

Health in Action

Managing Risks and Promoting Wellness

pdrma.org | January 2015

2014 Grant Award Winners Offer Wellness Opportunities to Employees



Employees at Bartlett Park District, Wood Dale Park District and Illinois Park and Recreation Association (IPRA) can all look forward to new wellness programs to participate in – because these three agencies are the 2014 winners of PDRMA Health Program’s Employee Wellness Grants. Three grants, up to a maximum of \$1,000, are awarded each year by the Wellness Committee to help members fund innovative, health-enhancing programs for their employees.

The Bartlett Park District won a \$1,000 award for its year-long **Eat Well, Live Well, Play Well** program launched by its wellness committee in 2014. The program lets full-time employees earn points for participating in monthly physical, social, and educational health activities. Participants can qualify for gifts – such as a Subway gift card, t-shirt, wearing jeans to work, a Fitbit or a Wellness day off – in eight incentive levels based on the number of points earned. “The program has been so successful that we decided to apply for grant funding to be able to sponsor it again in 2015,” says Lynsey Heathcote, Recreation Manager and chair of the agency’s Wellness Committee. Bartlett’s goal is to have at least 50 percent of its full-time employees participate, reach or exceed the level-five incentive, and either learn something new or try a new activity as a result of the program.

Part of IPRA’s \$850 grant will also be used to fund a program from last year – a staff retreat to Camp Duncan to do physical activity and teambuilding exercises together, including low ropes, high ropes and a climbing wall that Executive Director Debbie Trueblood says everyone liked so much, they asked to do it again this year. The rest of the grant will fund IPRA’s new **An Opportunity to Practice What We Preach** program. “Since we don’t have any fitness facilities of our own, we created a way for our employees to participate in their own local park and rec agencies where they live,” Trueblood says.

IPRA employees who join their hometown park district fitness center and use the facility or attend classes at least five times during the year receive a \$75 reimbursement to offset their costs. The agency hopes to have at least five of its seven staff members engage in physical activity at the teambuilding retreat

continued on page 3

Inside...

PDRMA
Health

PDRMA PROFILES

WALKTOBER RACKS UP THE MILES –
AND PARTICIPANTS



PATH Biometric Screenings Available January to April

Having everything in one place makes it easier to find what you need. **PATH** – Positive Activities Toward Health – not only offers you a personalized journey to help you incorporate wellness into your daily life, but offers onsite biometric screenings at Health member agencies from Jan. 20 to April 10 so you can find a day, time and location that works best for you.

Completing your Personal Health Assessment (PHA) is the first step in creating your customized **PATH**. Using the information in the PHA, your profile goals, and your biometric screening results, **PATH** personalizes your wellness journey to help meet your goals.

“We’re excited that **PATH** offers participants so many choices in one easy-to-access location,” says Leslie Reid, PDRMA Wellness Consultant.

“From choosing a screening date to exploring new opportunities like trackers, challenges and health coaching, **PATH** makes it easier than ever



continued on page 3



PDRMA Profiles

How do you stay motivated to achieve your health and wellness goals? We'd like your ideas and tips about eating right and exercising. Please email HealthinAction@pdrma.org with your story or suggest another PDRMA Health Program participant who has inspired you for us to feature in a profile. Help us to stay focused on health and wellness!

Ask the folks at SEASPAR (South East Association for Special Parks And Recreation) about "company culture," and they'll tell you it's all about a friendly, supportive dose of health and wellness. "We have encouraged a healthy culture – for many, many years," says Susan Friend, Executive Director, and a 35-year SEASPAR veteran.

For example, everyone at SEASPAR participates in the PDRMA Health Program annual biometric screening – and even before SEASPAR was part of PDRMA Health. "We've had our own biometric screenings for a long time, and we didn't even have to promote participation; everyone just did it." Now as a PDRMA Health member, SEASPAR employees have taken health and wellness to a new level, encouraging each other to participate in PDRMA Health's programs – and some other ones of their own.

