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Operators from each division are the "ambassadors" of the UTU/Metro Wellness Program, an agency-wide push to assess and improve the health of employees.



Photo by Jimmy Stroup

"Wellness Wednesdays" Coming to a Division Near You

By JIMMY STROUP

(March 19, 2008) The best ideas for improving the health of Metro employees from multiple divisions have been consolidated into a new United Transportation Union/Metro Wellness Program, coming soon to a division near you.

Metro Corporate Safety and the United Transportation Union (UTU) have joined forces to implement and instruct a core group of employees in the ways of wellness.

These employees, the program's "ambassadors," were trained to give a health risk assessment, how to suggest improvements in eating habits and eventually to lead employees in exercise regimens.

"This has never been done before," said Lisa Arredondo, UTU Local 1607 chairperson, who is heading up the program on the union side. "It's Metro and the UTU coming together for this common cause, using medical vendors and information in the best way possible."

The program will begin with the ambassadors assessing each employee at his or her



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division. Then, on “Wellness Wednesdays,” the ambassadors and managers will promote exercise, beginning with a coordinated group walk and moving to more rigorous exercise as people shape up.

“The ambassadors’ job is to carry the flag – they’re the cheerleaders,” said Eddie Boghossian, systems safety manager in Corporate Safety. “They’ll keep up with all things wellness. They’ll keep people involved and working toward the ultimate goal of improving the health of our employees.”

The next step for the UTU/Metro Wellness Program is a health fair at Division 18 on April 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. All Metro employees are welcome.

Working from the best health information

The new program has coordinated with Blue Cross of California, Kaiser Permanente and PacifiCare, as well as the American Heart Association, to ensure that it’s working from the best health information.

“They’ve been extremely successful at Carson Division 18 with walking programs and wellness activities,” Boghossian said. “And as time rolls on, we’re going to ramp up the activity – first walks, then group exercise, then who knows?”

Metro Chief Operations Officer Carolyn Flowers has been sold on the program since its proposal, as has UTU General Chairman James Williams. When asked about the program, Williams simply said, “Got health?”

The “Got Health?” slogan is one the program is using to promote involvement. In the same vein, the division ambassadors were each issued a distinct yellow polo shirt that they’ll wear when performing wellness activities.

The March 19 meeting at the Services Support Center offered an overview for managers at each division, as well as the initial training for the ambassadors.