The Douglas County Healthy Directions Wellness Newsletter

May, 2009

What's Inside:

- Get All the Advantages!
- Ready to Kick the Habit?
- Walk the Pedistrian Bridge
- Engineers Go Smoke Free
- And more!

Get All the Advantages!

Our health care coverage provider, UnitedHealthcare, has an online, self-service web site – **www.myuhc.com** – that's available seven days a week. It's easy to register, it's free, and it's confidential.

What can you do at myhuc.com?

- **Find a doctor**
- **Track your blood pressure**
- **Track your weight, access healthy weight tools**
- **Look up your claims**
- **Improve your health**
- **Access a drug guide/dictionary**
- **Order your prescriptions online – and save**
- **Chat with a nurse**
- **Simplify your life**
- **Learn about diabetes/other health issues**
- **Save money on services**
- **Stay healthy**
- **Replace your ID card**
- **Record your health history**
- **Keep track of your family's medical history**
- **Estimate costs ahead of time**
- **Embrace wellness!**
- **See your benefits**
- **Keep track of your shots**
- **Check costs for a procedure**
- **Access an on-line health coach**
- **And much, much more**

It all adds up to **peace of mind.**

Ready to Kick the Habit?

Tobacco is the single most preventable cause of death in the world. It is the only legal consumer product that can harm everyone exposed to it - and it kills up to half of those who use it as intended, with its victims dying on average 15 years prematurely.

This year, world wide, tobacco will kill more than five million people **- more than tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and malaria combined.**

The largest US federal tobacco tax increase in history took effect on April 1, a move expected to prompt 1 million smokers to quit and prevent 2 million young people from starting. Quitting smoking has immediate, as well as long-term, health benefits, including reducing risks for smoking-related diseases such as cancer, heart disease, stroke, and some respiratory illnesses.

Is it time for you to kick the habit? For a list of resources, log on to:

http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/quit_smoking/how_to_quit/index.htm

Commit to be Fit

Starting an Exercise Program

Thinking about adding physical activity to your life, but not sure how to get started? Sometimes taking the first step is the hardest part. If you haven't been active in some time, start at a comfortable level and add a little more activity as you go along. Some people find that getting active with a friend makes it easier to get started.

Is something holding you back?
Think about reasons why you have not been physically active. Then try to come up with some ways to get past what is keeping you from getting active.

Have you said to yourself . . . ?

I haven't been active in a very long time.
Solution: Choose something you like to do. Many people find walking helps them get started. Before you know it, you will be doing more each day.

I don't have the time.
Solution: Start with 10-minute chunks of time a couple of days a week. Walk during a break. Dance in the living room to your favorite music. It all adds up.

It costs too much.
Solution: You don't have to join a health club or buy fancy equipment to be active. Play tag with your kids. Walk briskly with your dog for 10 minutes or more.

What can physical activity do for you?

- Be healthier/get in shape
- Increase chances of living longer
- Feel better about yourself
- Have less chance of becoming depressed
- Sleep better at night
- Help you look good
- Get around better
- Have stronger muscles and bones
- Help you stay at or get to a healthy weight
- Be with friends or meet new people
- Enjoy yourself and have fun

Build up over time
Start by doing what you can, and then look for ways to do more. If you have not been active for a while, start out slowly. After several weeks or months, build up your activities—do them longer and more often.

Walking is one way to add physical activity to your life. When you first start, walk 10 minutes a day on a few days during the first couple of weeks.

Add more time and days. Walk a little longer. Try 15 minutes instead of 10 minutes. Then walk on more days a week.

Pick up the pace. Once this is easy to do, try walking faster. Keep up your brisk walking for a couple of months. You might want to add biking on the weekends for variety.

How much physical activity do you need?

Aerobic
Adults should get at least **2 hours and 30 minutes** each week of aerobic physical activity that requires **moderate** effort. You need to do this type of activity for at least **10 minutes** at a time.

Strengthening
Adults should also do **strengthening** activities at least **2 days** a week. Strengthening activities include push-ups, sit-ups and lifting weights (see page 7 for more ideas on what activities to do, how much, and how often).

Do it your way.
Pick an activity you like and fits into your life.
Find the time that works best for you.
Be active with friends and family. Having a support network can help you keep up with your program.

*Be Active **Your** Way: A Guide for Adults.*
Download the entire booklet at:
www.healthfinder.gov/getactive

BOB KERREY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE — A GREAT PLACE TO WALK!

