UD wellness program: A success story

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UD’s Wellness Program changed my life. Seriously.

I’ve been going to Wellness Program brown-bags since the late 1990s. I’m an occasional attendee at best, but I take at least one important tidbit away from every program I attend, and just like pennies, they add up.

I remember my first brown-bag like it was yesterday. It was 1998; hydrogenated oils had only recently come onto the scene as a public-health menace; “trans fats” wouldn’t make it onto nutrition labels for another eight years. Our presenter that day wanted us all to switch to olive oil ... stat.

A short time later, my dad, 55 at the time, had a heart attack and emergency quintuple bypass surgery. I went right home, pitched a half-empty can of Crisco shortening and never looked back. Suddenly, I had a first-degree family history of coronary heart disease — a principal risk factor for heart attack and stroke. I wanted no part of that, and I declared that if my kids were going to have plaque in their arteries, it wasn’t going to be on my watch.

Today, my HDL — considered a negative risk factor for heart disease — is the envy of my physician. That’s only one component of being healthy, of course, but it’s important, and for me, it all started with that Wellness Program brown-bag.

This past August, shortly after my 45th birthday, I decided it was time step up my wellness game with an activity class. This was a huge step for me. Sure, I’ve got a freakishly good cholesterol ratio ... but I cannot say the same for my large motor skills. My primary source of exercise has always been walking — chosen not for its aerobic value, but its low correlation with the need for stitches.

Most of my colleagues have seen me trip and/or fall at least once, and it doesn’t even require a trip hazard. (Though to my credit, I do occasionally stick the landing. Superstar.)

My colleague Eileen, an honest-to-goodness wellness superstar, encouraged me to try the lunchtime rowing class. I had thought about this a couple of years ago when I wrote a feature about the women’s rowing team, but I promptly bruised my shin and decided to stick with walking.

“Come on,” Eileen said. “It’s perfectly safe, and it’s easy. I hardly break a sweat.” (Note: Eileen is a marathoner. To a marathoner, “easy” is not what you think.)

Rowing is now my favorite part of every Tuesday and Thursday. I do break a sweat. And, I whine a little after class sometimes when I have trouble doing things like lifting my umbrella. But I haven’t needed stitches, and I haven’t felt this much athletic confidence since I passed intermediate swimming in 1978.

Go ahead. Step up your wellness game with a brown-bag presentation or an activity class. It could change your life. For information, see https://www.udayton.edu/hr/employee_resources/wellness_program/.

— Maureen Schlangen