

DHSS Wellness Superstar

Tim Jackson, Regional Manager for the Division of Senior and Disability Services, Region 2 is our Wellness Superstar for this issue. This is his story.

For the last few years, I have been about 25 pounds heavier than I wanted to be. I'd made half-hearted failed attempts at dieting which usually included starving myself one day just so that I could gorge myself the next. About four months ago, I decided to start keeping track of the amount of calories I consumed each day so I downloaded an app for my phone that helped me log what I was eating. It gave me a target amount of calories which immediately caused me to consume less than I had been eating. I was probably consuming anywhere between 3000 and 5000 calories a day and my new target (given to me by this non-compassionate app) was around 1800 calories per day. So, I did my best to hit my target and found that I could get pretty close if I paid attention to what I was eating and remained disciplined enough to eat only when I'm hungry. My co-worker (and assistant- Sara) helped by sharing ideas for low-calorie food items and we soon became each other's peer pressure/support system.

Around the same time, I decided to really embrace Walking Wednesdays. Yes, I had walked on Wednesdays in the past so that I could wear jeans and tennis shoes for the day but I didn't really engage it as an opportunity to push myself. I got another app for my phone that kept track of the distance that I was walking. I figured out that, if I kept myself at a good pace, I could walk an entire mile within a 15-minute break. I also figured out that it's awfully rewarding to realize that I can walk a mile in 15 minutes while merely taking a break from doing my job. So, Walking Wednesdays spilled into every other work day.

Since I'd never been successful at losing weight in the past, I stayed away from the scale. I didn't want lack of weight loss to deter me from my new healthier lifestyle. I wanted to keep up what I was doing because I felt better. But I finally broke down and stepped on the scale about a month after starting. I discovered I had lost about 15 pounds. I was ecstatic and this was the good news I needed to continue eating right and exercising. It's now been 4 months and I have officially lost 30 pounds. I feel so much better. I can breathe better due to less sinus issues, and

my snoring (which was presenting my spouse with a bit of a problem) has reduced to little or none.

I must warn that Walking Wednesdays does not come without its fair share of danger. Here is the written account that I sent my supervisor after experiencing terror on my afternoon walk during a recent Walking Wednesday...

"I just went out for my afternoon walk... made the turn at the front of the building by the trees at the street (my normal route) and all of a sudden I felt something in my hair. I swat it away thinking it's a bug or something. Nope, it's a bird! The bird flies back and away from me but hovers about 15 feet in the air following me as I ran in fear for a good 25 yards chirping all the way (the bird chirped... not me). Then it followed me for the entire length of the building until I turned and headed for the rear of the building where our office door is. After sharing the story with my co-workers, I decided to head back out determined to finish my walk. I took a different route this time thinking that I just got too close to the bird's nest in a tree or whatever. So, I made the turn at the front of the building which is fairly far away from the scene of the attack... and that bugger was waiting for me again, this time at the corner of the building, and starts chirping at me and air-stalking me. So I ran in a chaotic zigzag across the parking lot away from the building. Also this time, he followed me all the way back to the other side of the building where our office door was... chirping all the way (both of us this time). I think I'm calling it quits on my afternoon walk. So, to summarize, that was 1.03 miles in the morning and .81 mile (much of that in a fearful sprint) in the afternoon.

I had my professional photographer (Sara) follow me around on Walking Wednesday to try to get a photo of the bird attacking me (as it continues to haunt me daily). Although we never could get a good photo of it, here is one showing the bird right before his/her descent to a fly-by. As for my Walking Wednesday report, I'm happy to say that,

despite the avian attacks, I got in 2 miles today. How did you do? And if you haven't walked yet today, there's still time before 5:00!"