Two years ago, SEASPAR started its board-approved Wellness Committee that plans and delivers a variety of activities to promote healthy lifestyles. "We have a newsletter, a walking club, and monthly healthy treat days where we serve fruit or fruit smoothies," says

Shannon Tovey, Support Staff Coordinator and Wellness Committee member. The group meets monthly to



"The Incredibles" — SEASPAR employees logging steps that have virtually taken them to so many places.

discuss new program ideas and current needs before bringing in speakers to address them – including doctors and massage therapists or counselors from the Employee Assistance Program. The committee even treated employees to chair massages during a few particularly stressful times. Overall, it promotes and encourages participation in wellness programs, like those sponsored by PDRMA Health.

"Together we've virtually walked across the country, Hawaii and a lot of other places through PDRMA Health's programs," Friend says, referencing the spring and fall Healthy Habits for Life programs. These

programs have provided a new focus – and new resources for SEASPAR employees. Most of them are

still wearing – and loving – their Fitbits that they received from PDRMA during the 2014 fall Walktober Healthy Habits for Life program.

"It's really cool and becomes an obsession, because you can see how many steps you've walked in a day, how many calories you've burned and how much water you've had," says Recreation Specialist Kim Huggins.

Another Fitbit aficionado is Friend, who says the program came along at the right time for her. "I had the right mindset

to get more active and eat better when Walktober began. You pay attention to it, it motivates you and when you get close to your goal – you feel like you have to get up off the chair and do a little bit more. It can take over and control your life if you let it," she says with a laugh. "And my life needed some control."

Control is something Friend admires in Huggins. "Watching Kim and knowing she practices a healthy lifestyle encourages the rest of us," Friend comments. One of Huggins' habits is running, an activity she's enjoyed since high school when she ran cross-country.

"I ran track for a semester in college," Huggins says, "and since then I've been part of a group of friends that I still run with today. Having them really keeps me motivated to run and keeps others going, too. It's a lot of fun, it releases stress, it keeps weight off, and it makes you feel good."



(L to R) Tovey, Friend and Franczyk enjoy healthy snack options at SEASPAR.

continued on next page

Huggins sees the SEASPAR team as a great support system, too. “My supervisor watches my hours to make sure I have time away from work,” she explains. “It’s really important to have a good work/life balance, and that’s a strong point about SEASPAR; they really watch out for you.”

That work/life balance is something SEASPAR management strongly believes in, Friend confirms. “Sometimes you just can’t leave on time, but when you can, you should,” she says. “We know how important it is to have a healthy balance, and we often walk around at the end of the day and encourage people to leave.”

Watching out for people is what led to SEASPAR winning the “2013 Exceptional Workplace Award,” presented by the Illinois Park and Recreation Association to recognize a health and wellness focus in the workplace. SEASPAR also won an award and gift card from PDRMA Health in recognition of having the highest percentage of employees participate in the Medical Self-care Challenge. What did they do with the gift card? They used it to treat themselves to a healthy lunch.

They also got a special healthy breakfast on the day of PDRMA Health’s biometric screening and are looking forward to one again this year when they have the **PATH** biometric screening. “Susan prepares custom omelets for everyone,” says Ann Franczyk, Administrative Assistant. “She chops up all kinds of vegetables and then makes individual omelets for everyone who participates. It’s a fun thing, and it encourages all of us to participate – and we all do.”

The team likes to pass on their commitment to health and wellness to the special-needs clients they serve, too, by providing healthy choices in their cooking classes and healthy snacks at social programs.

“A lot of what we do is just a lot of little things,” says Friend. “It’s not like we put a banner across the door or shout about what we do. But when there’s an opportunity to promote health and wellness – whether it’s our monthly fruit bowl or fruit smoothies, our omelet bar (which is made with egg substitute, by the way), or participating in PDRMA Health’s programs – we jump at the chance. And then we talk about it, because it’s become a bigger part of just doing what we do.”

PATH Biometric Screenings cont.

to make wellness part of every day.”

