



Got Health/Wellness?

by Karen Li, M.D.

The Wellness Advisory Council (WAC) received an impressive 323 responses to the District Staff Needs Assessment Survey last month. Thank you for participating! Our brief survey covered three general sections: About You, Wellness Topics, and Logistics. Thanks to your responses, we now have some direction in designing and implementing wellness offerings for faculty and staff.

The good news is that of those who responded, 45% are happy with their current state of health. However, that leaves 55% of respondents who are not. When asked "Would you consider participating in structured wellness activities of interest if offered?" 90% of you said YES. The **top four** areas of interest include: Stress management/meditation, Ways to incorporate physical activity in your busy life, Quick n' healthy recipes, and Eating for wellness. The most requested activities are: Strength/flexibility exercises (yoga, conditioning, etc.), Aerobic exercise (Zumba, boot camp, etc.), Stress reduction/meditation, and Clubs such as walking, biking, and dancing.

Results from the "Logistics" section reveal that 53% prefer that activities be offered after work, 22% at lunch time, 20% before work, and 4% other. A majority of you prefer 30-60 minute health/wellness offerings at your sites. Results show that most of you would use resource guides or information on wellness topics, and formats preferred are email/internet, as well as presentations/workshops.

We received many terrific comments, ranging from "I would love a fitness class before work every morning" to "My life is hectic, and I need some help managing all of the stress..." and "I like the idea of incorporating wellness at my job site." Many of you also asked about discounted rates at gyms, rec centers, and yoga studios.

We appreciate your feedback, and we will work diligently with each site to make this happen!



Featured Articles...



Carlmont student is inspired by "Food Revolution" event.
Page 2



Parent Education: Taking the Stress Out of College Applications
Page 3



Quiet time at CDS brings sense of peace to participants.
Page 4

Called Into Action

by Judy Sencenbaugh, District Nurse

By now, most schools have had one or more earthquake drills to coincide with the Great California ShakeOut. Lock down and/or fire drills are slated to occur during spring semester. School employees have attended a SEMS training (Standardized Emergency Management System) provided by San Mateo County to learn how to work with community partners to prepare for emergencies. Along with nearly ten million Californians, the District office held its second annual California ShakeOut drill on October 17th, at 10:17 AM. Staff practiced "Drop, Cover, and Hold On", and evacuated to the parking lot to confirm ability to exit the building rapidly. Plans for future disaster training will include continued CPR trainings for staff and students, the Redwood City Fire Department's assistance in proper placement and use of fire extinguishers in each work area, distribution of staff name badges /SMART cards to define individual roles in an emergency, automatic parent notification of an emergency situation via Infinite Campus, and a new tracking system to identify students when they get on/off a school bus.

(Continued on next page)

Youth Mental Health First Aid – Respect! 24/7

by Judy Sencenbaugh, District Nurse



As many as one in five youth in the United States suffer from a mental health disorder challenge. School staffs often encounter a student experiencing a mental health illness or crisis.

To become better equipped to assist your student(s) through a crisis situation, an 8-hour course called Youth Mental Health First Aid is offered at various times during the school year. The San Mateo County Office of Education in partnership with San Mateo County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Office of Diversity and Equality provide this training. It is targeted for all staff involved with students, including teachers, secretaries, student leaders, school resource officers, and other school safety advocates.

Kristine Patane, RN, Health Aide at Woodside High School states: “The Youth Mental Health First Aid course was extremely helpful to me. I learned clear, concise techniques aimed at guiding me through any mental health crisis. Although this training was geared for youth, it could be applied to any age group. The **key steps**: assess for suicide, listen non-judgmentally, give reassurance and information, encourage professional help, and encourage self-help and other supports were taught. I feel better prepared as a health aide as students in crisis often come to the health office first.”

Notices for future trainings will be sent to staff by Dr. Karen Li, Wellness Coordinator. The San Mateo County Office of Education can also arrange for on-site trainings, with time frames that can be adapted to the individual site’s needs.

"If you would like more information about WAC or are interested in attending a meeting, please contact Dr. Karen Li: kli@seq.org".

SURVIVAL, PREPAREDNESS, EMERGENCY KITS

PREPARE, SURVIVE, EMERGE!

Called Into Action (Continued)

Each school site should review their emergency plans once a year, conduct emergency drills, and determine how long the school will care for students during a disaster, (72 hours, or until parent pick-up). A system of radio communication with emergency services is recommended for each site, since cell and land lines may be non-functional.