Looking for a fun place to walk? Visit the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge located at Omaha's beautiful downtown riverfront. With its elegant curvilinear design, it's one of the most graceful and picturesque walking opportunities in the area.

Facts about the bridge:

- It is 3,000 feet long, including the landings (that's approximately 0.568 mile).
- The walkway is 15 ft. wide.
- At the center, people stand about 60 ft. above the Missouri River.
- An emergency help phone is located in the middle of the bridge, north side; push the button to connect to "911".
- The bridge is a cable stay bridge, meaning cables stretch down diagonally from each of the towers to the bridge deck for strength, support and flexibility, as well as visual appeal.
- Metro Area Transit buses, with bike racks, offer routes to both sides of the bridge.
- It is the longest pedestrian bridge to link two states.
- The bridge is curved, symbolic of the meandering Missouri River.
- It is as much a journey as it is a destination, with heightened visual interest created by a curving pathway and ever-changing vistas for users to experience.
- With 150 miles of trail on each side of the river, the bridge improves bicycle and pedestrian options.

The official address is 705 Riverfront Drive. The bridge is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Parking is available on Riverfront Drive at Lewis & Clark Landing, the National Park Service (evenings and weekends), and Miller's Landing. For more great walking, biking, rollerblading, running routes, check out the local trail system at www.omahatrails.com or pick up a map at the Parks and Rec office located in room 701 of the Civic Center.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

Chicken and Black Bean Tacos

Serves 6; 2 tacos per serving

Ingredients

12 6-inch corn tortillas
1/2 cup chopped onion
15-ounce can low-sodium black beans, undrained
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/4 cup shredded lettuce (optional)
6 tablespoons salsa
1 pound ground chicken or turkey, ground without skin
1/2 teaspoon bottled minced garlic
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro or parsley1 tablespoon chili powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup chopped tomatoes (optional)
1/4 cup shredded low-fat cheddar cheese (optional)

Cooking Instructions

Preheat oven to 250°F. Wrap tortillas in foil. Place in oven while preparing chicken mixture. In a large skillet, cook ground chicken, onion, and garlic over medium-high heat about 5 minutes, or until chicken is no longer pink. Place mixture in a colander and rinse under hot water. Drain well. Wipe skillet with a paper towel. Return mixture to skillet. Stir in beans, cilantro, chili powder, cumin, salt, and pepper. Cook and stir over medium-high heat until heated through, about 5 minutes. Spoon mixture over half of each corn tortilla; fold over. Add tomatoes, lettuce, cheese, and salsa if desired.

Nutrition Analysis (per serving)

195 Calories 2.0 g Total Fat 0.5 g Saturated Fat 0.0 g Trans Fat 0.5 g Polyunsaturated Fat 6 g Fiber
0.5 g Monounsaturated Fat 44 mg Cholesterol 205 mg Sodium 25 g Carbohydrates 1 g Sugar 22 g Protein

Dietary Exchanges

1 1/2 starch, 3 very lean meat 22 g Protein

Front Row left to right: Phil Ray, Mikel Schmidt
Back Row left to right: Todd Gibbs, Steve Welchert, Bernie Schulte

Quitting Is Not Easy…But Can Be Done Here Are Their Stories

The guys in the Douglas County Health Center Engineer Shop survived an extremely challenging March. There was a little relief in April, but May could well find them continuing to face a challenge.

It ain't easy to quit smoking.

But for Steve, Mikel, Bernie and Phil, and even Todd, who has been smoke-free since August of 2007, the challenges met and defeated in giving up smoking were well worth it.

Between them they spent more than a century puffing away. All of the guys started for quite similar reasons, and all of them quit for similar reasons.

Here are their stories.

Todd Gibbs
Quit smoking August 2007
Smoked up to two packs per day for 25-26 years, and started because everybody else was doing it.

It was medical reasons unrelated to smoking that sent Todd to the hospital for a week. While there he was not allowed to smoke.

After that experience, Todd decided he would never pick up a cigarette again.

For Todd, a time to quit smoking was provided for him, but the decision to stay smoke free was his. For the most part, he says quitting was easy for him and more than two years later, he's still smoke-free, feels much better and is breathing more easily.

Todd says he encourages other people to quit, but realizes there are challenges.

