Wellness Grant Feature of the Month: Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy Department

Wellness Ambassador: Emily McDaniel

Wellness Ambassador Emily McDaniel took full advantage of Mini-Grant funding and implemented a variety of fun, health-centered ideas for employees of the Child Life and Creative Arts Therapy department. These ideas included team chair massages, group spin and stretching classes, and a series of “Mini Health Mission” challenges for all department members to participate in.

Team chair massages were implemented first. To pull off this event, Emily coordinated for a masseuse to visit the department to provide brief chair massages for all interested staff. The goal of this initiative was to help staff take time during the work day for self-care. Brief massages can be revitalizing, and with that in mind, Emily hoped the chair massages would set the tone for the next grant-funded health initiatives to come. Emily reported that about 15 department members participated in the massages. Of those that participated, many enjoyed the opportunity to take a few minutes out of their day to relax. Many department members did choose not to participate due to other work obligations and busy schedules, but still expressed appreciation for the coordination of this event. Overall, this event was successful in helping department members learn the importance of self-care, especially in a field where employees can often feel emotionally drained.

The next event Emily coordinated was an hour-long group spin and yoga class. The goal for this event was to have staff get together for a rejuvenating team workout that would introduce a new form of exercise to the group. Eight staff attended the event, and each received a goody bag upon completion of the class, which included a $5.00 Jamba Juice gift card. Staff members who participated in this event expressed appreciation for the opportunity, and many expressed interest in continuing spin workouts as a new form of exercise. At least 5 team members have now been attending spin classes in Sacramento.

Finally, Emily implemented a series of “Mini Health Mission” challenges, including topics such as: “Hydrate Yourself,” “Let’s Get Moving,” “Read a Health and Wellness Article and Take a Quiz,” “Create a Mission Statement,” “Gratitude Journaling,” “Healthy Recipe Cook-Off,” and “Child Life Loose Parts Competition.” At the beginning of every month from June – September, a new challenge and all details on how to participate were sent out to all department members via email. Progress and accomplishments for each challenge were tracked on a shared Excel sheet, and at the end of each month, the challenge winners were announced and prizes were distributed. These challenges averaged roughly 9 participants each month. Of those who participated, many reported developing new appreciation for practices such as gratitude journaling and meditation.

Overall, these events proved to be successful in encouraging staff members to engage in activities that promoted health and wellness. Emily plans to continue her efforts to promote health and wellness within her department by surveying staff to gather ideas for other events and implementing “Child Life Monthly Goals for Health.”