

Mower Refreshed Living

Recently I saw a book cover titled “Do Hard Things”, it caught my eye because typically like water I will default to the path of least resistance. Why would I choose to do hard things?

As I connect with individuals and groups across the county I’m realizing the path of least resistance isn’t a journey I travel alone! By nature we don’t choose to do hard things, we struggle to choose the more difficult path, especially when it comes to our health.

Research in our county revealed that you and I are not typically motivated to make healthy choices because of doctor’s advice, programming, or even financial benefit. What the research discovered was a primary motivator to do hard things when it comes to our wellness is rooted in the desire to be available for those we love.

Another significant discovery was life transitions were highly motivating moments for us in Mower County. It may come in a life cycle transition like becoming a parent or grandparent, a death of a loved one or in a life event transition like graduation, retirement, new job, or change in our health or the health of someone we care for.

Transitions can inspire us to do hard things. To take a few more walks each week, to cut back on our late night snacking, to park a little further from the store entrance, to take deep breathes before dealing with conflict or to strive to focus on being more grateful.

The new year presents a transition for us each, we leave 2011 behind and move into 2012. Inspired to consider doing hard things in 2012? Join efforts with a friend, family member or co worker to make the hard things less difficult.

Eventually as we practice doing hard things, little transitions occur in us, and the healthy choice becomes our new default, it becomes the easier choice in our daily living!



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What is Mower Refreshed?

- A county wide movement that inspires and ignites individuals and groups to promote health not healthcare.
- An effort that seeks to change culture surrounding wellness, supporting the healthy choices becoming the easier choice by nature for every citizen.
- A connecting point for citizen-driven wellness ideas and efforts to collaborate with one another, share resources, and experience opportunity to network with others in the county.

County Connections

Adams/Austin/Brownsdale/Corning/Dexter/Elkton/GrandMeadow/Johnsburg/Lansing/LeRoy/Lyle/Mapleview/Racine/RoseCreek/Sargeant/Taopi/Waltham

County Connections is a spot where we want to highlight groups, individual, and businesses who are striving to make healthy choices a priority in our county. You'll see in this issue and the many to follow that Mower County is filled with folks who are innovative and inspiring in the way they make healthy choices easier for themselves and those around them.

One small company that inspired us is IBI Data (www.ibidata.com) in Brownsdale, MN. A business of approximately fifty five employees is using creative and cost effective means to promote wellness and build community within the company.



The efforts at IBI Data are rooted in three components that increase the likelihood of successfully engaging employees in workplace wellness:

1. Employers who are innovative thinkers, have commitment to overall wellness, and understand it will take time to see the ROI (return on investment).
2. A champion employee(s) who facilitate the development of a work environment that values health and can build a sense of community with co workers.
3. Employees who are willing to try new thinking and activities.

IBI Data has the needed ingredients in owner Katherine Harte, programmer Sherry Anderson, and a workforce that experiences low turnover and functions as a community. Sherry volunteers as the wellness committee coordinator but is quick to state that the owner's commitment to healthy living and willingness to think outside the box as well as the support from co-workers makes organizing wellness efforts at IBI Data a whole lot easier.

IBI Data has been practical and frugal in promoting well living. That's encouraging for businesses with limited financial resources.

Here are just a few of the ideas from IBI Data:

- **Wall of gratitude** located by the employee break room that provides opportunity for employees to thank one another, to recognize others and acknowledge a job well done, a good deed offered, and encouragement in the workplace. This no cost idea has a high rate ROI as it energizes and encourages employees/employers in their day to day work but also develops healthy workplace relationships.
- Employee inspired ideas like a **table with healthy snack options** close by the vending machine. Choices aren't taken away but healthy alternatives are given.
- Simple **paths developed on the property for employees to walk, run or snowshoe** on during lunch break promote movement and opportunity for fresh air.
- Small corner dedicated to **exercise equipment that can be easily accessed** during a 15 minute break with a donated Wii system near where a Just Dance challenge can occur between co worker during lunch.
- **Health risk assessments (HRA)** was offered last year to all workers, an opportunity to confidentially assess their overall health through a questionnaire, fasting blood draw to test cholesterol and blood sugar levels and opportunity to have blood pressure taken. This voluntarily offer to employees had a 80% rate of participation! The success of involvement was primarily founded on coworkers encouraging one another and self motivation to be healthier.
- **Workplace wellness events** such as the current event, a pound for pound challenge. At no cost to the company, employees are motivated to shed pounds so they can donate food to a local food shelf in the amount of the pounds lost. Last year as a group 80 pounds were lost and 80 pounds of food donated.

Simple wellness efforts in the workplace can offer a sense of community and potentially impact the cost of health care regardless of the size of the business. This company has found balance in not taking choices away but providing opportunities to have a choice that encourages well living in the workplace!



Refreshed Focus

In our launch e-News issue we mentioned four goal groups that developed from research in our county. In this issue we want to communicate more about the goal groups and what they re focusing on.

Each goal group has citizen leaders that facilitate the team. The group is made up of folks who have a specific interest in the goals the team is centered on or is looking to grow in our county.

Each goal group meets one time monthly for one hour to share resources and ideas on wellness efforts occurring or needed in our county. The ideas may become a “deliverable”. A deliverable is an actual program event or opportunity that citizens can participate in. We might describe a deliverable as a practical tool for us to utilize as we strive to live well and make healthier choices.

Let's look at each group and their focus points...

Healthier Choices: Developing sustainable strategies that encourage the population of Mower county to make healthier choices. This group hopes to increase access to healthier food choices, increase active living opportunities and active lifestyles and promote and support healthy environmental issues.