Steve Welchert
Quit smoking March 12, 2009
Smoked a pack a day for 25 years, and started because it was the "cool" thing to do.

It was more than the recent cost increase that led to Steve's decision to quit smoking. There was something very close and personal.

Steve's father, a long-time smoker, recently was diagnosed with emphysema and needs a lung transplant to cure him.

After making the decision to quit smoking, Steve chose Nicorette gum to help him find success. He bought the 100-piece program with 2 mg pieces of gum and chewed one piece every two hours until they were gone. Once the Nicorette was gone, Steve switched to regular chewing gum and says that seems to have helped.

As with many who have quit before him, Steve faced the common challenge of an urge to eat plus the addition of a few pounds. While the urge to eat is admittedly there, he finds that chewing gum also helps to curb that urge. Overall, Steve says he feels a lot better and no longer has a cough. He strongly encourages others to quit smoking, but knows the person has to want to quit and to do so successfully takes dedication.

"It's a person's prerogative," he says.

Mikel Schmidt
Quit smoking March 25th, 2009
Smoked about two packs per day for 40 years, and started because "my brother made me".

Given that he had a history of asthma Mikel beat the odds for a very long time. But, in February of 2009, the smoking finally caught up with him and he was admitted to the hospital, suffering from breathing issues.

It was his first stay in a hospital, but Mikel quickly learned it would likely not be his last unless he made some changes. Mikel was told that if he didn't quit smoking he would eventually be carrying an oxygen tank with him.

While the words scared him, the information really hit home after he returned to work and saw that the rest of "the guys" were quitting.

Feeling somewhat embarrassed that he hadn't yet quit. Mikel made the decision to stop smoking.

For two weeks Mikel wore a 7 mg Nicotine patch and chewed 2mg Nicorette gum. He's been smoke-free ever since and says the few additional pounds he picked up are well worth it.

Feeling better and breathing better, Mikel no longer has a cough and the likelihood he will require oxygen in his later years is diminishing by the day.

Mikel is grateful for his co-workers' support, and wants to encourage other smokers to quit.

"It takes a great deal of motivation but it can be done," he says.

Bernie Schulte
Quit smoking March 17th, 2009
Smoked a half pack a day for about 6 years, and started due to stress.

Several factors helped Bernie decide to quit smoking. One of them was the cost, but there were a couple more personal reasons that played an even bigger role.

His dad died of emphysema after smoking for several years, so when Bernie started wheezing at night, he began to think about his dad. That might have been enough, but it was the birth of his first grandchild that made him quit cold turkey.

"I want to be around to spoil him," Bernie said.

He says quitting hasn't been too bad, and adds that he feels considerably better. The support of his co-workers has made the decision to quit much easier.

Bernie calls quitting the: "best thing you can do for your health, you will feel the difference."

Phil Ray
Quit smoking March 25th, 2009
Smoked a pack a day for 30 years, and started "because everybody else was doing it."

The increased cost of smoking was a big reason that Phil made the decision to quit.

But like so many others, a chronic cough and frequent episodes of shortness of breath were ultimately the determining factors. The 28-day Nicotine patch regime was his method of quitting. For two weeks he wore the 14 mg patch and for two additional weeks he wore the 7 mg patch. Since that time, he has used nothing. Often, stress can cause a smoking relapse for those who have recently quit, and even those who gave up the habit long ago. Phil recently encountered an extremely stressful event that easily could have caused a non-smoker to start.

Realizing that smoking wasn't the answer, Phil was able to resist the urge by simply telling himself "no".

Like Bernie, he also is a new grandfather and wants to be around to spoil his grandson and watch him grow. Phil understands smoking is a hard thing to quit, and wants to encourage others to quit, but he never has liked to be badgered about it and has no desire to badger others.

Though many of the reasons the guys in the Douglas County Health Center Engineer Shop quit are similar, there are personal factors that play a huge role in the decision to give up smoking.

One thing is certain - the guys are doing great, and their support for one another has helped tremendously.

