

Stepping out at work

Getting enough physical activity can be tough. And the problem is compounded for those whose jobs involve sitting at a desk or standing for long periods. The solution? Get active at work. By incorporating regular physical activity into your work day, you address the health dangers of inactivity at its roots—you find pockets of time to devote to being active and you offset time spent in sedentary tasks. “Sixteen million Canadians spend half their waking hours at work,”

said Debra Vine, Public Health Nurse with the Motiv8 initiative at KFL&A Public Health.

“Consequently, it’s vital to find ways of increasing physical activity at and around work.”

Two Kingston workplaces recently found a way to do just that. Staff at Canadian Mental Health Association’s (CMHA) Kingston Branch and at Kingston Frontenac Housing Corporation engaged in a friendly competition to determine who could be more active.

“We took the pedometer (step-counter) challenge and had a lot of fun competing with each other,” said Brenda Miller, Mental Health Promotion Worker at CMHA. “It was a great motivator and made us aware of how much physical activity we really got in a day by how many steps we took.”

By the end of the four-week competition, each team had racked up more than a million collective steps. And though staff at the housing corporation came out on top for this particular contest, “no one was the loser,” said Brenda. “It created an atmosphere of fun competitiveness, encouraged goal setting, created awareness of diet and healthy eating, and promoted

positive mental health through walking.” Part of Brenda’s job is to spread the word about the link between physical activity and improved mental health. Employers clearly benefit when staff make healthy lifestyle choices, too. “It makes good business sense,” said Motiv8’s Debra Vine. “Healthier, happier employees reduce operating costs, boost the bottom line and make the business more competitive.”



If you’re looking to boost your physical activity at work or if you are an employer seeking healthier employees KFL&A Public Health offers resources to help get things started, said Debra. “The Walk-On Workplace Toolkit provides workplaces with the resources to get staff physically active all year round. It’s available on CD-ROM, free of charge. We also have a Pedometer

Lending Library and workplaces can call KFL&A Public Health and borrow pedometers for staff’s use.”

Meanwhile, the CMHA’s Brenda Miller said that staff at another Kingston workplace, the local branch of Ontario March of Dimes, is now engaged in their own pedometer challenge. The outcome can be predicted, however: everyone will benefit from the far-reaching benefits of regular physical activity.

For more information call KFL&A Public Health’s Living Well line at 613-549-1232 ext. 1180.



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