



August is Health Hero Month

Michelle Graham, Program Assistant, DOT Road Services

Michelle Graham and her daughter have each been diagnosed with different types of diabetes, providing a powerful motivating force for change. The 14-year employee successfully wove her family and her workplace into an integrated strategy for good health.

"I researched, worked with the American Diabetes Association and used Healthy IncentivesSM", says Graham, who regularly combs her Health Matters newsletter for tips (especially the Recipe Box). She joined Weight Watchers at Work[®] -- losing 10 pounds-- and enrolled her family in a local gym using the Gym Discount Program. Graham also makes sure to choose

generic prescriptions whenever possible for her insulin and equipment.

"In these economic times, I have to watch every bit of money coming in and going out."

Graham acknowledges support from her co-workers and supervisor Trevor Cray for helping to keep her diabetes in check "They allow me to walk at lunch ...and also eat at my desk when I need to. They're in my corner all the way."



Sgt. Napoleon Rafanan, DAJD, Maleng Regional Justice Center



The competitive edge of the Live Well Challenge helps Sgt. Napoleon Rafanan keep up the momentum on a rigorous a year-round weight lifting and workout program. He has engaged his co-workers to keep their bodies fit and morale up during the graveyard shift at the jail in Kent.

"I live in a world where everybody's tough and nobody wants to talk about the stress," he says.

In response, Rafanan organizes teams each year (see 2008's infamous "The Muscle Syndicate"), blogs regularly and urges co-workers to eat smart, move more and reach outside their comfort zones toward a healthier lifestyle.

"People are surprised at how much they can dig down. There is always doubt. Just push it aside and keep trying. Eventually, you'll find something that you love." Rafanan's next personal challenge: joining his wife in a marathon.

King County Councilmember Larry Gossett

Larry Gossett has been serving his constituents for more than 15 years. His work schedule often includes meetings at the courthouse and in the community. A supporter of the Healthy IncentivesSM Program since its inception, Gossett says the program, along with his doctor, his family and his neighbors are helping him stick to a diet and activity regimen that helps reduce his risk of diabetes.

"About a year ago my doctor told me I was borderline diabetic... and I took that very seriously. I started a new routine of walking and jogging at Garfield (High School). I met new neighbors and garnered new friends. It's been good."

Gossett worked with his wife on a new diet that has helped everyone in the family. Pop has been replaced with water and juice. There are a lot more vegetables and a lot less meat at the dinner table.

His new approach is also adding to a new level of awareness about health among council staff, who now challenge each other to adopt and maintain healthy habits, especially during the busy times. "I get my walks in no matter what. And if I can do it, I know others can as well."



Starla Wright, Registered Nurse, Public Health Federal Way

Three years ago Starla Wright decided to make the move toward a healthier life: "I joined a weight loss program. I started eating right, exercising regularly and getting more diligent about living out my spiritual faith." The companionship of her work team combined with a co-worker challenging her to compete in a sprint triathlon helped Wright move to the next level. That, and the prospect of more points for her Live Well Challenge team. The results: Wright's ability to lose 100 pounds over the past three years has brought new energy and enthusiasm to her life; to her office where

co-workers see the changes and start working on their own; and to her clients.

"Now, when I talk to my clients, I can say, 'I totally get it.' I get the depression thing; I get being overweight and fearing you can never ever change things."

Wright also gets to share her story, providing living proof that anything – and anyone -- can change.



Dennis Pingeon, VM Supervisor, Transit South Base



At 60 years old, Denny Pingeon rode in the Seattle-to-Portland bike ride, and is planning to climb Mount Rainier and is working with his wife on their first backyard garden. Pingeon has always been active, but he hasn't always been so healthy.

"Twenty years ago I had doctor who told me that as long as I exercise, I could eat anything. Well, I paid attention to the eating part but not so

much about the exercise."

Pingeon used his health coach and friends at work to put together a supporting cast that helped him lose 30 pounds and have a healthier life. Denny's biking partners includes main "driver" George Stites from Transit's Training Center, Mike "Bucky" Buchanan and Kim Martin. "They're all committed to long-term health. When you have folks like that around, you really don't have an option. It's either participate or go away." Future plans include a bicycle tour of the U.S.

Donald Gauthier, Engineer, DDES Renton

After his doctor told him he was at risk for diabetes, Don Gauthier and his wife Jan decided to use Healthy IncentivesSM as a springboard to better health.

"We both quit drinking soft drinks, started eating more salads, began walking everyday," says the 21-year county veteran. At work, Don joined his colleagues on the Live Well Challenge team "Flex in the City," who walk regularly, and even took a turn in co-worker Laura McCollum-Wallace's on-site bellydancing classes.

But Don's regimen took on even greater importance

last year when he was diagnosed with large B-cell lymphoma – a cancer that attacks the immune system. That's when DDES co-workers rallied to support his battle by helping him keep to his new health plan. "Janice King and Cathy Ortiz were very instrumental in keeping me on task to walk. They were compassionate and supportive." This year Don's wife has decided to join the Live Well Challenge, signing up with him on a "spartner" team.



Employee resources

Eat Smart — Get tips and healthy recipes submitted by your co-workers. Go to www.kingcounty.gov/HealthMatters and click on "Eat Smart" or call 206-205-5017. Be sure to check out the "Recipe Box".

Move More – Now is the time to enjoy this weather! Go to www.kingcounty.gov/HealthMatters and click on "Move More" then "Local events" to see what's happening locally in August. If you are looking to join a gym, be sure to check out these discounts for county

employees first. Click on "Gym Discount Program" or call (206) 263-6085.

Quit Tobacco - Smoking is expensive. Quitting is free. King County offers comprehensive benefits to help you make the move. Click on "Quit Tobacco" from the *Health Matters* site or call 206-263-6085.

For more information on all these resources and others, go to www.kingcounty.gov/HealthMatters or call 206-205-5017.