



October 2024

Falling Back into Autumn

For many, the time change in November marks the real beginning of fall. Don't forget to adjust your clocks on Sunday, November 3. But which way? A good trick to remember is to think of the phrase "fall back," meaning you should set them backward one hour.

In spite of darkness coming earlier each day, there's still plenty of daylight to enjoy the fall weather as you go for a bike ride or take a long walk kicking and crunching through the fallen leaves. It's also a great time to tweak your exercise and healthy eating habits to transition to fall and winter. This issue of the *Healthy State of Iowa Employees* newsletter highlights some of the activities we enjoy most this time of year, including opportunities to make a difference in the community when you are needed most.



Healthy Living this Fall

As the crisp fall air arrives, it's the perfect time to embrace all the season has to offer, including fresh seasonal produce (apples, pumpkins, squash, sweet potatoes, and more) and a variety of opportunities to enjoy being active outdoors.

Spend time picking apples at an orchard or visit a pumpkin patch – both are great ways to enjoy nature

while gathering fresh, nutritional ingredients. These fall fruits and vegetables are packed with essential vitamins, fiber, and antioxidants, making them ideal for healthy eating.

For easy, delicious ways to use fall favorites (including healthy slow cooker recipes) explore recipes from the [Spend Smart, Eat Smart, website](#), which offers options like pumpkin chili and apple butternut squash soup, among others. By combining outdoor activities with nutrient-packed fall ingredients, you can enjoy wholesome meals and a healthy lifestyle throughout the season.



Staff Spotlight

Name: Caroline McKinney

Current Position: Nutrition Innovation Director, Nutrition and Aging Resource Center

Years with State: 2 years

My Healthy Choices: Eating more veggies

"I've always enjoyed cooking and finding creative ways to incorporate more veggies into my daily meals. Vegetables are so healthy for us and the good news is, they can be weaved into our eating patterns in a variety of different ways! Here are a few simple ways I like to go about it:

- Chopping up a medley of vegetables like zucchini, tomatoes, onions, peppers, seasoning with spices, oil, and flavored balsamic and sautéing on the stove. This makes a great side or can be

served over rice or lentils.

- Stuffed peppers are always a favorite and can be quite versatile. I like to incorporate sauteed vegetables, cooked rice, and ground meat as the filling. Once assembled they can be topped with your favorite cheese.
- Egg bites can make for a quick grab-and-go option and can incorporate many of the veggies that may be already sitting in your fridge! Some of my go-tos are small florets of broccoli, spinach, and mushrooms.

I like to rotate my recipes with the seasons and also shop local produce – it always seems like the local, in season produce packs a more flavorful punch! In the future, I look forward to creating my own vegetable garden so some of that 'local' produce is just steps away. I hope this provides a bit of culinary inspiration and ideas to sprinkle in a few more veggies into your own meals!"

Stay Fit While Giving Back: Physical Activity and Volunteering

Do you know that many volunteer activities can help you stay physically fit? From cleaning up local parks to organizing charity runs, volunteering can be a great way to get moving and stay active. Whether you're lifting boxes at a food drive or building homes for families in need, these tasks not only help others, but also give your muscles a good workout.

Volunteering offers a fun and purposeful way to get your recommended 150 minutes of weekly physical activity. Plus, being active in a group can boost your motivation, making it easier to stay committed to your fitness goals. In addition to promoting physical health, outdoor volunteer work exposes you to sunlight, which can improve mood and increase vitamin D levels, strengthening your immune system. By incorporating volunteering into your routine, you can enjoy all the health benefits of physical activity while contributing to meaningful causes.

A Challenge: Sign up for an active volunteer event this month and feel the benefits in both mind and body.



Cybersecurity Awareness Month: Protect your Digital Health

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month—a time to focus on the importance of online safety and security. In today's digital age, our personal and professional lives are increasingly intertwined with technology. From banking to shopping, working to socializing, we spend a significant amount of time online. Unfortunately, this also makes us vulnerable to cyber threats. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), an average of 2,412 complaints of cyber crime were received each day in 2023.

How can you protect yourself?

- **Strong Passwords:** Create complex passwords that are difficult to guess. Use a combination of upper and lowercase letters, numbers, and symbols. Avoid using easily identifiable information like birthdays or children's names.
- **Two-Factor Authentication:** Enable two-factor authentication whenever possible. This adds an extra layer of security by requiring a second form of verification, such as a code sent to your phone or email.
- **Be Wary of Phishing Attempts:** Be cautious of unsolicited emails, texts, or calls asking for personal information, even if they appear to be from a reputable source. The use of Artificial Intelligence makes these attempts to obtain information more believable than ever. Never click on links or download attachments from unknown sources.
- **Keep Your Software Updated:** Regularly update your operating system, web browser, and other software. Updates often include security patches that can protect you from vulnerabilities.

- **Be Mindful of Public Wi-Fi:** Avoid using public Wi-Fi for sensitive activities like online banking or shopping. Public networks may not be secure, and hackers can intercept your data.
- **Freeze Your Credit:** Contact each of the 3 credit bureaus to put a freeze on your credit. This will keep new lines of credit from being opened with your personal information.
- **Educate Yourself:** Stay informed about the latest cybersecurity threats and best practices. Attend workshops, webinars, or read articles on the topic.

By following these tips, you can significantly reduce your risk of becoming a victim of cyber crime and protect your digital health.

Want to learn more? The Iowa Department of Insurance and Financial Services offers an initiative called Iowa Fraud Fighters, dedicated to educating residents on fraud tactics, red flags, and ways to protect themselves. Learn more and empower yourself at iowafraudfighters.gov.

Well-Being Webinars Offer Wealth of Information

Through the work of the Healthy State of Iowa Employees initiative, the Department of Administrative Services has partnered with Wellmark to provide on-demand, well-being webinars throughout 2024. These webinars focus on behavior change, time management, physical activity, and holiday stress.

Webinar information is sent to agency Wellness Champions to share with co-workers each quarter, and is also be linked in this newsletter. Webinars from the first three quarters of 2024 are linked below and can be viewed whenever it's convenient for you!

- [Behavior Change and the Brain](#)
- [Decoding Fitness Trends](#)
- [Time Management and Organization](#)

Take Action!

- Wherever you are in your mental health journey, the State of Iowa offers tools and benefits to support you and your family. In collaboration with Wellmark, DAS has three guides to assist you, your family, and those of you who work in a supervisory capacity:

[Healthy Everywhere Guide for Employees](#) - A guide to building better mental health at work and home.

[Healthy at Work Guide for Leaders](#) - A leader's guide that outlines important information to help you support employee well-being at work, at home, and everywhere in between.

[Healthy at Home Parents' Guide](#) - A guide to supporting your child's mental health.

- Live Healthy Iowa's *10 Week Wellness Challenge* runs from January 13, 2025, through March 21, 2025. Visit the [Next Step Challenge website](#) for more information. Registration opens December 2, 2024.
- Most of us know that Iowa's fall colors can be stunning, but do you know that the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) compiles an [Iowa Fall Colors - Weekly Report](#)? Be sure to visit the page to determine when peak viewing for your area of the state will be.
- [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 SEHARC form](#) to be added to the mailing list, or follow them on Facebook!
- Check out the DAS [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) for 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.

- For more great information, be sure to check out these Wellmark publications - [Wellmark Blue Magazine](#) and [Blue at Work](#).

To learn more about how Healthy EmployeesSM Powered by Wellmark is working with the State of Iowa to make the healthy choices easier for you, visit the [DAS Health and Well-Being webpage](#).

The Healthy State of Iowa Employees quarterly newsletter 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.

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