



January 2023

Kickstart Healthy Habits this Winter

The winter solstice has passed and daylight is getting longer - now is the perfect time to kickstart healthy habits for life. This edition of the quarterly *Healthy State of Iowa Employees* newsletter focuses on winter tips, activities, and opportunities for good health. It is a cooperative effort between the Department of Administrative Services, Wellmark, and the State of Iowa Wellness Champions' Education and Engagement Committee. It's designed to help keep State of Iowa employees connected and informed of wellness opportunities around the state. Enjoy!

Do Winter Blues Affect You?

Seasonal depression, also described as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), is a type of depression that occurs when the seasons change. Symptoms begin in autumn and continue into the winter months, though seasonal depression may also occur for some in the spring and summer.

Why some people experience seasonal depression is not completely understood. Scientists correlate the disorder with a disruption in daily rhythms that results from changes in daylight. Two brain chemicals, serotonin and melatonin, help regulate the sleep-wake cycle, and those suffering with SAD may have abnormal levels of both.

Symptoms of winter-pattern SAD that are more common than symptoms of major depression include carbohydrate cravings, overeating, weight gain, oversleeping and social withdrawal.

About five percent of Americans have seasonal depression, though many may not realize it. Those who live in the northern states are more likely to experience SAD, and the condition affects more women than men.

Increasing the amount of light at home, exploring stress management and meditation, exercising outside, and vacationing in areas that have more sun are all helpful in combating symptoms. Counting down the weeks until spring may help, too!



Staff Spotlight

Name: Jeff Geerts

Current Position: Special Projects Manager, Energy Team, Iowa Economic Development Authority



Years with the State: 30 years

My Healthy Choice: Volunteering

"As a long-time public servant, volunteering is in my blood. I volunteer in several capacities to improve the quality of life in my community. I led the effort at my church to convert an asphalt parking lot into a community garden for refugee families. We now have 20 garden plots for refugee families and the church has two garden plots to raise produce for local food pantries. I serve on the board of directors of the Des Moines Heritage Trust where our mission is to promote and support historic preservation in the Des Moines metro area. As an organization we recently restored the East Des Moines Union Railroad depot. When I am not volunteering in the community garden or serving the Des Moines Heritage Trust, I find myself volunteering in the concession stand, on the field, or in the auditorium to support my local school district's instrumental and vocal music departments."

It's National Mentoring Month!

January is National Mentoring Month. Investing as little as an hour mentoring each week can have a very positive impact in your life as well as for the mentee's.

Mentoring relationships are a shared opportunity for learning and growth. Mentors point out the experience has enabled them to:

- Have fun
- Achieve personal growth and learn more about themselves
- Improve their self-esteem and feel they are making a difference
- Gain a better understanding of other cultures and develop a greater appreciation for diversity
- Feel more productive and have a better attitude at work
- Enhance their relationships with their own children



Mentoring programs will screen, train, and support you to be successful in your mentoring relationship. They will provide ideas and resources for mentoring sessions, talk about how to spend time doing things you and your mentee enjoy, or encourage you to just talk and "hang out" at times.

Virtual opportunities are also available. For example, Future Ready Iowa Career Mentoring needs mentors to meet virtually with college students and provide insight and guidance about their career path.

Iowa MENTOR, the state organization that champions mentoring, can help you connect with a mentoring opportunity that best suits you. Learn more about becoming a mentor at iowamentoring.org.

Live Healthy Iowa 10-Week Wellness Challenge

The Challenge is ON, and there's still time to join if you register by January 23. Between January 9 and March 17, teams of two to 10 people will track their activity minutes and/or weight loss through Live Healthy Iowa's website or mobile app. For a \$25 registration fee, all participants will receive a challenge T-shirt, a complimentary subscription to Fresh Pickings magazine, and a \$10 discount on the Live Healthy Iowa 5k registration. Participants will also have unlimited access to wellness content on Live Healthy Iowa's website and a personal online dashboard to track progress, connect with teammates, set

goals, and much more. The flexible format and friendly team-based approach will keep you motivated and accountable to achieving your wellness goals in 2023. Visit www.livehealthyiowa.org and use code LHIGOV to register your team today. There's still time!

Produce Delivered to Your Home

The State of Iowa Wellness Champions have partnered with Prudent Produce (Elkhart, IA) to offer a food box program for State of Iowa employees. The boxes include local foods when possible and offerings are always organic high-quality produce, meat, dairy, and eggs.



- Place orders between noon on Friday and 9 a.m. on Sunday the week prior to delivery.
- Delivery area: Ames to Indianola; Adel to Newton, with pickup locations in north central Iowa (see a list at <https://www.prudentproduce.net/nif>).
- Use the coupon code "FamilyFarms" to receive \$2 off each delivery (does not apply to student gift boxes nor 'choose your own' bins).
- Sign up for weekly or bi-weekly deliveries, with flexibility to add or skip deliveries as you wish.

Do You Know?

- [SEHARC](#) (State of Iowa Health and Recreation Committee) connects you with offers for discounted tickets to area events and hosts fun activities throughout the year. If you are interested in receiving information on these opportunities, complete this [form](#) to be added to SEHARC's mailing list or follow them on Facebook!
- The DAS [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) presents a number of on-demand seminars covering various topics related to health and well-being. EAP also offers confidential resources at no cost to help employees and eligible family members address challenges which may impact job performance, well-being, and overall health. Check out the webpage today!
- For more great information, be sure to check out these Wellmark publications - [Wellmark Blue Magazine](#) and [Blue at Work](#).

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If you have questions or suggestions for future content, please contact us at healthyemployees@iowa.gov.