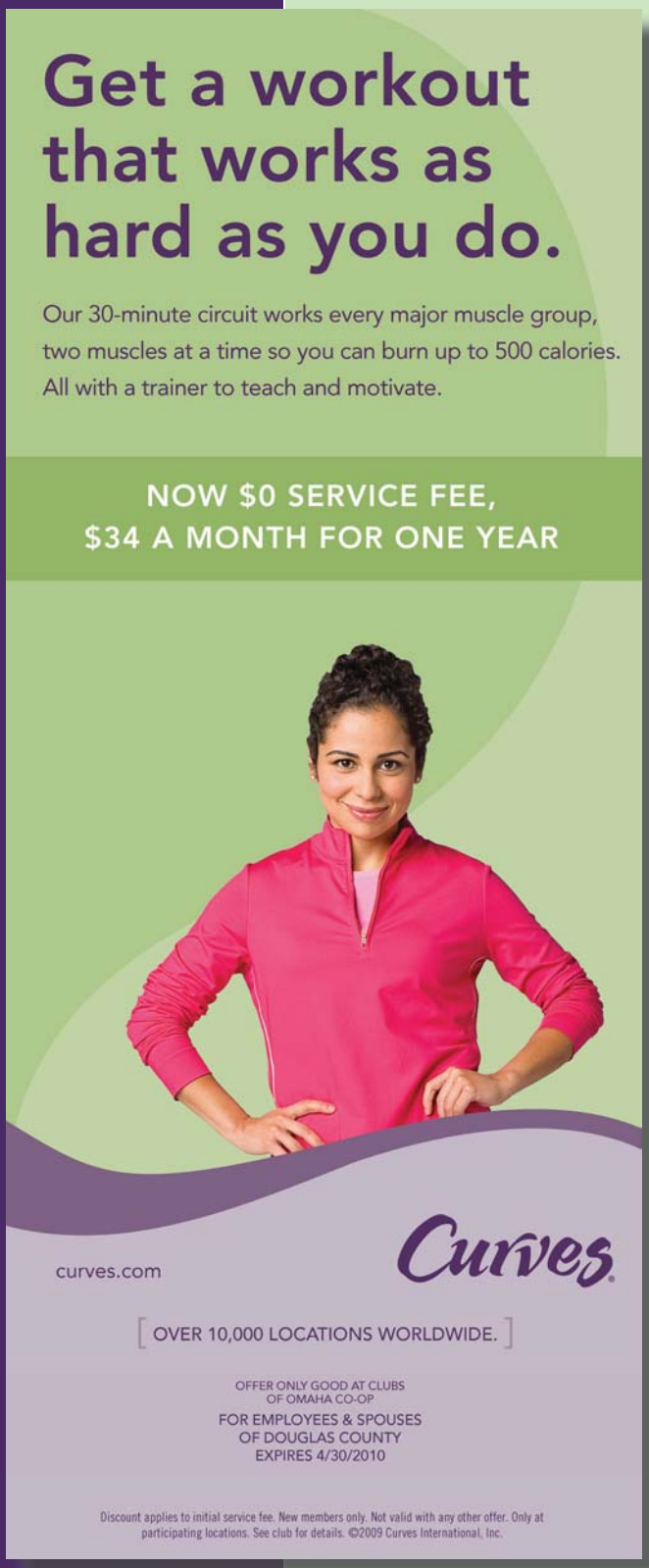
Congratulations guys!

Subway Gift Cards for Participants

Thanks to everyone and their spouses who participated in the health assessment! Subway gift cards will be sent out in mid May and the drawing for the prizes will be held May 19th at the Wellness Committee meeting – and winners of the drawing will be posted in the June newsletter.

Healthy People, Healthy Planet!
Blue Planet Natural Grill offers a 10% discount to all Douglas County employees!
Just show your employee I.D. badge to receive your discount.

Blue Planet Natural Grill
6307 Center Street (Aksarben Shopping Center), Suite 101, Omaha, NE
www.blueplanetnaturalgrill.com



A Special Offer from Curves!

Curves is waiving the $149 one-time joining fee for Douglas County employees!

Omaha Northeast
5821 N. 90th Street
(402) 408-1955

Omaha Southeast
1941 S. 42nd St. Ste 202
(402) 991-9887

Omaha South Central
3019 S. 83rd Plaza
(402) 398-9777

Bellevue
1512 Harlan Drive
(402) 682-9288

Ralston
5072 S. 107th Street
(402) 614-9888

203rd & Roberts
1618 N. 203rd St.
(402) 289-0800

Papillion
823 Tara Plaza
(402) 596-1860

Plattsmouth
1504 S. 15th St. Ste. A
(402) 296-4688

West Central
15615 Pacific Street
Bay 5
(402) 330-3282

DOUGLAS COUNTY Healthy Directions

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