

**WELLNESS NEWSLETTER**

**APRIL 2007**

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**Health Risk Appraisal 2007**

The Health & Wellness Committee is pleased to announce that we have once again partnered with the Wellness Institute at Seven Oaks General Hospital to assist us in conducting a follow-up Health Risk Appraisal (HRA).

In February & March 2005 an initial survey was completed and an astounding 80% of staff in the division responded. Everyone who completed the survey and identified their name was provided an individual report outlining their individual health risks. Based on these surveys, the division received aggregate data which has

helped guide the Health & Wellness Committee. With this information, we have developed an operational plan which focuses on 4 priorities: Communication, Morale, Physical Activity and Stress Management. We have developed a structure by which staff at each location has a voice through their Wellness Representatives and we have additionally sponsored many exciting divisional and site-based Health & Wellness initiatives.

The HRA will once again provide Seine River School Division with measurements of the overall health for our

workforce. This time, it was accomplished through the use of an online survey during the period of April 16, 2007 to April 20, 2007.

A summary report will be provided to the Health & Wellness Committee by the end of May 2007 and the results will once again help us identify health and wellness issues affecting Seine River School Division staff.



**SRSD Staff Volleyball Tournament**



Volleyball Hawaiian style! Ste. Anne Elementary staff knows how to have fun!

On Friday January 26, 2007, teams from across the division gathered at Ecole St. Norbert Immersion and College Ste. Norbert Collegiate to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Staff Volleyball Tournament. Teams from College Lorette Collegiate, College St. Norbert Collegiate, Ecole St. Norbert Immersion, Ecole St. Adolphe School, Ste. Anne Elementary School, Ecole

Ste. Anne Immersion, Ste. Anne Collegiate, Division Office and Ecole Lorette Immersion represented their locations with enthusiasm and excitement.

It was an extremely successful event which saw the teams from College Lorette Collegiate and Ecole St. Adolphe School emerge as victors of the tournament. There was however some

controversy as to who was the real winner...but we'll let this one alone for now!

Thank you to all the participants and cheerleaders who attended and a special thanks to Ecole St. Norbert Immersion and College Ste. Norbert Collegiate for hosting the event.

See you all there next year!!

## Stress: What is it?

Although we all talk about stress, it often isn't clear what stress is really about. Many people consider stress to be something that happens to them, an event such as an injury or a promotion. Others think that stress is what happens to our body, mind and behaviour in response to an event (e.g. heart pounding, anxiety, or nail biting.) While stress does involve events and our response to them, these are not the most important factors. Our thoughts about the situations in which we find ourselves are the critical factor.

When something happens to us, we automatically evaluate the situation mentally. We decide if it is threatening to us, how we need to deal with the situation and what skills we can use. If we decide that the demands of the situation outweigh the skills we have, then we label the situation as "stressful" and react with the classic "stress response." If we decide that our coping skills outweigh the demands of the situation, then we don't see it as "stressful."

Everyone sees situations differently and has different cop-

ing skills. For this reason, no two people will respond exactly the same way to a given situation.

Additionally, not all situations that are labeled "stressful" are negative. The birth of a child, being promoted or moving to a new home may not be perceived as threatening. However, we may feel that situations are "stressful" because we don't feel fully prepared to deal with them.

Some situations in life are stress-provoking, but it is our thoughts that determine

whether they are a problem to us.

How we perceive a stress-provoking event and how we react to it determines its impact on our health. We may be motivated and invigorated by the events in our lives, or we may see some as "stressful" and respond in a manner that may have a negative effect on our physical, mental and social well-being. If we always respond in a negative way our health and happiness may suffer. By understanding ourselves and our reactions to stress-provoking situations, we can learn to handle stress more effectively.

## Characteristics of Mental Health

Understanding the characteristics that make up good mental health will help you determine how mentally fit you are. Here are some real-life examples:

**Ability to enjoy life** You've just become engaged. You join your friends and family in celebrating the future you are planning with your partner. You realize that life before and after your marriage will bring challenges, but worries about problems that may crop up do not dim the joy you feel.

**Resilience** Due to changes in

the marketplace, you are suddenly laid off from a job you love. You are shocked and angry, but those emotions fade quickly as you put the event in perspective. You gather solid references, revamp your resume and begin your job search.

**Balance** An old friend confronts you, saying you never have time for them. You are taken aback and give excuses of overwork. Then you look at it from their point of view, and realize you have been letting that relationship and other

personal interests slide. You make a commitment to restore the balance.

**Self-actualization** While working full-time at an undemanding job, you take a night course in a field that has always intrigued you. You realize your talents and interests lie with this other area. You consult your teacher for advice and begin pursuing a new career path.