Benefits-eligible employees can also earn up to a \$400 annual incentive when they participate in **PATH**. Points earned throughout the year translate into dollars, and there are many more ways for participants to earn points than ever before.

“In addition to earning points for completing the PHA and/or a biometric screening, you also earn points for participating in other **PATH** activities such as using trackers, finishing a quarterly challenge, or working with a health coach,” explains Reid.

To take advantage of all that **PATH** has to offer, log in to the PDRMA website at www.pdrma.org. Go to the **Risk Management & Wellness** menu, **Member-Only Benefits** and click the **My PATH** link. If you’re visiting the site for the first time, be sure to complete the **PATH** Site Tour Workshop (and earn incentive points) by clicking the Site Video Workshop link in the image banner at the top of the page.

“We’re excited about all that **PATH** has to offer as well as the greater flexibility provided by having screening events from January to April,” Reid says. “With so many ways to reach your wellness goals, you have more opportunities to earn points toward your \$400 annual incentive as well. Personalize your **PATH** journey by completing your PHA as soon as possible and registering for your biometric screening.”

2014 Grant Award Winners cont.

and the same number to use park district fitness facilities and/or attend classes by the end of 2015.

Wood Dale Park District does have its own recreation facilities, so its Wellness Committee wanted a plan that would cover more than that and designed its **Three is a Healthy Number: A Triple Threat Approach to Health** program that won a \$1,000 wellness grant.

“We took a look at things we personally need to work on,” says Kristina Sromek, Fitness Coordinator. “Nutrition is always a big concern after the Christmas holidays, and just going through the holidays can be very stressful. So we decided to try little things that people wouldn’t find drastic or life changing.”

With a focus on mental, physical and nutritional well-being, the 14-week program alternates themes each week, awarding points to those who complete weekly tasks – such as three-minute exercise breaks at their desks, breathing exercises to help beat stress, and organized healthy lunches where employees bring in and share healthy options instead of going out to eat. Employees compete for prizes based on points earned in three categories that the agency hopes will increase awareness of mental, physical and nutritional well-being while encouraging employees to incorporate healthy practices into their daily lives.

2015 Board of Directors

Ken Eppelheimer, Chair, Wilmette Park District • Craig Culp, Vice Chair, Northern Suburban Special Recreation Association • Chuck Balling, Glenview Park District • Debbie Kopas, Homewood-Flossmoor Park District • Jim Rogers, Elmhurst Park District • Craig Talsma, Hoffman Estates Park District • Donna Wilson, Arlington Heights Park District

PDRMA Mission

PDRMA is a self-governed, member-owned, risk management agency of public entities that administers funds contributed by members to provide targeted programs and services to help members reduce exposure related to property, liability, workers' compensation, and health coverages.

Health in Action – A bimonthly publication of the Park District Risk Management Agency • 630-769-0332 • pdrma.org

Walktober Racks up the Miles – and Participants



Walktober, PDRMA Health's fall Healthy Habits for Life (HHL) program, was a record breaker with the greatest number of participants of any HHL program – 1,311.

"We had 56 agencies and 98 teams, with most participants being part of a team," explains Lauren Mucker, PDRMA Wellness Consultant. "It was a big – but very exciting – surprise to see our participation levels increase so dramatically."

Why the increased participation? Is it due to a growing awareness of the benefits of incorporating wellness into everyday life? Does the "fierce" competition among teams and agencies account for it? Or is it simply because FitBit Zips™ are really cool? Probably a combination of all three, along with a variety of personal reasons, suggests Mucker.

Regardless of why so many people participated, their collective results were impressive.

"Together, participants walked more than 522 *million* steps – roughly 209 *thousand* miles," she adds, "and averaged more than 9 *million steps* per day throughout Walktober."

Although Walktober is over, your FitBit Zip can still be part of your **PATH** wellness journey and used when you participate in future challenges. Sync it through your **My PATH** link on the PDRMA website to upload your activity automatically to **PATH** – and earn annual incentive points.

Start the New Year off on the right foot – and just keep on walking! ■