Staff should prepare a personal disaster kit to be stored either in their classroom/office, or in their car. Suggested personal items include: Comfortable/sturdy shoes (that you can walk home in), medications, extra eye glasses/sunglasses, jacket, poncho, hat, gloves, dust mask/bandana, personal hygiene products, hand sanitizer, pre-moistened towelettes, space blanket, pen/paper, and small bills. For a complete list of supplies, refer to:

<http://www.redcross.org/prepare/location/home-family/get-kit>

Reflections on the Food Revolution Event

by Bita Shahrini, C.H.S. Senior



The Sierra Club’s Green Youth Alliance and the San Mateo Food Systems Alliance came together on October 16th, 2013 to host an inspiring “Food Revolution” event to educate people about the importance of eating healthy, fresh, locally-grown food. They didn’t just talk the talk, however, they walked the walk too - serving a delicious dinner with ingredients consisting solely of local foods and produce to the 75+ people who showed up in support of this Food Revolution.

After the eye-opening screening of the movie *Fresh*, the speakers illuminated the detrimental effects of the industrial food chain, the use of pesticides, the dangers of genetically modified foods, and how the concentration of power in the hands of a few large agribusinesses undermines not only our health but also our local economy. Moreover, they encouraged all the environmentalists, school officials, parents, students, and activists in the audience to get involved in the food movement by making a personal commitment to buying local, changing their diets to exclude most processed foods, and joining local groups such as community garden groups, the Farm to School movement, and the Sierra Club’s Food Committee.

The Sequoia Union High School District was well represented with Trustee Alan Sarver, Food Service Director Nora DeCaro, Wellness Advisory Council member Dana Schuster, and Carlmont Senior Bita Shahrini in attendance.

PARENT EDUCATION TARGETS COLLEGE ADMISSION STRESS

by Charlene Margot, Parent and Director of The Parent Education Series

This fall the Parent Education Series at Menlo-Atherton, Sequoia, and Woodside High Schools offered programs to help reduce parent and student stress associated with the college application process. Over 1,000 parents, students, and community members attended presentations by Robin Mamlet, former dean of admission at Stanford University, Swarthmore, and Sarah Lawrence, and journalist Christine VanDeVelde, co-authors of *College Admission: From Application to Acceptance, Step by Step*. Their book is widely regarded as the “go-to” guide for any family or student approaching the college admission process, and it features the professional counsel of more than 50 deans of admission across the country.

In hour-long presentations followed by open Q & A, parents and students listened to expert advice about how to find a college that’s the “right fit,” what is more important (good grades or tough courses), SAT vs. ACT testing, how wait lists work, applying for financial aid, advice for athletes or artists, and how parents can best support their students. Robin and Christine urged students to value their own “authenticity,” and to take courses and engage in extra-curricular activities that honor their individual interests and affinities. While highly selective colleges may admit only a small percentage of students, most colleges admit 75% or more of their applicants—so there is a best “fit” for every student.

The Parent Education Series is sponsored by funding from the Sequoia Healthcare District, the M-A PTA, the Sequoia High School Education Foundation, and the Woodside PTSA. For more information about The Parent Education Series, contact Charlene Margot, Program Director, at cmargot@csiconsulting.net.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT:

This newsletter was printed by a generous gift from Sequoia Hospital.

WAC Executive Committee Members:

Nora DeCaro, Director of Food Services
 Gigi Kruse-Silva, CHS teacher
 Karen Li, M.D., District Wellness Coordinator
 Charlene Margot, The Parent Education Series,
 Founder/ Program Director
 Judy Romero, MFT, Sequoia Teen Resource Center Director
 Dana Schuster, MS, Health and Fitness Instructor
 Judy Sencenbaugh, District Nurse
 Marie Violet, Director, Sequoia Hospital
 Health and Wellness Center

Healthful, Yummy Comfort Food...



Pumpkin Apple Soup

- 15-ounce can pumpkin
- 2 cups low sodium chicken broth
- 1/2 tsp pumpkin pie spice
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 1 large tart apple, cubed
- 1 tablespoon butter

Mix first four ingredients in saucepan - whisk and simmer for 5 minutes. Cook apple cubes in butter in a separate pan until slightly soft. Serve soup in bowls and top with apple.