**Flexibility** The love of your life has walked out. You are devastated and feel like all

your plans for the future have been ruined. After grieving for a time, you begin to see that your expectations of the relationship and of your partner were unrealistic. Gradually, you reconsider what you want and expect from a partner.

## New Diet Trends

**Whole Foods:** Canada's Guidelines to Healthy Eating now incorporates findings on micronutrients and phytochemicals in whole foods like lentils, nuts, beans, unrefined grains, fruits and vegetables.

**Fat Awareness:** The Heart and Stroke Foun-

dation of Canada says beneficial fats should comprise about a quarter of our caloric intake. However, trans fats, used widely in processed foods, raise levels of harmful cholesterol in the body. Last year, Health Canada launched a program to educate people on trans (or par-

tially hydrogenated) fats, and Canada became the first country to require food labeling for trans fat content.

**Functional Foods:** A range of antioxidants are found in higher levels in some grains and produce. This finding has launched a marketing

blitz on "functional" or "super" foods, like blueberries and salmon.

**Laughter is the easiest and cheapest way to boost your emotional health, prevent disease and relieve stress.**

## HEALTH & WELLNESS IN THE DIVISION

### Richer School

Once per month all staff join in and bring lunch for the rest. After school exercise programs for staff.. For April Fool's Day, staff picked a name out of the hat and was that person for part of the morning. Birthday cakes to celebrate birthdays.

### École St. Adolphe School

Reintroduced exercise ball to staff room . A taste of Florida lunch. Conducted staff meeting and computer training during a "cold" day. Resulted in one less meeting while school in session. Participation in the divisional volleyball tournament. Staff volleyball team challenged our Grade 8's to a game and whole school watched. Staff volleyball night--friends and parents also participated. Murder Mystery Evening. Frothy hot chocolate day.

### Ste. Anne Elementary School

Participation in the divisional volleyball tournament. Secret Santa and Secret Valentine's party. Celebrations Dinner Theatre for our Christmas gathering. Spring golf outings. Staff take turns providing food for our staff parties. Staff recognition.

### École Ste. Anne Immersion

Once a month physical activity for staff such as basketball, volleyball, skating & broomball.

During inside recess (on cold days) have health walk throughout school for the full 15 minutes. Staff and student participation.

### La Barriere Crossings School

The principal and teachers helped to provide much needed relief before the Christmas break. Principal Overall covered a 40 minute period for all LBC teachers. In turn, the teachers "paid it forward" and provided their EA's with an extended break or lunch. The break for all was truly appreciated!!

Every two months, LBC staff initiates an evening out. The evening is optional and willing participants enjoy socializing out-side of school. Everyone has a great time!!

### Collège Lorette Collegiate

Pickrel lunch for staff. Men made breakfast for women. Extracurricular activities on "Storm Days".

### Division Office

Best Christmas-decorated office contest. Spring Break BBQ. Participation in divisional volleyball tournament.

### École St. -Norbert Immersion

We always have healthy snacks at our staff meetings. We were all given a teacher bag for appreciation. We had a chocolate fountain with fresh fruits. We played basketball and volleyball against the students.

### LaSalle School

Activities enjoyed by staff members sharing common interest such as scrapbooking and walking groups.

The focus of **Collège St. Norbert Collegiate's** wellness/social committee this year has been staff togetherness. We have planned events whereby the staff can come together as a group to socialize and get to know one another better. As a committee, we decided to "send" birthday greetings to all our staff during the month of their birth. Every month a member of the committee purchases cards for all the staff that are celebrating birthdays. We have all staff members sign each card and on the last Thursday of the month we hand them out. We also celebrate the day with a birthday cake/dessert. Events that we have planned throughout the year were potluck lunches, Valentine's day cards & chocolates, game night at the end of first semester and a pig roast at the end of the year.

**Adding an extra 20 minutes of walking to your daily routine will burn off 7 pounds of body fat per year.**

**The more physically active you are, the less likely you will require gall bladder surgery. The most likely people to form gallstones are those who are obese.**

## TAKE A BREAK FROM FITNESS

Take a break every few months from your exercise program. It's beneficial to both physical and mental well being, especially if your workouts are suffering, and you've lost interest and energy. Learn to listen to your mind and body and allow a break when you need it. Many fear taking time away from their workout will cause them to backslide, losing all their hard earned exercise gains. Not so. You won't backslide in only one week. Longer than a week, however, and

you'll quickly start to lose some of the progress you've made.

Athletes and coaches recommend a recovery week every 4-10 weeks. You can completely rest or try other less intense activities like walking, riding your bike or stretching. You'll come back to your regular exercise pattern refreshed and energized.

