Public Health Department is Fit-Friendly Company

The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department was recently recognized by the American Heart Association as one of eight Fit-Friendly Companies in the Santa Barbara area.

The Public Health Department has implemented several policies and programs designed to promote the health of its employees, including:

- An annual Walking Challenge competition among teams within the department and in other County departments. Last year over 160 Public Health employees walked over 21,000 miles during the six week competition.
- Last summer the department sponsored a Rethink Your Drink challenge in which employees and their families were encouraged to drink less soda and other high sugar beverages, and replace them with water, low-fat milk, or juice.
- Employees have been featured cooking healthy meals and doing physical activities on the department’s public television shows Healthy for Life and Una Vida Saludable.
- Departmental policy requires that at least 50% of food and drinks served at all departmental meetings and events be healthy (low in fat and sugar) and include water.
- Nearly all vending machines have been removed from department facilities. Those that remain follow the healthy food and drink options policy.
- Private breastfeeding rooms are available for employees who are nursing mothers.
- Staff are encouraged to stand and stretch during meetings, and to walk during breaks.
- Signs are placed at elevators encouraging staff and visitors to use the stairs.
- On-site medical providers offer free blood pressure, cholesterol, and other screenings, immunizations, and other services to department employees.
- Low-cost smoking cessation classes are offered to employees on-site.

Department Director and County Health Officer Dr. Takashi Wada explained, “Employee health promotion activities benefit the organization as well as the staff by increasing employee health, morale, and productivity, and reducing absenteeism and healthcare costs. We are proud to be a Fit-Friendly company.”

For more information contact Scott McCann, Director of Health Education at 681-5270.

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