



County and District Welcome Jeneé Littrell

The San Mateo County Office of Education welcomes Jeneé Littrell, MA, as the new Director of Safe and Supportive Schools. In her role, Jeneé will oversee mental health services for all school districts in San Mateo County. She is particularly excited to work with the Sequoia Union High School District, since her background includes extensive experience with high schools and adolescents.

As a high school student, Jeneé's life was powerfully affected by a school counselor who noticed her falling grades and attendance. Her own mother suffered from mental health issues and made unhealthy lifestyle choices incompatible with raising a teenage daughter. While the conversation with her high school counselor was impactful, Jeneé ended up dropping out of high school and becoming a teenage mother.

Wanting a better life for herself and her daughters, Jeneé realized that she needed to return to school. Her goal was to be the first in her family to get a college degree. She ultimately earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Public Administration, a Master's degree in Educational Counseling, and a second Master's degree in Educational Leadership.

Jeneé's first professional position out of college was working for a social justice organization. She was struck by the stories the students shared about their experiences on campus, many related to race, ethnicity, culture, gender, and religion. The students needed to be connected, and Jeneé noticed that many struggled with life challenges similar to her own.

In 2001, Jeneé's life changed forever when gun violence erupted at Santana High School in San Diego. Hired by the school district to support Santana High School, she served as the on-site counselor, building mental health services and supports. She trained staff on warning signs, developed a referral process, assessed students in need, and connected them to services on campus and in the community. This model was adopted at every school in the district, and Jeneé was promoted to District Administrator, overseeing mental health and prevention services.

In her work, Jeneé recognized that students were becoming victims of commercial sexual exploitation. She identified the need for a written protocol on how schools should deal with human trafficking, and her protocol became the first in the nation. In 2015, the federal government noticed Jeneé's work and she was tapped by the U.S. Department of Education to author a guide entitled "Human Trafficking in America's Schools." This spring, Jeneé was named "Citizen of The Year" by the Department of Justice and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. She lives in San Mateo with her husband.

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Wellness Advisory Council Update

Dana Schuster MS, Health & Fitness Instructor

The district Wellness Advisory Council (WAC) had a fabulous October meeting, with over twenty attendees including SUHSD administrators, staff, teachers, students, parents, and community health representatives. We were pleased to have a presentation by D'Anne Burwell, author of *Saving Jake: When Addiction Hits Home*, who bravely and passionately shared her own family's experiences and resultant expertise regarding teen prescription drug abuse and addiction.

A productive brainstorming session ensued, resulting in the identification of possible goals for WAC in each category of the Coordinated School Health Model supported by the Sequoia Healthcare District Healthy Schools Initiative (HSI). Many of the ideas related to expanding awareness of, and support for, Mental Health concerns, particularly in regards to addressing student stress. Considerable interest was also noted for expanding Health Education for students and the broader school community on the topics of drug and alcohol prevention, vaping, and addiction.

WAC looks forward to an exciting and productive year of wellness activities - let us know (email Karen Li, kli@seq.org) if you want to be involved!

Mindful Eating Recipe

(Recipe courtesy of Michelle May, M.D., *Huffington Post*)



Yield: abundant

Ingredients:

- 1 or 2 servings of food you love
- 2 tablespoons of intention
- 1 heaping teaspoon of attention
- A sprinkle of trust

Optional: pleasure, enjoyment, celebration, tradition

Directions:

1. Care for yourself physically by getting adequate sleep, exercise, and nutrition.
2. Create a self-care buffer zone by regularly nurturing your body, mind, heart, and spirit.
3. When you're hungry, consider what you want, what you need, and what you have to eat before choosing food.
4. Decide how you want to feel when you're finished eating; serve yourself accordingly (or adjust the portion if someone else served you).
5. When the food you crave isn't particularly healthful, omit all guilt and shame. Remind yourself that all foods fit when you practice balance, variety, and moderation.
6. Sit down to eat and minimize distractions.
7. Savor the appearance, aromas, textures, and flavors as you eat.
8. Eat slowly and mindfully for maximal enjoyment from every bite.
9. Stop when you feel content and energetic.
10. Repeat steps 1-9 for the remainder of your life.

