
There are a lot of positives actually. It’s been nice spending time helping my department pay more attention to health and wellness. I’ve been able to connect with staff and coworkers. We discuss our goals, I take their feedback and suggestions and I have been gaining an insight into their ideas and preferences as well as challenges. We’ve been able to spend more time taking care of ourselves which was much needed. We recently did chair massages with the help of the mini grant which was great!

What are some of the challenges you face as a wellness ambassador?
There are some challenges with staff participation, but I look at that as a work in progress since I’m a new Wellness Ambassador.

What is one piece of advice you would like to share with new wellness ambassadors?
Get creative and don’t be afraid to spend time to help the department grow. We have our main jobs but this can be a part of what we do. It can make us better professionals.

Staff and Faculty Health and Well-being 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?
I get inspired by people who are able to squeeze in workouts during their work day, and that helped me come up with a few ideas (with suggestions from coworkers and staff too) for short activities we could do to promote health and well-being in the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department. The Mini Grant allowed us to set up two main events and mini competitions. Our main events were the Chair massages and the Fun and Fitness class. In the Fun and Fitness class, we had spin and stretching exercises as well as fun activities followed by an hour of team building exercises. In addition, we are planning quite a few health and wellness competitions and activities that focus on different goals! Here are some that are coming up soon:

- hydration goals – where we keep track of our water intake
- movement activities and getting people to move with short fitness breaks
- healthy recipes
- Reading health related articles and taking a quiz to win a prize
- Wellness quizzes based on Wellness Ambassador newsletters followed by a prize draw
- Meditation marathons – the goal is to meditate for 5 minutes every day for 7 days and then build on that
- Creative arts implementation – “Sculpt off” activity led by the Art Therapist in our department
- Silent disco dance-off with our department’s Music Therapist

Our events and activities are going to be made accessible with varying ability levels so everyone can participate. We want to get insight and we want to keep it going where we all work towards a common goal (even if our events happen just once a month). We are grateful to have our managers’ help with spreading information too.

What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?
In my free time I love to spend time with family and friends. I enjoy spin classes and going on walks too! Bike riding is a fun family activity I do with my kids.

To be part of wellness initiatives with Emily McDaniel please email ejmcdaniel@ucdavis.edu