When you stop exercising, your fitness level will drop

quickly after the first twelve days, and then continue to decline at a slower rate. Other studies have shown losses of 50% aerobic (heart/lung) fitness and 50% muscular strength in two to four weeks. Very fit weight trainers showed a 14-day layoff from training didn't affect their performance levels.

The fitter you are, the longer it takes to lose your exercise gains when you stop. Even after three months of inactivity, a highly fit person is still

considerably fitter than a non-exerciser. Strength levels of a fit person will usually stabilize at 50% higher than sedentary individuals. That's encouraging news to fit people who may be forced to stop activity due to injury or illness.

If you eat sensibly, you won't lose any muscular definition or size by being away from the weights for only a week. To keep fat from covering your muscles, go light on your fat intake!

Tammy McCallum – École St. Norbert Immersion  
Sandy Turcotte – Collège St. Norbert Collegiate  
Doug Proch – La Salle School  
Helen Grandmont – Bus Driver  
Susan Lepage – Dawson Trail School  
Simon Laplante – École St. Norbert Immersion  
Chris Huppe – Division Office  
Roy Seidler – Division Office  
Greg Reid – Trustee

## Quick Hands-On Stress Relief

Got a minute? Get a massage – a self-massage, that is. These moves can help relieve tension around your head, neck, shoulders and hands:

**The scalp soother.** Place thumbs behind your ears and spread your fingers on top of your head. Move your scalp back and forth slightly by making circles with your fingertips for 15-20 seconds.

**The eye easer.** Close your eyes and place your ring fingers directly under your eyebrows, near the bridge of your nose. Slowly increase pressure for five seconds, then gently release. Repeat 2-3 times.

**The shoulder saver.** Place your left hand on the right side of your neck by your shoulder. Press fingers firmly into the muscle while tucking your chin in toward your chest. Hold this position for 10 seconds, release, and then repeat on the left side.

**The palm pleaser.** Lace your fingers together, leaving thumbs free. Slowly knead your left thumb into the palm of your right hand for 20-30 seconds. Then repeat on your left hand.

## Bet You Didn't Know

Men are 20% more likely than women to sneeze in a dusty room ... a cup of coffee-flavored yogurt contains about as much caffeine as a 12-ounce can of cola ... dandruff is not caused by dry scalp – fact is, it's more common with oily scalps ... whispering when you're hoarse is actually worse for your vocal cords than speaking normally ... “Rx,” the symbol appearing on prescriptions, means “take,” from the Latin word for recipe.

Experience all the benefits of exercise by doing at least 30 minutes of aerobic activity five times a week. After you have established regular aerobic workouts, you can add strength training to your plan. Lifting weights not only builds muscle strength, it raises your metabolism, causing you to burn more calories. Stretching and related activities such as yoga can also be added to your program to keep muscles and joints flexible.

Spring is the perfect time to put a bounce in your step by beginning an exercise program. Aerobic activities, such as walking or running, are a wonderful way to enjoy the warmer weather while getting in shape. If you have been inactive during the winter months or if you have never exercised regularly, check with your doctor.

Weight training is a powerful tool against osteoporosis. It can increase spinal bone mineral density by 13 percent in six months.

## The Internet and Your Health: The Benefits and Dangers

The Internet has become second only to a visit to the doctor as a way for Canadians to find health information. Two-thirds of Canadians with Internet access use it for medical research.

However, the result from typing a symptom into a search engine can be more alarming than illuminating. The Internet is an unregulated medium, so you will likely find as much misinformation as sound advice.

Anyone can purchase a domain name and create a site, regardless of his or her motives or qualifications. The Canadian Competition Bureau scans the Internet for questionable material, but its reach is

[www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca).

Some commercial or personal sites may be interesting secondary resources, but be careful. The Canadian Health Network [www.canadian-health-network.ca](http://www.canadian-health-network.ca) offers several questions you should ask yourself when visiting these sites, including:

1. Are the author's name, credentials and contact information listed?
2. Is the information recent?
3. Has the site clearly presented its disclaimers?

The Health Network suggests using extra caution if the site charges a fee, promotes a product or service or asks for personal information. It also

suggests, such as the Canadian Women's Health Network [www.cwhn.ca](http://www.cwhn.ca) or the College of Family Physicians of Canada [www.cfpc.ca](http://www.cfpc.ca).

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The Health Network suggests using extra caution if the site charges a fee, promotes a product or service or asks for personal information. It also recommends you ignore spam or popup ads offering medical services or prescription drugs at all times. Online research can broaden your awareness, but keep in mind that you often can't be sure of the validity of what you're reading. Be rigorous in checking the quality of the resources you use and talk to your health care provider about how what you read online applies to you.

