Wellness Ambassador of the Month

Colleen Anthonisen - Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

How long have you worked at UC Davis?

I started volunteering at UC Davis in October of 2012 and was hired in February of 2013. I’ve been with the Neuromuscular Research Center in the PM&R department for about 6 years now.

What does wellness mean to you?

The first thing I think of when I think about wellness is gathering an awareness of where you are within different aspects of wellness, whether that be physically, emotionally, socially, etc. Once you’re aware of where you’re at in regard to your wellness, the next step is to be conscious of what aspects of wellness you may be lacking in and try to reach a balance that is best for you.

Why did you become a wellness ambassador?

When I first started working here, I had the idea to create a ‘You Rock’ wall in our department, where employees could post sticky notes shouting out a co-worker for any of their achievements or admirable qualities. At the end of every week I would send out an email to share all of the shout-outs that were posted to the wall. I noticed that the department responded well to having this fun activity and I wanted to find more ways to incorporate fun, light-hearted activities within the department. When I heard about the Wellness Ambassador Program, I thought it was the perfect way to bring activities to the department and connect with other wellness ambassadors to create new ideas.

How long have you been a wellness ambassador?

I’ve been a wellness ambassador since 2016.

What has been rewarding or positive about your experience thus far?

Witnessing the connections that are building across the department about things that aren’t necessarily work related and seeing how positively everyone responds to having fun activities in the workplace is very rewarding. We’re currently doing a 30-day water challenge, which is funded by the Wellness Ambassador Mini-Grant, and it’s been a great way for everyone to connect and strive to achieve better health.

What are some of the challenges you face as a wellness ambassador?

The main challenge is finding activities or challenges that interest everyone in the department. The first few ideas I tried out as a new wellness ambassador didn’t reach as many people as I had hoped, but since then I have learned how to collect feedback from department members and incorporate that feedback into ideas for new activities.
What is one piece of advice you would like to share with new wellness ambassadors?

Get to know your department and what activities they might like to be a part of. That’s the best way to optimize your participation.

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 enjoy creating challenges that bring healthy competition to the department. In the past we’ve done water challenges, stair-stepping challenges, and squat challenges. Each one is about a month long in hope that by participating, people will develop healthy habits that will ultimately make healthy choices easy because they have become habitual.

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

I like to get involved in different hobbies and devote my time to different organizations that help me broaden my personal growth or that bring different forms of satisfaction into my life. I enjoy volunteering with charitable organizations that raise money for children, and I also enjoy the work I do at a local winery to help run weddings.