

# Wellness Matters

The Wellness Newsletter of the Scantic Valley Regional Health Trust

June 2008

## Meet Our New Wellness Program!

By Arlene Miller

The Scantic Valley Regional Health Trust was formed over 15 years ago in an attempt to regionalize our health care coverage and reduce costs. The Trust is a consortium of 6 political entities, which include the towns of East Longmeadow, Hampden, Longmeadow and Wilbraham, the Wilbraham Regional School District and the Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative.

The Trust is able to offer a variety of health plans to their employees. Most of our plans are self funded by the trust. That is, the premium employees pay increases and decreases annually depending on our experience and the use of the system. The more the costs, the more we pay.

For years now, the SVRHT board has been looking at wellness programs as a way to reduce or contain our costs. If we can prevent a heart attack, for instance, it costs the Trust less. While our various health plans do

## Greetings From Amy

Hi everyone! I am thrilled to introduce myself to you as the very first Wellness Coordinator for the Scantic Valley Regional Health Trust. As Arlene stated above, you will now be offered a whole new level of wellness programming.

Beginning with this newsletter you will have ongoing access to health education programs and classes designed specifically to improve your health and quality of life. Special attention will be paid to tobacco cessation, physical activity, nutrition and stress management. You will be encouraged (even enticed finan-

offer screenings and occasional smoking cessation or walking programs, this has been sporadic and not well attended.

Things are about to change!

The board is very pleased to be offering a whole new level of wellness programs through our newly hired (although part-time) wellness coordinator, Amy Higgins. It is our hope and expectation that our regional and self-funded approach to health care, coupled with this comprehensive wellness program will help to improve our general health and contain costs. The more employees who participate in the wellness programs, the more success we will achieve. Remember, our health care costs are directly related to the health of our employees.

cially sometimes!) to participate in these programs because it is a winning opportunity for everyone...you improve your health, your employer gets a more productive worker who costs less in health care dollars.

My sincere hope is that not only will you become a more satisfied and productive employee, but you will also feel better than you've ever felt.

### To Contact Amy:

Email: amyhiggins2003@yahoo.com



## About Amy

Amy Higgins has worked in the field of employee wellness for over a decade. After graduating in 1995 with a degree in Exercise Science from the University of Massachusetts in Amherst Amy managed fitness and wellness programs for both the Travelers and the Aetna in Hartford, Connecticut. Her passion for fitness and wellness led her to become certified as a group exercise instructor, personal trainer and yoga teacher. A sought after lecturer, Amy has taught fitness and yoga workshops throughout the country. She lives in Longmeadow with her husband Luke, sons Simon and Gabriel, and black lab Jake.

ALL WHO RETURN  
THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON PAGE 3

**BY JUNE 20**

WILL ENTER A  
DRAWING TO WIN A

**\$50 GAS CARD!**

There will be one drawing for each of the following locations: Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, Hampden, Wilbraham, Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District, Lower Pioneer Valley

Educational Collaborative

## How well do you Know Your Resources?

Please review the information below to familiarize yourself with some of the wellness resources that are already offered through the SVRHT. Note: some of them are offered through health insurers some are not.

### Tobacco

One important change you can make to improve your overall health and increase life expectancy is to quit using tobacco products now. Former smokers have a lower risk for lung cancer than do current smokers. In one to nine months after quitting smoking, your lungs will function better. And after 10 years, your risk of lung cancer is nearly the same as someone who never smoked.

No matter what your age or how long you smoked, quitting will help you live longer.. People who stop smoking before age 35 avoid 90% of the health issues attributable to tobacco. Even those who quit later in life can significantly reduce their risk of dying at a young age.

Ex-smokers can also enjoy a higher quality of life with fewer illnesses from cold and flu viruses, better self-reported health status, and reduced rates of bronchitis and pneumonia. *Written by the American Heart Association*

#### Get more information:

*Mass Dept of Public Health*

1-800-TRY-TO-STOP (1-800-879-8678)

[www.trytostop.org](http://www.trytostop.org)

*Blue Cross Blue Shield MA* offers the Living Free Program-visit [www.bluecrossma.com](http://www.bluecrossma.com), then click on My Wellbeing and proceed to Healthy Programs.

