

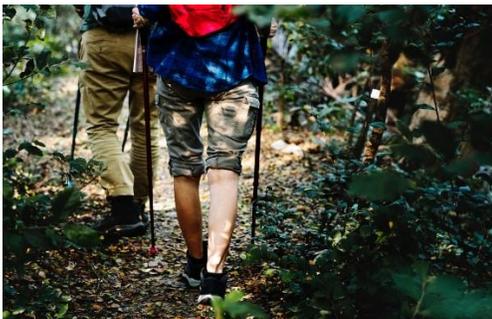


April 2023

Thank Goodness, Spring Has Arrived!

More daylight, warmer temperatures, spring blooms, and green grass are all proof that spring has finally sprung! This issue of the *Healthy State of Iowa Employees* newsletter highlights some of the activities we enjoy most this time of year, as well as a great way to enrich your life while making a difference in the community.

Shake Off Winter Sluggishness - Exercise Outside



As the spring season arrives, it's the perfect time to shake off the sluggishness of winter, cut back on streaming, and get out of hibernation mode. After months of cold weather and skimpy daylight, spring brings with it a renewed sense of energy and vitality.

Warmer temperatures and longer daylight hours provide the perfect opportunity to get outside and exercise. Outdoor exercise has numerous benefits, including improved cardiovascular health, increased vitamin D levels, and reduced stress and anxiety. Plus,

being outside in nature can help boost your mood and energy levels, making you feel more motivated.

Iowa boasts over 2,000 miles of trails, with some of the most scenic and well-maintained trails offering a variety of options for all. So take advantage of the season and start taking small steps toward a happier, healthier you. Locate area trails at <http://www.iowabytrail.com> and, if you are in the downtown Des Moines area for work or play, don't forget the [Capitol Complex](#) has several walking routes as well.

April is Global Volunteer Month

Global Volunteer Month celebrates the impact of volunteer service and the power volunteers have to tackle some of society's greatest challenges, to build stronger, more vibrant communities, and to take action that changes the world. A month-long celebration of volunteer service, Global Volunteer Month provides the perfect opportunity to shine a light on the individuals and organizations making a difference in our communities.

Volunteering is good for you too. Studies show volunteering leads to lower rates of depression and stress. People report feeling a greater sense of purpose while learning valuable skills and developing new relationships while volunteering. Here are some ideas to get involved today:

- Search for volunteer opportunities in your community on the statewide [Get Connected](#) site
- Nominate your agency's volunteers for a [Governor's Volunteer Award](#)
- Encourage your agency or division to sign up and participate in the [Give Back Iowa Challenge](#)
- Sign up to be a [youth mentor](#) or [college and career mentor](#)
- Volunteer with the young people in your life on Global Youth Service Days April 28-30

Follow [@volunteeriowa](#) on social media to learn more about Global Volunteer Month activities.

Staff Spotlight



Name: Karen Alessio

Current Position: Secretary 2, Iowa Communications Network

Years with the State: 13 years

My Healthy Choice: Walking

“One of my favorite forms of exercise is walking, because it does a body good; but another great reason is that it involves my dogs. Since I first brought my dogs home, I leashed them up and we have been a strong team ever since. Walking is such a natural form of exercise. It improves cardiovascular fitness, strengthens bones and muscles, helps you maintain a healthy body weight, and manage chronic conditions including high blood pressure, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. I am so thankful that both of my dogs love to walk! A couple of summers ago, Chief (our oldest German Shepherd)

and I walked from our home in Polk City to the downtown Des Moines Farmers Market. He was a champ and did an awesome job, especially considering it's a 12-mile journey!

Most mornings (rain, shine, sleet, or snow) we are up and out the door at 5:00 a.m., and now that my husband, Gary, has retired, he joins us often for our morning walks! Walking together is just one of the ways my dogs bring happiness to our life, and research shows that owning a dog boosts and enhances the owner's health.

I would encourage anyone who would like to feel better overall to invest in a pair of good walking shoes and grab the leash if you have a dog. Start by walking at a pace that's comfortable for you and gradually pick up speed until you're walking briskly. You will be pleasantly surprised at your increased energy level, improved sleep, and maybe even your reduced stress.”

New Well-Being Webinars Offered

Through the work of the Healthy State of Iowa Employees, the Department of Administrative Services has partnered with Wellmark to begin providing on-demand, well-being webinars throughout 2023. Webinars will focus on physical activity, social connection, financial security, and emotional balance. Information about the webinars will be sent to agency Wellness Champions to share with co-workers each quarter and will be linked in this newsletter. The webinars for the first and second quarter are listed below and are available for viewing at your convenience.

- [Fitness at All Ages and Abilities](#) (40 minutes)
- [Sleep 101](#) (50 minutes)

Growing Vegetables in Container Gardens

Spring weather and produce prices at the grocery store may inspire you to consider growing your own vegetables this summer. Whether you have space for a garden or not, container gardening is a great option. There are a few things to keep in mind when container gardening:

1. Container size - Larger plants require larger pots to allow space for roots and to prevent the pots from blowing over. Container size can range from one gallon for herbs, spinach or lettuce to a five-gallon container for one large vegetable plant.
2. Soil - Plants in containers need mixed soils. Good commercial potting mixes will retain moisture and nutrients. Otherwise, one recipe is to mix one part garden soil, one part peat moss, one part perlite and one part coarse builders' sand. Compost may also be added for nutrients.
3. Location - Vegetable plants need six to eight hours of full sun. Watch the shadows across your yard throughout the day to determine if the location of containers will work. In addition, containers located in areas unprotected from wind will require more water than those containers that are protected.
4. Watering - Drainage holes in the pot, container size, types of soil used, and weather conditions all factor into the care of plants. You will need to monitor your plants and containers based on the climate, and conditions will change throughout the lifecycle of your plants. Soil mixtures that are dried out will pull away from the sides of a container, and water added to the container can drain out before the soil is sufficiently moistened.



For additional information on container gardening, please visit [Iowa State University Extension and Outreach](#).

Do You Know?

- Team up with your pup and get moving during the [Strut Your Pup Challenge](#), May 1-26, presented by Live Healthy Iowa!
- [SEHARC](#) (State of Iowa Health and Recreation Committee) connects you with offers for discounted tickets to area events and hosts fun activities throughout the year. If you are interested in receiving information on these opportunities, complete this [form](#) to be added to SEHARC's mailing list or follow them on Facebook!
- Live Healthy Iowa offers up the [Burst Your Thirst Challenge](#), running from June 5-30. Registration opens in May.
- Check out the DAS [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) for a number of on-demand seminars covering various topics related to health and well-being. EAP also offers confidential resources at no cost to help employees and eligible family members address challenges.
- For more great information, be sure to check out these Wellmark publications - [Wellmark Blue Magazine](#) and [Blue at Work](#).

To learn more about how Healthy EmployeesSM Powered by Wellmark is working with the State of Iowa to make the healthy choices easier for you, visit the [Healthy Employees website](#).

