Wellness Grant Feature of the Month: HR Shared Services Organization
Wellness Ambassadors: Alex Vela & Erin Jones

The HR Shared Services Organization used their mini-grant funds to purchase materials for lunchtime stretch breaks and succulent planting activities. Alex and Erin, the Wellness Ambassadors, wanted both events to address the results of their needs assessment survey, in which many of their coworkers said they wanted to reduce mental and physical stress.

**Lunchtime Stretch Breaks**
The stretch breaks began in early 2019, and continue to be held every Wednesday for 20 minutes. Health and well-being was promoted through the stretch breaks by providing a set time and location to get employees away from their desk to stretch their body without leaving work and without any cost to them. Foam mats are laid out in an available conference room, the lights are turned off, and the HR Shared Services Organization rewards themselves with some much-needed stretching! The new foam blocks assist participants in the stretching and the new rollers help iron out the extra kinks.

In hindsight, the summer stretching series would have begun with a beginner difficulty and gradually worked up. Alex believes some may have chosen not to return based on varying degree of difficulty levels.

Overall, seventeen people have participated in at least one the stretch breaks, and continue to have five to seven participants (on average). After the stretch breaks, the participants shared that they felt better, felt more focused, and felt more relaxed after attending a stretch session. Session participants also reported the following:

1. Love being able to do this at work because they had no time at home
2. Able to focus their energy on their body, and felt better overall after session
3. Feel more energized
4. Feel more relaxed

Because the lights are off and no one besides the instructor is speaking, it becomes a very peaceful and relaxing environment. Everyone was encouraged to bring a friend with them, and there were several people that came because of this reason. It was also great to see people connect with each other and share their workout tips!
Succulent Plant Classes
The succulent planting classes were very popular, and the first class filled up very quickly (it had a waitlist!). The plants were purchased from campus and other potting materials were purchased from local stores. The Wellness Ambassadors hosted multiple lunchtime sessions and it was a great way for participants to share planting tips and good company. Approximately 25 people participated in the succulent planting series. The classes aimed to promote wellness by creating a peaceful environment which allowed for stress relief and acted as a creative outlet for participants.

Alex felt that the atmosphere allowed attendees to relax and have a moment of fun in the workspace, as gardening can be therapeutic, which was a definite tone in the room during the class. Attendees had a lot of questions about succulent care, so by answering those questions and taking personal suggestions from the audience, it offered a larger overall learning space for everyone involved.

Wellness Ambassadors received numerous compliments after the succulent planting class from attendees and management. So many of the participants were incredibly thankful for the opportunity to do something ‘a little different’ at work and to socialize with their colleagues in a fun environment. Participants mentioned that the class itself and the instruction was very helpful and offered a lot of plant care knowledge to take with them. It was great to see people display their plants at their desks.

Since the succulent class required re- purchasing of goods for future classes, Wellness Ambassadors are have retained the leftover supplies in the hopes of hosting the classes again in the future. For the time being, many of the participants have kept their plants at their work space, so it is very nice being able to walk through the halls and see bits of greenery spread across many workspaces and pods.