

DHSS 2011 Wellness Superstar

On most days, you will find many employees using their breaks and lunches to walk around the parking lots of the DHSS campus. Whether the reason is to enjoy a nice, sunny day, get away from the computer for a bit, or to get some much-needed physical activity, these workers are all contributing to their health and well-being. For some DHSS employees, it has become a part of their daily routine, just as going to work itself.

Everyday's Small Efforts Make a Big Difference

Employees such as, Perry Foster, from the DHSS Warehouse, stated that he started to walk to lose weight and get in shape. He states that a person "needs to start early because, to a great extent, what you do now to take care of yourself will pay dividends down the road and make your life easier and more enjoyable." Perry has lost 53 lbs through walking and other activities such as riding his bike to work. Walking is something, as he adds, that "doesn't require any special equipment other than comfortable shoes." He also notes that "walking on breaks gets you out of the workplace for a while to recharge your batteries."

Jayna Slade, from the Bureau of Special Health Care Needs, has also used walking to help her lose over 140 lbs! She started small, but was soon up to a mile a day when she decided to sign up for a half-marathon (13.1 miles) this past October. To train for this great endeavor, she split her walking time throughout the day. She did four miles in the morning before work, three to four miles at lunch, and three miles in the evening, as well as walking on morning and afternoon breaks. She went on to complete the half-marathon on October 11th in Wichita, Kansas. Since March of 2010, she has completed 24-5k's, four 10k's and one half-marathon, and since February of last year, she has walked over 3,500 miles and plans on doing a full marathon in the summer of 2012!

Linda Marr, also from the Bureau of Special Health Care Needs, has made great strides in her walking routine as well. She started walking during the summer of 2008 to get in better

shape. Linda states that she is healthier now and wants to maintain the weight she has lost.

Strategies for Success

DHSS walkers have a lot of great tips to share for co-workers considering making walking a habit. Linda advises others that would like to make walking part of their everyday routine to start slow and to also make healthier food choices. Healthy food choices and daily activity go hand-in-hand for a healthy lifestyle. Perry adds "Walking definitely makes you more aware of your diet, and once you start to see progress, it just seems to build." He also states that is important to add on to your goals because, "now you have accomplished your previous goals and you need to be challenged. A person just needs to start off at a comfortable pace for them and try to make it a regular habit, and before too long, they will look forward to their walks."

Jayna adds, "Just start one step at a time. Time isn't going to find you; you are going to have to find the time. I work full time, go to school full time, have three kids and a soon-to-be husband. If I can find the time, anyone can." She also credits the activity tracking system that Lifestyle Ladder offers on its website for helping track her success.

Final Thought

Many reading this might be saying, "I could never do that," or "That seems too difficult for me," but you would be surprised at what you can accomplish when you are determined. Jayna added "What I had to figure out for myself is that I have had the power all along...just never gave myself enough credit that I could do it. Now I know I can...no matter what anyone else thinks, I know I can."

We thank Perry, Jayna and Linda for sharing their experiences on choosing to take an active role in their health and well-being and encouraging others to do the same.

Know a Wellness Superstar?

Send an email to

worksitewellness@health.mo.gov.