Chicken Tacos with Avocado Salad

(Recipe courtesy of Food Network Kitchen)



Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 1 1/4 pounds skinless, boneless chicken thighs (about 6)
- 1 cup jarred salsa
- Juice of 2 limes, plus wedges for serving
- 1/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- 1 bunch cilantro, leaves chopped (about 3/4 cup)
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 14-ounce can hearts of palm, drained & sliced 1/2 inch thick
- 1 avocado, chopped
- 6 radishes, thinly sliced
- 16 corn tortillas
- Shredded lettuce and/or diced red onion, for topping

Directions:

1. Toss the chicken with 1/2 cup salsa, the juice of 1 lime and 1 tablespoon vegetable oil in a large bowl; let marinate 10 minutes.
2. Mix the remaining 1/2 cup salsa, the sour cream and 2 tablespoons cilantro in a small bowl; season with salt and pepper. Cover and refrigerate.
3. Gently toss the hearts of palm, avocado, radishes, the remaining cilantro, 1 tablespoon vegetable oil and the juice of the remaining lime in a medium bowl; season with salt and pepper.
4. Heat the remaining 2 tablespoons vegetable oil in a large cast-iron skillet or grill pan over medium-high heat. Add the chicken along with the marinade and cook until slightly charred and cooked through, about 7 minutes per side. Transfer to a cutting board and chop; season with salt.
5. Warm the tortillas as the label directs. Using 2 stacked tortillas per taco, fill with the chicken, salsa-sour cream mixture and lettuce and/or red onion. Serve with the avocado salad and lime wedges.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

- ✚ The Sequoia Healthcare District supports many health services and wellness projects in the Sequoia Union High School District.
- ✚ This newsletter was printed through a generous gift from Dignity Health Sequoia Hospital.

Pan-Roasted Green Beans With Golden Almonds

(Recipe courtesy of "Home Cooking with Jean-Georges")



Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

8 ounces green and/or wax beans, trimmed
 1/4 cup blanched whole almonds, coarsely chopped
 3 TBSP olive oil
 1 large shallot, minced
 1 TBSP fresh flat-leaf parsley, thinly sliced
 1 lemon
 Freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

1. Blanch green beans in boiling water for 2 minutes; drain and transfer beans to ice bath until cool. Drain and pat dry.
2. In a small saucepan, combine the almonds and oil and cook over medium heat until the almonds are golden; about 6 minutes. Stir in the shallot and remove pan from heat. The shallot will cook in the residual heat.
3. Coat a large skillet with oil and heat over med-high until hot but not smoking. Add beans, season with salt, and cook, tossing frequently, until charred dark brown in spots and tender-crisp; about 7 minutes.
4. Top with almond mixture, then parsley. Grate zest of 1/4 of the lemon over the beans, season with pepper. Cut the lemon into wedges to serve with the beans.

Turkey Crunch Meatballs

(Recipe courtesy of *Taste of Home Magazine*)



Yield: About 5 dozen

Ingredients:

1 can (8oz) sliced water chestnuts
 1 egg, slightly beaten
 3 tablespoons soy sauce (I used low sodium)
 1/2 cup chopped green onions (green part only)
 1/4 cup dry breadcrumbs
 2 TBSP minced fresh cilantro
 1 -1/2 tsp grated lime peel
 1-1/2 tsp minced fresh ginger root
 1 clove garlic, minced
 1/4 tsp salt
 1/4 tsp pepper
 1-1/2 pounds lean ground turkey
 2 TBSP canola oil
 Plum sauce

Directions:

1. Cut enough water chestnut slices in half to make 60 pieces, set aside.
2. In a large bowl combine the next 10 ingredients. Crumble turkey over mixture and mix well. Divide into 60 portions and shape each portion into a ball around a piece of water chestnut.
3. In a large nonstick skillet, sauté meatballs in oil in batches for 5 minutes or until browned. Transfer to a 13 x 9 baking dish, cover and bake at 350 for 10-15 minutes until cooked through (meat is no longer pink). Drain, and serve with plum sauce.

Professional Development for Teacher Wellness

The Professional Development department of the Sequoia District is offering more workshops related to teacher wellness. The last workshop, "Maintaining a Growth Mindset," took place on December 2. Teachers received tools that they could use with students to encourage a growth mindset. To find out more about upcoming workshops, go to <https://www.smores.com/vdc90>.

benefits@seq

With Sonia Ramirez de Figueroa
Human Resources/Benefits

Q: Several employees asked about access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) as the district website references Aetna as the provider. Can you clarify this please?

A: Aetna is simply the name/provider of the SUHSD EAP benefits, which are available whether one has district medical coverage through Kaiser, Blue Shield, Blue Cross, or United Healthcare. Access to EAP is not related to having Aetna as one's medical insurer.

Q: What EAP benefits might employees not be aware of?