### Physical Activity

I think we all know by now that physical activity is an important part of maintaining good health. But how much activity do we really need? Over the course of the next few months the SVRHT Wellness Program will provide educational programs and activities that teach you everything you need to know about exercise, but for now keep the following recommendation from the American College of Sports Medicine and the American Heart Association in mind:

Do moderately intense cardio 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week OR vigorously intense cardio

20 minutes a day, 3 days a week

AND

Do 8-10 strength training exercises, two sets each of 8-12 repetitions twice a week

#### Get more information:

*BCBS HMO (MA)* offers a fitness benefit for members that provides up to \$150 that can be used toward membership or exercise classes at a health club.

*Tufts* offers discounted membership to the Appalachian Mountain Club and participating fitness centers and Curves locations. Log onto <http://www.tuftshealthplan.com/members> to for more information on discounts.

*Health New England* will reimburse up to \$150 per family per calendar year for fitness center membership

### Weight Management

Although appearance is one reason to maintain a healthy weight, the most important reasons are related to health. Even moderate weight excess (10 to 20 pounds for a person of average height) increases the risk of death, particularly among adults ages 30 to 64. The American Heart Association now recognizes obesity as a major risk factor for coronary heart disease. In addition, even moderate weight gain may increase a person's chance of the following conditions: Type 2 Diabetes, some types of cancer, sleep apnea, asthma and arthritis.

The most effective way to maintain weight is through a combination of regular physical activity, a sound nutrition plan and stress management.

#### Get more information:

*BCBS HMO (MA)* provides up to \$150 toward fees paid for a qualified Weight Watchers or hospital-based weight loss program.

*Tufts Health Plan* offers a variety of fitness and nutrition discounts including: Curves, participating fitness centers, Nutrition Counseling, traditional Weight Watchers meetings as well as on-line programs, and participating hospital-based Wellness Centers. Log onto <http://www.tuftshealthplan.com/members> to for more information on discounts.

*Health New England* will reimburse up to \$150 per calendar year for Weight Watchers meetings. Log onto: [http://www.healthnewengland.com/healthydirections/hne\\_programs/index.html](http://www.healthnewengland.com/healthydirections/hne_programs/index.html)

### Please log onto your health insurers website. Each site has a wealth of information.

Health New England <http://www.healthnewengland.com/healthydirections/index.html>

Tufts <http://www.tuftshealthplan.com/members>

Blue Cross Blue Shield <http://www.bluecrossma.com>, then click on My Wellbeing and proceed to Healthy Programs

# Health Matters Questionnaire

Everyone who completes and returns this questionnaire by Friday June 20th will be entered into a drawing for a \$50 gas card. There will be one drawing for each of the following locations: Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, Hampden, Wilbraham, Hampden-Wilbraham Regional School District, Lower Pioneer Valley Educational Collaborative.

## Questions

1. From the resources information on page 2 of this newsletter, please list the phone number of the Try to Stop smoking cessation hotline.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How many days per week does the American College of Sports Medicine recommend that all adults should strength train?

(hint: the answer is on page 2!)

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Please choose the top three you would like to see offered by the SVRHT Wellness Program

- a. \_\_\_\_\_ walking groups
- b. \_\_\_\_\_ onsite fitness classes
- c. \_\_\_\_\_ weight management/weight loss incentive programs
- d. \_\_\_\_\_ onsite yoga classes
- e. \_\_\_\_\_ lunch and learn workshops

If e., please list topics: you would like to learn about \_\_\_\_\_

- f. \_\_\_\_\_ quarterly newsletters
- g. \_\_\_\_\_ onsite chair massage
- h. \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_ TOWN/ORGANIZATION \_\_\_\_\_

Return completed questionnaire by email to: amyhiggins2003@yahoo.com or by paper to your Benefits Administrator- BY JUNE 20th!