Pomegranate-Glazed Acorn Squash

- Halve & seed 1 Acorn Squash
- Slice into thin wedges
- Toss with olive oil & roast at 425° for 20mins
- Cook 1 cup pomegranate juice with 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt in deep skillet until thickened for 5 minutes
- Add the squash & 2 tablespoons each butter & pomegranate seeds: toss to coat
- Sprinkle with torn mint. And enjoy!

To be, Or not to be Chilled, that is the question. Transition and Transformation: A Quiet Time for All

The probation officer came onto the community day school campus to check on her expelled student who was wearing an electronic monitoring bracelet from juvenile hall. When informed that she would have to wait until the student completed his Quiet Time Meditation, the officer exclaimed; "Meditation!? Quiet Time!? My guy is where?! You've got to be kidding me!?" Just such a reaction is not uncommon at Sequoia Community Day School in East Palo Alto, California where expelled and recently incarcerated youth are assigned from the Sequoia Union High School District.

Quiet Time is an innovative, high impact program using a venerated tradition of meditation to facilitate stress reduction and set the tone for readiness-to-learn. Our District Wellness Coordinator, Dr. Karen Li, first spoke of it to me last Spring after reading an article in *Leadership*, a publication of the Association of California School Administrators (Dierke, James S. *Leadership*, ACSA, September/October 2012.) I was intrigued by the experience and the reported results of the inner-Mission District school in San Francisco which had experimented with the program. And, after hearing a presentation by Laurent Valosek, Executive Director, of the Center for Wellness and Achievement in Education (CWAE), a local non-profit experienced in teaching and leading meditation in schools, I began a conversation with the faculty and staff. Everyone was interested in finding out more. So, on our next faculty/staff collaboration day we set up a visit to John O'Connell High School in San Francisco to see for ourselves just how this worked.

We witnessed students with similar challenges as ours meditating together in large rooms at set times during the day. These students were just as playful, and yes, sometimes just as irreverent as ours in the hallways; but, when Quiet Time rolled around, and the CWAE meditation leader gently rang the hand bell to start the meditation most everyone went down deep. There were two students who did not meditate, one who participated in Sustained Silent Reading, and the other who just sat reverently with her eyes open. These were students who had decided not to participate, a very small minority it turns out. We interviewed the students; some of whom made it emphatically clear that the meditation was indeed a stress reduction practice, and not a religious practice. Their parents had all signed permission forms. We spoke with some of the teachers, all of whom had been trained in Transcendental Meditation (TM) and who practiced daily. Finally, I spoke to the principal, who also meditated.

The teachers reported that since implementing the program, students were more focused in their classrooms and that there were fewer behavioral problems. Moreover, they indicated that their own stress levels were reduced. "Chilled", as one colleague described his demeanor. The students were literally "stoked." They reported that they not only felt more at ease at school and open to doing well, some indicated that their ways of dealing with difficult situations outside of school had improved. Finally, the principal stated that compared to the year before, school violence was down, suspensions were down, attendance was up, and grade point averages were up. Interestingly, faculty and staff absences were considerably lower than the year before.

As a faculty and staff we decided to give it a try. I wrote a successful grant to the Sequoia Healthcare District and through the good graces of Ms. Pamela Kurtzman's office we were given the chance to move ahead. The Center for Wellness and Achievement in Education has proven to be a remarkable organization dedicated to the success of Quiet Time, and to the sustained mentorship of all involved. They graciously began training us early in the Spring and some of us participated in a weekend retreat held in the North Bay. We began our presentations and outreach to students in late September and now all but two of our students have decided to participate. All those who chose to participate have obtained signed permission from their parents. Those who have chosen not to participate in meditation, take part in Quiet Time through Silent Sustained Reading or creative design with classical music the backdrop.

It is absolutely remarkable to witness our population of students in deep meditation twice a day. We have built it into our daily schedule ensuring that the required time for instruction is met. All of us have experienced a profound change on campus in the short time we have implemented the program. And while many students are "too cool for school" when asked about any personal changes they have experienced since learning to meditate, one student, after thoughtful hesitation, responded, "I no longer yell if I get angry at home. And I don't get angry as much." This was later corroborated by his mother. We can only hope that the sustained meditation practice built into our daily schedule will open up our young charges to the venerated task of developing their emotional intellects, open up their intellectual acumen to academic readiness, and finally, open up their hearts to embrace a sense of peace within. Chill, my brothers and sisters. Chill.

R. Marshall Burgamy, Administrator, Sequoia Community Day School