

Wellness Works Coordinators' Bulletin

Providing your wellness committee
with updates and relevant health
information!

May 2017

Highlights from this Month's Bulletin:



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Recognition**
Biggest Leap, Highest
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Reduce your risk for
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New Class:
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Wellness Conference Highlights

On Tuesday, April 25, 2017 the Maine Municipal Employees Health Trust's Wellness Department hosted the 29th annual wellness conference. There were 74 attendees, representing 40 of our member groups. Keynote speaker, Travis Mills, inspired the audience to "Never give up. Never quit." no matter the obstacles or circumstances.



*Travis Mills, pictured with
conference attendees,
who are also veterans.*

Adam Lacher from the Alzheimer's Association, Maine Chapter, spoke about Alzheimer's disease and the impact it has on caregivers and the workplace. Attached to this bulletin you will find an order form from the Alzheimer's Association to order free brochures.

In the afternoon we had a networking session. Attached to this bulletin you will find notes from each breakout group for ideas that you can implement at your worksite.

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10 Ways to Love Your Brain

By: Abby DiPasquale

For the last four years, my family has been learning how devastating Alzheimer’s disease can be to the person affected by the disease and the family that loves them. My husband and I were recently flipping channels late at night, and we came across a documentary on CNN of singer Glen Campbell, who suffers from the disease as well. It was a frighteningly real portrayal of things that are unfolding in our own lives, as well as millions of others across the country. As I sat there with tears streaming down my face, I thought there has to be something we can do. We know this is the disease that will slowly steal my father-in-law from us, as it already has, and I worry about what it means for my husband and our children in the future.

Currently, 5.3 million Americans are affected by Alzheimer’s and an estimated 700,000 will die with it this year. Two-thirds of those affected are women and unlike other causes of death, the rates are increasing. Between 2000 and 2013, deaths attributed to Alzheimer’s disease increased 71 percent, while those attributed to the number one cause of death—heart disease—decreased 14 percent. The number of Americans with Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias will grow each year as the size of the population age 65 and older continues to increase. By 2025, the number of people age 65 and older with Alzheimer’s disease is estimated to reach 7.1 million — a 40 percent increase from the 5.1 million age 65 and older affected in 2015. By 2050, the number of people age 65 and older with Alzheimer’s disease may nearly triple, from 5.1 million to a projected 13.8 million, barring the development of medical breakthroughs to prevent or cure the disease.

Everyone with a brain is at risk for Alzheimer’s. There is no cure for Alzheimer’s, but there are things we can do now to potentially reduce our risk of developing the disease in the future. Here are “**10 Ways to Love Your Brain**” from the Alzheimer’s Association (www.alz.org)

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This year we did something new! We recognized two groups and one individual for implementing comprehensive wellness programs at their worksites.

Knox County

Knox County received the *Biggest Leap* award for offering a wellness program that made the most leaps and bounds. The Knox County wellness committee pushed themselves this past year to consider the health needs of employees and offered programs that have a positive and lasting impact on their health.



City of South Portland

The City of South Portland received the *Highest Peak* award for taking their wellness program to the next level. The City of South Portland’s wellness committee challenged themselves to involve more employees in the wellness program. They did so by offering incentives and a wide variety of programs to meet the health interests of individual employees.



Denise Mungen

Denise Mungen, EcoMaine, was honored with the *Wellness Champion* award for inspiring others to be their healthiest self. She was successful by using her passion, empathy and ability to recognize and overcome barriers to meeting the health needs of employees who work shift work.



(10 Ways to Love Your Brain continued from page 2)

1. **Break a sweat.** Engage in regular cardiovascular exercise that elevates your heart rate and increases blood flow to the brain and body. Several studies have found an association between physical activity and reduced risk of cognitive decline.



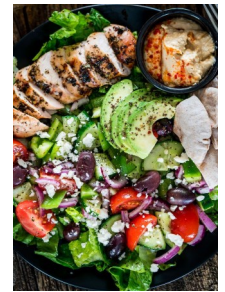
2. **Hit the books.** Formal education in any stage of life will help reduce your risk of cognitive decline and dementia. For example, take a class at a local college, community center or online.



3. **Butt out.** Evidence shows that smoking increases risk of cognitive decline. Quitting smoking can reduce that risk to levels comparable to those who have not smoked.

4. **Follow your heart.** Evidence shows that risk factors for cardiovascular disease and stroke – obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes – negatively impact your cognitive health. Take care of your heart, and your brain just might follow.

5. **Heads up!** Brain injury can raise your risk of cognitive decline and dementia. Wear a seat belt, use a helmet when playing contact sports or riding a bike, and take steps to prevent falls.



6. **Fuel up right.** Eat a healthy and balanced diet that is high in vegetables and fruit to help reduce the risk of cognitive decline. Although research on diet and cognitive function is limited, certain diets, including Mediterranean and Mediterranean-DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension), may contribute to risk reduction.

7. **Catch some Zzz's.** Not getting enough sleep due to conditions like insomnia or sleep apnea may result in problems with memory and thinking.

8. **Take care of your mental health.** Some studies link a history of depression with increased risk of cognitive decline, so seek medical treatment if you have symptoms of depression, anxiety or other mental health concerns. Also, try to manage stress.

9. **Buddy up.** Staying socially engaged may support brain health. Pursue social activities that are meaningful to you. Find ways to be part of your local community – if you love animals, consider volunteering at a local shelter. If you enjoy singing, join a local choir or help at an afterschool program. Or, just share activities with friends and family.



10. **Stump yourself.** Challenge and activate your mind. Build a piece of furniture. Complete a jigsaw puzzle. Do something artistic. Play games, such as bridge, that make you think strategically. Challenging your mind may have short and long-term benefits for your brain.

New Class: Alzheimer's 101

More than 5 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's takes a devastating toll – not just on those with the disease but on entire families. This class will take a look at the 10 warning signs and symptoms and how to be a caregiver to someone with Alzheimer's. **To schedule this class at your worksite contact Anne Charles at 1-800-452-8786 or via email at acharles@memun.org.**



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