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San Gabriel Valley Division 9 walkers stretch before they head out for a mile-long jaunt around the division parking lot. The new wellness program's trainer, Amy Lopez of Aquila Inc., has developed unique exercise regimens that allow participants to get fit in the most beneficial way to each individual.



### North Los Angeles Division 3 and San Gabriel Valley 9 Working on Wellness in New Program

By JIMMY STROUP

(August 3, 2007) Numbers don't lie. And with 25 percent of the operators at Divisions 3 and 9 signed up for a new wellness pilot program – for a total of more than 400 participants – the numbers show that when given the opportunity, Metro employees are interested in learning about and improving their health.

Started in April in cooperation with Florida-based fitness experts Aquila Ltd., the program emphasizes healthy eating habits, exercise, stretching and monitoring overall health concerns like weight, cholesterol and high blood pressure.

"We're trying to promote healthier lifestyles in general," said Amy Lopez, the trainer from Aquila. "Portion size in particular is a huge issue."

Aquila's also providing mini courses on improving health with information on stress management, lung cancer awareness and the threats posed by skin cancer, among other topics.

"It's something that we've been wanting to do for a long time and now it's finally coming to fruition," said Operator Richard Lopez, who's one of the forces behind the pilot program. "[We've set up] scheduled health risk assessments and [participants] come in and their training is evaluated by one of the Aquila trainers. Suggestions are made by the trainer and the operator moves on from there."

Photos by Jimmy Stroup



Operator Linda Shamburger hands out water to San Gabriel Valley Division 9 walkers on the second of a three-lap circuit. Operators, maintainers and managers at Division 9 and North Los Angeles Division 3 have signed up for the new wellness program that's meant to increase the overall fitness of Metro employees – on and off the job.

Operators aren't the only participants, though. Maintainers and employees from the sector office have become involved, too. Lopez said the effort to get the wellness program – based originally on an idea out of the Corporate Safety Department – off the ground has been supported by every level of Metro.

"Maintenance is involved and the sector office is involved, so we're getting very good cooperation from all different parts of Metro," Lopez said, noting that union representatives have also voiced their support for the program.

### Proof positive

The program is picking up speed and making some noticeable changes in general health, as was evidenced by the favorable results of cholesterol checks performed by

the Red Cross in conjunction with a blood drive at Division 9 a few weeks ago.

"This whole program is designed to promote injury prevention," said Doug Middleton, transportation manager. "We've come to realize that happy, healthy employees are more likely to come to work and feel better about the entire experience."

Lopez said the current workout room at Division 9 is working out well for the time being, but he is looking forward to the opening of the new building in the fall, which has a state-of-the-art workout area.

He hopes to get the program to a point where half of the operators and maintainers are participating on some level in the wellness program, and thinks the new building's facilities will help meet that goal.

"It's a win-win situation," he said. "For the operators, because they get a personal trainer to monitor their progress here at the division, and the agency makes out because there's less risk of Worker's Comp claims or work injuries because our people are in better shape."