Wellness Grant Feature of the Month – Center for Health and the Environment

Wellness Ambassador: Suzette Smiley-Jewell

The Center for Health and the Environment used their mini grant funds to purchase yoga mats. They offered 30 minutes of gentle yoga on Fridays during their lunch break.

The department had 9 staff and faculty members participate, but many more have shown interest for additional sessions. In the department’s large conference room, participants have plenty of space to stretch and really enjoy the yoga sessions. Relying on yoga web series such as “DoYogaWithMe” and “YogaTX”; the classes follow the techniques of a number of instructors with varying yoga styles. Most participants enjoyed basic stretching that focused on the back, shoulders and hamstrings.

As the sessions are once per week, the program is sustainable, and is complimented with aerobics and walking on other days of the week.

Employees in the Center for Health and the Environment have expressed interest in Tai Chi, so there are plans to add Tai Chi classes to the weekly lunch and work-out/relaxation breaks. Additionally, the yoga mats have been useful as staff members can borrow them for other on-campus yoga classes.

In the future, this department hopes to recruit a co-Wellness Ambassador in order to offer more yoga sessions due to the high demand in their department. There has also been talk of including other nearby departments, such as Facilities, IR4, and/or the Cat Colony to join yoga sessions.

The department noted that the health and satisfaction benefits improved by:

- Increased physical activity and improved physical health of participants
- Being more physically active during the work day
- Making time to take a break during work even during busy days
- Using walking and aerobics on other days of the week to promote regular physical activity that is incorporated into their work schedules
- Better social well-being of staff members

Health-related participation and satisfaction outcomes:

Leslie Olivares: “It has been a great way to take breaks at work and get us moving as opposed to sitting at a desk all day. I feel more alert when I go back to work after a yoga session and my only suggestion for improvement would be to get more mats. It would be nice if more people could join!”

Diane Mitchell: “Always feel better physically after the yoga sessions, also as always wish I could make every session – work sometimes gets in the way. The only improvement is perhaps more sessions if you or someone else is willing to add a day each week – and perhaps a mass email 30 minutes before each session to remind us not to miss it if we are available. Many thanks for starting this up and being persistent!”

Barbara Bellieu: “The days I have gone I’ve felt way better, and it has definitely stretched the pain out of my right shoulder blade. I am going to come as often as I am able and let others know how much it is helping; I hope attendance will increase!”