

USW STARTS MOVING

BY JENNA CAPUTO

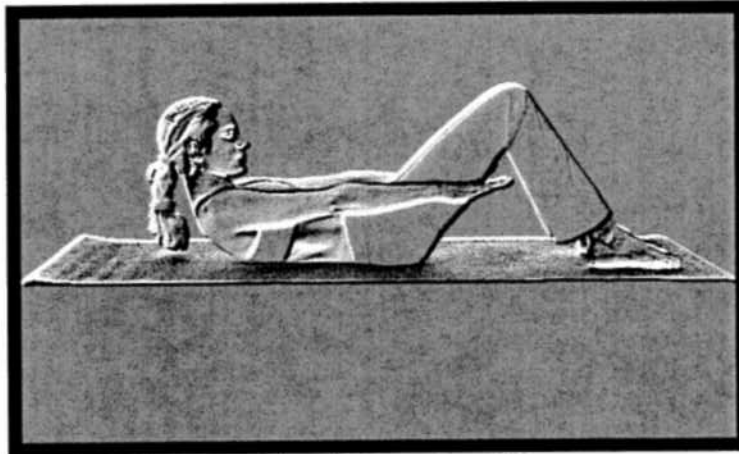
The figures are startling. Sixty-eight percent of adults and seventeen percent of children in the US are obese or overweight according to studies by the Department of Health and Human Services. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics show that physical inactivity and poor diet cause more than 400,000 deaths each year. Some say a “bad American diet” is the cause, but the underlying issue is that most Americans are just not getting the proper amount of physical activity. We went from a nation of farmers and people who worked with their hands, to a nation that is often found sitting behind a computer for the majority of the day.

And when we’re not at work, we sit in the car on the commute, sit to dinner, sit down at night to relax and watch TV. “Sitting is the worst thing you can do for your body,” says Nuhar Jaleel, owner of The Pilates Principle in Latham, NY.

“Our bodies are not made to sit. They are made to move.” And sitting hunched up in front of a computer, on the phone, or at the steering wheel can cause aches, pains, and chronic disorders that you might not even think about. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) released a statement in July 2011 with their new recommendations on quantity and quality of exercise that most of us do not even come close to reaching. The reports shows that at the very least, adults should be doing 150 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per week, and should also include resistance, flexibility, and neuromotor training into their weekly routines as well.

They also state that these guidelines are not enough for those that sit at a desk all day. “Sedentary behavior – sitting for long periods of time – is distinct from physical activity and has been shown to be a health risk in itself. Meeting the guidelines for physical activity does not make up for a sedentary lifestyle.” That said, even though many of us do not meet these guidelines, the ACSM says that we can still benefit from even some activity.

So what does this mean for office workers and how can we even begin to live up to these numbers? “Most



people know that they need to exercise more,” says Jenna Laboda, USW member from PEF’s Health and Safety department and an area dance teacher. “But with our hectic lifestyles, it’s hard to make a change to incorporate going out and taking a class, or making it to the gym every day. Even with the best of intentions, once people get in the car after a long day of work, they just end up going home. Having a workplace program offers a nice convenience for employees. As soon as you’re done with work, you just walk downstairs, take your class, and go home. No excuses necessary. You can help reverse the negative effects of sitting all day, do something that’s

good for your body and well-being (not to mention help lower stress levels), and still make it home in time for dinner without ever having to go anywhere else.”

Workplace wellness programs are becoming much more commonplace as employers try to provide resources for their employees often stuck in technology driven sedentary lifestyles. Besides contributing to lower health care costs, these programs make for happier, less stressed and more productive employees in the workforce. And USW has jumped on the bandwagon, offering a way to help combat the scary statistics and negative effects of office work.

“USW wanted to help provide an arena for our members to benefit from all the great wellness resources in our area. We could see that there was a need for a program like this at PEF,” says Nancy Holford, one of the coordinators for the USW sponsored wellness program

at PEF.

