Wellness Ambassador of the Month

Steven Asercion – Supply Chain Management

How long have you worked at UC Davis?
I’ve been with the university for almost 30 years.

What does wellness mean to you?
Wellness means being active, eating well, and finding time to revitalize.

Why did you become a wellness ambassador?
I wanted to help any way I can to promote wellness within our unit at Cousteau by making them aware of activities that the campus offers. Also, find out what activities interest our unit and help achieve that with the assistance of a wellness grant.

How long have you been a wellness ambassador?
It’s been about 1 ½ years.

What has been rewarding or positive about your experience thus far?
The best part is meeting other Wellness Ambassadors at Cousteau and working together. We promote each other’s activities for staff to have the best options such as Tai Chi on Mondays, group walks on Tuesdays, and Stretching on Wednesdays. Also, several units competed in the steps challenge offered by campus. We motivated each other by competing for which Cousteau unit would finish first on the leaderboard. It’s all for great fun.

What were the Mini-Grant funds used for?
The Mini-Grant funds were used to buy materials for a Revitalizing Space, light sabers for Light Saber Tai Chi, and gift cards as raffle prizes for participating in the two activities. The Revitalizing Space converted a conference room for a few hours each week into a relaxing space where staff have the option to lie down for 15 minutes and get re-energized in a dark room with a nature sound (usually ocean waves) in the background from a sound machine to set the mood.
The Light Saber Tai Chi was designed for participants to have fun while exercising. Instructed by David Moore, Light Saber Tai Chi Master, participants learned martial art techniques with the light sabers and practiced choreographed moves.

At the end of the participation period (May 30—July 23), the Amazon gift cards were raffled using an iPhone app to reveal the four winners.

**How was health and well-being promoted through the initiative?**

The Revitalizing Space was promoted mainly via email with a link to the survey to reserve a space. The first email was sent several days before the actual activity. On the day of the activity a second reminder was sent via email. Some people waited to sign up until the day of the activity to allow others the opportunity to participate.

For the Light Saber Tai Chi, an email was sent out about a week before the activity and a reminder on the day of the activity. Flyers were posted in several locations in the building. In both instances, conversations with colleagues about the activity was mentioned and encouraged them to participate.

**What was the outcome? How do you feel your co-workers benefitted from the event?**

With the Revitalizing Space, some of the participants gave me a thumbs up as they passed by my cubicle and gave me positive comments. They appreciated that the space is set up and ready to go. From the recent survey, the participants described the space as: quiet, peaceful, restful, “timeout” place, re-group, refresh, dark, cool, calm, comforting, decompress, refocus, lie down, mental break, get away, vegetate, improved concentration and focus, less stress and enjoyed.

When asked on a survey how much they enjoyed their time using the Revitalizing Space on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the most enjoyable, 15 of the 20 people responded and gave it a rating of 9.5. People who used it would like to continue with the program. A few even suggested to have it offered more than once a week and maybe have a longer session.

With Light Saber Tai Chi, those who participated really enjoyed the techniques presented on how to work in tandem to replicate a battle. Some of the comments received included: “learning new aspects of Tai Chi”, “fun and useful skill while getting exercise at same time”, “fun to do something very different than what I expect to do in a mindfulness/exercise class, and it was a chance to be playful” and “It’s like being a kid again”.

When asked on a survey how much they enjoyed their time doing the Light Saber Tai Chi on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the most enjoyable, 9 of the 10 people who participated responded and gave it a rating of 10.
What are some of the challenges you face as a wellness ambassador?

Staff are made aware of the activities available to them via email, flyers or through conversations. I receive positive feedback and promise of participation, but then work or other situations come up and they’re unable to join in the chosen activity. Also, it can be challenging trying to find activities that make wellness challenges enjoyable and rewarding to the participants.

What is one piece of advice you would like to share with new wellness ambassadors?

Learn and build relationships with fellow ambassadors so everyone can share ideas and implement activities that benefit all parties.

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 think by making the activities fun, challenging, doable, and social, it helps build a less stressful environment that improves morale in the workplace. It’s a small contribution to the goal of the University of being healthy, but well worth the time and effort.

What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?

I like playing tennis. It’s a great way to release stress.