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Dr. Tracy A. Newkirk, M.D., of Integral Orthopedics Inc., at left, and Metro San Gabriel Valley GM Jack Gabig bring Moller Back Support system on board Division 9 buses for pilot program aimed at eliminating back discomfort for operators in the drivers seat.

PHOTOS: GAYLE ANDERSON



Serenity Now!

Division 9 Health Fair Shatters Fitness Myth of "No Pain, No Gain"

By Gayle Anderson

Wellness is all in a day's work at San Gabriel Valley Division 9, and, on June 29, a health fair gave employees even more opportunities to bolster their fitness level.

Held in the training room, employees traded health tips with health, nutrition and fitness experts from Weight Watchers, Bally Total Fitness, Curves, the American Red Cross, and a Tai Chi master willing to unlock the secrets of energy in motion.

Event coordinator Scott Boim, the sector's safety specialist, credits the activities committee chaired by Asst. Transportation Manager Larry Cosner for the best turnout ever.

The health fair was the perfect



Metro SGV Sr. Administrative Analyst Emma Nogales and Asst. Transportation Mgr. Larry Cosner enjoy a healthy snack. Wait! There's more! Employees enjoy "healthy snack Fridays"

opportunity to launch a promising pilot program of providing free orthopedic back supports for operators, said San Gabriel Valley General Manager Jack Gabig.

"Back discomfort is common occurrence with anyone who's driving a vehicle for eight hours a day," said Gabig. "That back discomfort can result in injuries. We want to reduce back injuries over the long term for our work force."

The program is a voluntary one, said Gabig. Operators are asked to fill out a survey before, during and after they use the support device.

"We hope to be able to measure over time the effect of this piece of equipment has on our operator's general comfort level," said Gabig. "If results look promising, the back support may become part of the standard operating procedure at all divisions."

More than a lumbar support, the Moller Back Support by Integral Orthopedics Inc. supports all three curvatures of the spine, said Dr. Tracy Newkirk, an orthopedic surgeon on hand to demonstrate the support system on board a Metro bus.

"The back support device minimizes the pressure on each vertebrae of the spine," he told operators eager to try the cushion. "If you just have lumbar support, you haven't addressed the underlying problem. You're just moving the stress to the mid- and upper back. That's when your shoulders tighten up."

"The preliminary results are outstanding," said Boim, who's signed up 170 operators so far.

Back inside the training room, there was no visible discomfort as management, mechanics and

at least once a month in the training room.



Grand Master Lee, Tin Pang, at right, and Joe Lee invite employees to a Tai Chi class that may be offered at Division 9.



Bus operators Terry Jones and Gilberto Vazquez give WeightWatchers a look-see, but, the proof is *not* in the pudding: Representative Rosemary Martinez, pictured here, lost 100 lbs. in 2004.



Employees are encouraged to try "Curves," a healthy hop, skip and jump from Division 9 and Metro SGV offices.



operators vied for time on four giant massage chairs. Nevermind that GM Jack Gabig and Transportation Manager Mike Greenwood were hovering nearby, anxious to enter the comfort zone. Operator Eric Davis was busy adjusting the chair to perfection with the remote control.

"This is like being on vacation," said Davis, closing his eyes as he sank into the plush cushions of the vibrating massage chair and drifted off onto a sea of serenity.

Mechanic Steve Goytia signs up for Bally Total Fitness program. Fitness clubs offered membership discounts to employees.



GM Jack Gabig and former Division 9 Transportation Manager Mike Greenwood (he's at Division 3, now) finally get a chance at the controls.

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