A: Most people know they can get help with issues such as grief, alcohol/drugs, and mental health concerns such as depression, but assistance is also available for family turmoil, adolescent issues, and divorce. EAP services are additionally offered for Financial Planning, Debt Management, Wills, and regarding Child and Elder Care resources.

Q: Are there any benefit changes this year that you'd like staff to know about?

A: Yes, a couple of things. First, CalPERS now offers Long Term Care coverage, and while this is not a benefit paid for by the district, it is an important option people should be aware is available. The max age for enrollment is 79, and one should visit www.calperslongtermcare.com or call 800-908-9119 for more information.

Second, Blue Shield HMO for retired employees older than age 65 will no longer be available as of January 1, 2016. While individuals who fall in this category have been notified by CalPERS, employees who are considering retiring soon need to also be aware of this change. Retirement benefits in general can be confusing and should be reviewed in advance. I strongly encourage any active employee who is considering retiring at the end of the school year to contact me so I can walk you through the process.

WAC Executive Committee Members

Becky Beacom, *PAMF, Health Education Manager*

Tiffany Burkle, *SHS Teacher, Health Careers Academy*

Nora DeCaro, *Director of Food Services*

Gigi Kruse-Silva, *CHS teacher*

Karen Jackson, *MD, Palo Alto Medical Foundation*

Karen Li, *MD, District Wellness Coordinator*

Charlene Margot, *MA, Director, The Parent Education Series*

Maureen Rafferty, *RN, District Nurse*

Dana Schuster, *MS, Health and Fitness Instructor*

Marie Violet, *Director, Dignity Health Sequoia Hospital Health & Wellness Center*

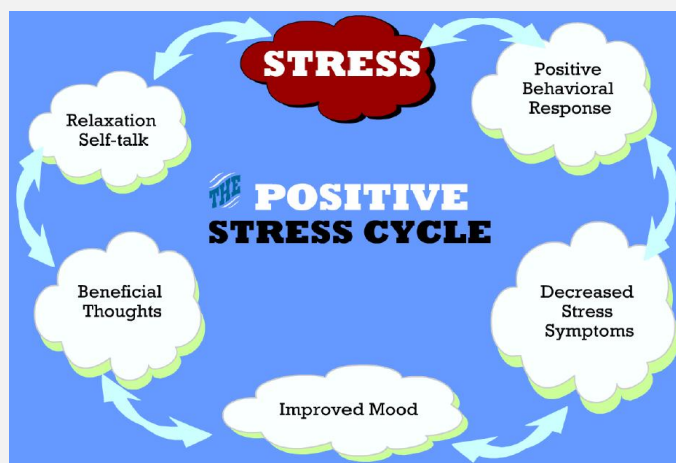


Image from stayfitchronicles.com/2013/09/20/stress-is-good-for-you

Using Stress to Your Advantage

By Victor Li, *Carlmont High School student*

(Adapted from an article published in the *Carlmont Highlander*)

Stress can make you sick and increase risks of everything from the common cold to cardiovascular disease, but what if you see stress as helpful?

Studies have shown that a mere change in perception of stress could save one's life. In a study made by the University of Wisconsin, researchers have found that people under a lot of stress have a 43 percent increased risk of dying prematurely, but only if they believed stress was harmful.

A study from Harvard University showed that people under stress showed constricted blood vessels, but those who were told that stress was a helpful reaction showed no signs at all. In other words, if you stop being anxious about stress, the body can help naturally cope with it in a healthy manner.

Stress prepares your body for action. During a stressful situation, your body helps you rise to the challenge. For example, according to WebMD, breathing faster gets more oxygen into your brain to help you think clearly. Sweating keeps your body from overheating, while secreting toxins from your system.

During your stress response, your body also releases a stress hormone from your pituitary gland known as Oxytocin, which acts as a natural anti-inflammatory by keeping your blood vessels relaxed, additionally regenerating and healing heart cells from stress-induced damage.

When your brain releases Oxytocin it revises your social instinct and urges you to seek support from others, enhancing your empathy, and making you willing to support people you care about.

Human connection and compassion for others have been proven to create resilience against stress. According to the University of Buffalo, studies show that for every major stressful experience, there is a 30 percent increased risk of dying. However, this was not true for people who spent time helping and caring for others.

As Stanford professor Kelly McGonigal, PhD, states, "When you choose to view stress as helpful, you create the biology of courage. And when you choose to connect with others under stress, you can create resilience."

NOTE: Don't miss the M-A Parent Education Series event with Kelly McGonigal, PhD, "The Upside of Stress," on Thursday, April 14, 2016 at Menlo-Atherton, M-A Performing Arts Center (PAC).