Here are a few examples of the ten current deliverables: Spouts Children's Garden, Prairie Visions, Get Fit Be Fit, Junior Master Gardening

Mental Fitness: To increase resilience when dealing with stress and anxiety. This team is working to increase the practice of intentional choices to reduce stress and anxiety in Mower county, and to encourage networks that connect community members and decrease anxiety.

The deliverables that this group is currently engaged with is developing “Take 5”, a practical tool for all ages to better cope with stress and a time bank concept for folks to network and trade skills and talents with no money exchanged.

Workforce Wellness: To create a healthier and more productive workforce. This team is collaborating efforts to increase productivity, reduces absenteeism, and better manage health care costs.

This team is collaborating on ways to provide options for businesses in the county to promote wellness that are little or no cost.

Community Connections: To connect Mower county's fragmented services and make connection for service providers and citizens of Mower County. This group is focusing on increasing county citizens knowledge about available services, programs, and events as well as decreasing the number of incorrect referrals between agencies.

Currently this group is working on updating and further developing a phone and web page for our county's services through United Ways 2-1-1 system.

If you are inspired by any of the goal group focuses, are interested in receiving more information on the teams current deliverables, or have ideas that have been ignited, contact us to build new collaborations and partnerships!

Contact us @ **Mower Refreshed** to receive the e-news and let us know about your events, ideas about wellness, photographs of our county or request a speaker for your group to learn about Mower Refreshed. Share a story for “County Connections” of a person or group that is making the healthy choice easier for others!

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**Coming Soon...
Mower Refreshed Web Site!**
Our collaboration with Riverland Community College Web Design Class and instructor Brenda Mandt has given our newly formed Marketing Team excellent designs to use in developing the web site. Thank you to Brenda and her students for partnering with Mower Refreshed! We hope this site will be a great connecting point for us across our county on well living. This is an opportunity to submit your photos of landscape and folks in Mower County, wellness focused video clips, and more ways to creatively promote well living! Look for the web site in early February 2012.

**Facebook, Texting,
Twitter... is on the Way!**
Social media will be another tool we will use to build our “county” community and share ideas, events, encouragement, and network surrounding health and wellness in our area. Links from our web page will keep you connected!



Refreshing Calendar Events

Opinions and ideas expressed at events listed do not necessarily reflect those of Mower Refreshed.

Shooting Star Trail is now complete from Rose Creek to LeRoy! Your journey can start at the Rose Peddler in Rose Creek. Winter fun...FREE rental of snowshoes to use on the Shooting Star Trail available at Rose Peddler. Sponsored by Prairie Vision www.prairievisions.org

Strong Women, Strong Bones. A non-aerobic exercise class. M W F 10-10:45am at United Methodist Church in Dexter. Contact: Linda Johnson @ 507-440-1225

Popcorn and Planning: Junior Master Gardeners. Saturday , January 21 @ Mower county 4H Building. Try six popcorn recipes and bring home popcorn grown in the JMG garden! Free event. 3rd grade and up. RSVP by January 13 @ U of MN Extension 507-437-9552

Silver Sneakers Classes. Focus is muscular strength and range of movement. Tuesday and Thursdays 8:30-9:30am and 4:30-5:30pm @ Mower County Senior Center Free through some insurances and \$2.00 for Senior Center Members. More classes coming! Contact Brigitte Gorman for more info @ 507-433-1939

Kids Cooking Classes. Sponsored by Hy-Vee of Austin. Check out www.hy-vee.com or www.austin.k12.mn.us/clc/ for more information on classes and dates.

Supermarket Store Tours. January 4, February 8 or March 7 @ Hy-Vee in Austin. 10am-12pm. \$5.00. Develop confidence in what your cart carries and learn tricks to find the most heart healthy choices. Contact: Jen Haugen at

jhaugen@hy-vee.com or 507-437-7625

Gentle Yoga. Mondays 4-4:45pm @ First United Methodist in Austin. Contact Shari Mason for more info @ 507-433-7619

Fitness Yoga. Mondays 5:15-6:00pm @ First United Methodist in Austin. Contact Shari Mason for more info @ 507-433-7619

Austin Area YMCA. Check their web site to get the latest on classes and dates.

Childbirth Education Classes. Childbirth preparation classes are now offered by Mayo Clinic Health System Austin. Four, 3 hour classes from 6-9pm are now offered for women in their third trimester and their support person by health professionals at MCHS Austin. Classes are free of charge. Next class series is January 16, 19, 23, and 26. Register at mayoclinichealthsystem.org and click on Minnesota, Austin, Classes/Events or call 507-434-1380.

Infant Passenger Safety Classes. For next classes offering visit mayoclinichealthsystem.org and click on Minnesota, Austin, Classes/Events or call 507-434-1380.

Snowshoeing Event at Lake Louise State Park. February 11, 1:00-4:00pm. For more information and to register call 507-324-5707 or visit http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/lake_louise/index.html

Visit our Mower County's school websites for activities, events and classes through the schools, Community Education and Early Childhood programs:

Austin: www.austin.k12.mn.us

Grand Meadow: www.gm.k12.mn.us

LeRoy: www.leroy.k12.mn.us

Lyle: www.lyle.k12.mn.us

Pacelli-Austin: www.pacellschools.org

Austin: www.riverland.edu

Southland-Adams: www.isd500.k12.mn.us



Hormel Nature Center Photo: John Duren

Mower County's Playgrounds

Hormel Nature Center. <http://www.hormelnaturecenter.org> For trail condition updates www.skinnyski.com

Lake Louise State Park. http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/state_parks/lake_louise/index.html

Mower County's GET FIT BE FIT!

This years competition is underway. Cheer on those you know who have teamed up for the challenge! For information on the program: <http://www.uwmower.org/pages/fit.asp>

**Post events or opportunities that promote well living in your community...
connect with us so we can promote your efforts!**