



July 2024

Making the Most of Your Iowa Summer!

The fanfare of July 4th has passed and talk has turned to the Iowa State Fair, late-season vacations, and back-to-school plans. But let's not wish summer away - there's still plenty of time to make the most of it! This issue of the *Healthy State of Iowa Employees* newsletter highlights some of the activities we enjoy most this time of year, including opportunities to make a difference in the community when you are needed most.

Pedal Power: Discover Iowa by Bicycle



Riding your bike is good for your physical, mental, and emotional health. Not only is biking a fantastic way to stay active, it's also an excellent opportunity to get away and explore the picturesque landscapes Iowa has to offer.

With its extensive network of [bike trails](#) and scenic routes, Iowa is a cyclist's paradise. Check out Livongo's [Let's Go on a Joy Ride](#), outlining the benefits of and uses for different types of bicycles. Pick your favorite set of wheels and start your adventure through Iowa's beautiful terrain today.

Helping Disaster-Impacted Iowans

Iowans help, it's what we do. With the recent tornadoes, severe storms, and current flooding, there is a huge need for volunteers to aid with cleanup in affected communities. If you decide to donate time to help out in a disaster, here are some tips to keep in mind:

- Do not self-deploy. Emergency personnel often need to secure affected areas first, such as clearing downed power lines or waiting for water to recede, before it is safe for volunteers to enter.
- When making a donation, cash donations are preferred over material goods. Cash donations allow relief organizations to purchase exactly what is needed. Be sure to look for trusted and established organizations who are accepting donations.
- Remember that volunteers are often needed most in the weeks and months after the disaster.

Currently there are many areas of Iowa still in need of volunteer assistance following severe weather and flooding this summer. If you are available to assist with the flood relief efforts, visit the [NW Iowa Disaster Volunteer Needs](#) page on the Volunteer Iowa Get Connected site and see the volunteer needs in specific communities.

The [Iowa Disaster Recovery](#) website is another way to view volunteer needs as well as the locations of volunteer reception centers that are open and operating in northwest Iowa.



Greenfield is also in need of volunteers to assist with their ongoing tornado cleanup and rebuilding efforts. If you are able to help, please complete the form on [GoServ Global's website](#) with your contact information and availability.

If you or someone you know is in need of volunteer assistance to clean up from recent flooding, call the Iowa Concern Hotline at 800-447-1985.

Spend Smart. Eat Smart.



A simple trip to the grocery store these days can be frustrating - even frightening - with prices appearing to rise with each visit. But, there is some good news. With a little planning, savvy shopping, and a collection of tasty recipes, you CAN eat delicious healthy food while you stick to a tight grocery budget.

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach offers the [Spend Smart. Eat Smart](#) website, with a robust set of tools to help families with meal planning, grocery shopping, and cooking on a

budget. The website includes more than 150 inexpensive and easy-to-prepare recipes, tips to organize your kitchen, food prep techniques, videos, a blog, and much more!

You can also take Spend Smart. Eat Smart. with you to the grocery store! With the [free mobile app](#), you have all the resources you need in the palm of your hand, including:

- a unit price calculator to help you compare products to determine the better buy.
 - produce basics and information to guide your fruit and vegetable choices.
 - a recipe finder to help you keep track of your favorite recipes from the website.
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Staff Spotlight



Name: Alyson C. Fleming

Current Position: Section 8 Director, Iowa Finance Authority

Years with State: 24 years

My Healthy Choices: Movement and nutrition

“After the birth of my daughter, I took up running and became a mentor for See Us Run Des Moines, where I trained and completed a marathon with local high school students. Running three times a week wasn’t getting me healthy, though. I still had baby weight to lose, I was anxious, my eating habits were not good, and I was just not feeling great. Then, I found CrossFit and added that to my marathon training. I was lucky to find a wonderful community in my CrossFit gym. During that time, I developed some deep friendships, trained hard, and learned how to eat better.

Meanwhile, I had a hip injury that I had been ignoring for too long and needed to have surgery. Shortly after surgery I was stricken with three blood clots, one in each lung (pulmonary embolism) and one in my calf (DVT). Due to the clots, I was not allowed to start physical therapy or do any activities for three months. This took a huge toll on me mentally, physically, and emotionally.

When I finally got the all clear, I rehabbed for 18 months. I slowly got back to short runs and modified CrossFit and I concentrated on my eating habits. By maintaining a “clean” diet, I was able to drop weight and gain muscle. I was sleeping and moving better and was able to get off my anxiety medicine.

I can no longer run more than a few miles, so I have traded running for my road bicycle, my Peloton, and I continue to do CrossFit. I am aware of my food intake, trying to eat 650-800 grams of vegetables/fruits and eating a clean, dairy-free, and gluten-free (I am a Celiac) diet. My doctors (heart, lung, family, etc.) have all made comments about how my active lifestyle and clean eating habits have held off some serious heart and lung issues that come with having survived clots. Positive check-ups and feeling great are now my reminders to keep it up.”

Well-Being Webinars Offer Wealth of Information

Through the work of the Healthy State of Iowa Employees initiative, the Department of Administrative Services has partnered with Wellmark to provide on-demand, well-being webinars again throughout 2024. These webinars focus on behavior change, time management, physical activity, and holiday stress.

Webinar information will be sent to agency Wellness Champions to share with co-workers each quarter, and will also be linked in this newsletter. The first and second quarter webinars are linked below and can be viewed whenever it’s convenient for you!

[Behavior Change and the Brain](#)
[Decoding Fitness Trends](#)

Take Action!

- Wherever you are in your mental health journey, the State of Iowa offers tools and benefits to support you and your family. In collaboration with Wellmark, DAS has recently released [Healthy Everywhere](#) - a guide to building better mental health at work and home.
- Live Healthy Iowa's [The Next Step](#) challenge runs from September 9 through October 18. Lace up your shoes and get in some steps this fall! Registration opens in August.
- Summer in Iowa is a great time to eat fresh produce. Don't have a garden? No problem! Visit the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's searchable database of all [registered Farmers' Markets](#) in the state.
- Did you know Iowa boasts more than 60 state parks and forests? If you're looking to check a few more off your list, learn more about the [Iowa State Park Passport](#) and make a plan to visit these hidden gems.
- [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!
- 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 [DAS Health and Well-Being webpage](#).

The Healthy State of Iowa Employees quarterly newsletter is a cooperative effort between the Department of Administrative Services, Wellmark, and the State of Iowa Wellness Champions' Education and Engagement Committee. It's designed to help keep State of Iowa employees connected and informed of wellness opportunities around the state.

If you have questions or suggestions for future content, please contact us at healthyemployees@iowa.gov.