USW raised the issue at the USW/PEF Labor-Management Committee. The union and PEF worked to develop a pilot program offered to both USW members and PEF M/C staff. PEF provided the space at Headquarters and USW paid for the program to start with a 6 week session taught by Nuhar Jaleel (The Pilates Principle) and Karden Rabine (Bodywork Professionals). The class was geared toward mixed levels and incorporated Pilates classes as well as an introduction to The MELT Method, which is a scientific method that can decompress and de-stress the body and helps treat common causes of chronic

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pain, stomach issues, lower belly paunch, and even wrinkles and cellulite. The response was tremendous. A waiting list had to be created as the number of participants signing up for the introductory pilot quickly exceeded the limit for the class. "We were pleasantly surprised and overwhelmed by the number of people interested in this first session," says Holford. "It was an exciting beginning to the program."

The participants were also excited by this new opportunity at PEF and are enthusiastic for upcoming programs. "I've been saying for ages that I needed to do this type of thing – but until you made it so easy for me to attend, I didn't!" Kathi Blinn said. Marlene Bradley, another participant in the pilot states, "I had no idea what they would be like. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to do them and so found the experience positive and helpful."

"I wasn't sure what to expect with the MELT classes since I had never done that before," Laboda said. "But I was amazed at how much better I felt even by the end of the first class. And the next day I was surprised at the stories I heard from other participants that not only had an amazing night's sleep after, but were shocked that they were pain free from chronic conditions for the first time in years! It really goes to show that even just a small change can be beneficial in so many ways."

USW plans to continue working with PEF to organize other wellness opportunities, starting with a new fitness session this winter at headquarters. The plan is to include both union and M/C staff in the various events which will include more Pilates and MELT as well as new fitness options and other wellness workshops. Announcements will be sent out as each event approaches. "The support for this pilot was magnificent and we're really looking forward to offering a variety of

wellness options for our members in the upcoming months! We will also be talking about how to bring similar wellness programs to the other PEF offices," Holford said.

Laboda agrees, saying, "We can't change what we need to do for our jobs, which is why it's so great that USW is making it possible for us to at least change the way we feel at the end of the day. As much as we like to say we'll go out and adhere to all the exercise recommendations, the sad reality is that our hectic lives make it hard to meet those goals. But every step toward that goal counts and USW is making it easy for those of us at PEF to start in the right direction and get moving to do something to contribute to our overall wellness. And that's what's really important – just to keep moving!"

*To view the ACSM recommendations - <http://www.acsm.org/about-acsm/media-room/news-releases/2011/08/01/acsm-issues-new-1-ecommendations-on-quantity-and-quality-of-exercise>



Make a difference! Help find a cure for cancer! The American Cancer Society's Cancer Prevention Study will gain a better understanding of the factors that cause or prevent cancer. The study is working to enroll 300,000 adults from all racial/ethnic backgrounds from all over the US. Participants will be required to complete an on-line survey every two to three years for 20-30 years. You can become a CPS-3 participant if you are between the ages of 30 and 65; have never been diagnosed with cancer; and are willing to commit to the study long-term. I have been assigned to help PEF and CSEA enroll participants. However, the study is open to all! I will have more information for those who are interested in March. If you have any questions, please e-mail me at pmurphy@pef.org.

Everyone knows someone... who has been affected by cancer, and we all know that "helpless" feeling as we stand by, watch and hope.



There is a way to help.

Enrolling in the nationwide Cancer Prevention Study-3 (CPS-3) will make a real difference in the fight against cancer.



It's free. If you are 30 - 65 years old, have never had a cancer diagnosis and are willing to be a long-term participant, just fill out a questionnaire, give a small blood sample and a waist measurement.

The American Cancer Society will follow up with surveys every two to three years to determine how life style choices affect cancer risk.



Your participation in CPS-3 will leave a legacy of hope for generations to come.

Don't feel "helpless" anymore. Please join the CPS-3, and make a difference!

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