Wellness Topics, Events & Challenge Ideas
ND Office of State Tax Commissioner
Laura Anhalt, Wellness Coordinator

• National Farmers’ Market Week/August - Farmers’ Market Challenge
  o Eat 2 items each week in the month of August from a Farmers’ Market, CSA, or home garden
    (your own or another’s) to enter a drawing for one of three $20 cash prizes. (Or whatever
    prize/s you can offer.)
  o Pair with emails/flyers touting the benefits of eating vegetables, eating local food,
    Environmental Working Group’s (EWG) lists of the Clean 15 and the Dirty Dozen
• National Sandwich Generation Month/July - www.caregivingclub.com
• Men’s Health Month/June - cdc.gov/men (Centers for Disease Control) - mensfitness.com -
  www.menshealth.org
• 5-A-Day Fruit & Vegetable Challenge - Eat five fruits & vegetables each day for 2 weeks to enter a prize
  drawing
  o Flyers/emails re: benefits of fruits & veggies, nutrition information of individual fruits & veggies,
    how much is a serving size of fruits & veggies, perhaps the benefits of organic produce
• Distracted Driving Awareness Month/April - Go to the National Safety Council web site for info and
  PDF flyers
• Meditation Challenge - Meditate 5 minutes each day for a week to enter a prize drawing
  o Just type in “meditation” and you’ll find plenty of web sites with different kinds of meditation
    and different ways to meditate, and the benefits.
• Exercise Challenge - Exercise 20 minutes each day 5 days a week for a month to enter prize drawing.
  The Tax Department usually has a drawing for five winners of a $20 cash prize
  o Emails & flyers about the benefits of exercise
• Handwashing Awareness Week/December - The Centers for Disease Control, cdc.gov, has information
  and ready-made PDF flyers to post.
• Eat Better, Eat Together Month/October - Type in Eat Better, Eat Together to get web sites and ideas
  o Emails/flyers re: importance of eating together (kids are healthier and do better in school, etc.)
    ▪ Email and/or post healthy recipes for meals and snacks
• World Alzheimer’s Month/September - Go to the Alzheimer’s Association web site for tips on how to
  handle loved ones with this disease. Also go to carecrossroads.com
  o What is Alzheimer’s flyer or email.
  o Tips for Alzheimer’s caregivers.
• The Importance of Breakfast - It’s easier to lose weight when you eat breakfast. Type in “importance
  of breakfast” for lots of resources and reasons to eat breakfast
  o Send emails with grab & go healthy breakfast ideas & reasons not to skip this meal.
• Fish Eating Challenge - Eat two servings of fish each week for a month to enter drawing.
  o Flyers/emails - Information about the Mediterranean Diet (which stresses eating fish)
    ▪ Recipes for Mediterranean Diet
    ▪ Why it is beneficial
    ▪ Why olive oil is the most healthy oil.
• Mediterranean Diet - Info about this diet without the fish eating challenge. Provide lots of easy,
  healthy recipes.
• Too Much Sitting - Sitting is the new smoking. Lots of info on line when you type in “too much sitting.”
  o What are the risks of sitting too much?
How to prevent neck & back injuries from too much sitting & how it effects blood pressure, blood sugar, your heart, etc
- WELCOA has a publication called “Taking a Stand on Sitting Down”

- **Oral Health**
  - When to brush your teeth.
  - How can I protect my oral health?
  - Tips for controlling dry mouth.
  - What is gingivitis and how to prevent it.
  - What causes sensitive teeth and how to treat it.

- **Colon Cancer Awareness Month/March**
  - Symptoms of colon or rectal cancer
  - Red meat and colon cancer
  - How do I reduce colon cancer risk?
  - Heart-smart recipes are colon-smart recipes too.
  - Screening can reduce your risk/types of screenings.

- **Blood Pressure Challenge /Heart Disease Prevention Month/February** - Have your blood pressure taken in the month of February to enter a prize drawing. The Tax Department participates with the Go Red for Women Campaign. The American Heart Association is a good resource.
  - Each February we have a Blood Pressure Taking Event. A nurse from Bismarck/Burleigh Public Health comes to one of our conference rooms and takes our blood pressure for free. 2014 marked our 8th year having this event.
  - Can assign 1500 HealthyBlue points for this one-day event.
  - Send heart-healthy recipes
  - Why is exercise important for heart health?
  - Watch your stress for heart health.
  - Beer and wine are good for your heart.

- **Flu Shot Challenge** - Enter a drawing if you got a flu shot by the end of October and get 1500 HealthyBlue points. Each October the Tax Department has a Flu Shot Clinic. Employees from a local drug store come to one of our conference rooms and to administer the shots from 7:30 - 9:30 a.m.
  - They process the payment with BCBS so it is free to employees and their families.

- **Developing Resilience** - Resilience is an individual’s tendency to cope with stress and adversity. An ability to “bounce back” to a previous state of normal functioning. Resilience can be learned. Type “resilience” into the search window and go from there.

- **Healthy Eating** - Include healthy recipes, how to add more fruit and veggie tips, information about healthy fats and bad fats. The American Heart Association has an “Eating Healthy Day” in November.

- **Breast Cancer Awareness Month/October** - Do flyers or emails about breast cancer and being overweight, risk & lifestyle choices, “How to Examine You Breast” downloads or brochures, and how early detection is key. Go to the American Cancer Society and the National Breast Cancer Foundation for resources.

- **National Yoga Month/September** - How yoga keeps you fit: helps with stress, drops blood pressure, good for your heart, helps with the drainage of lymph.
  - Provide a list of addresses and phone numbers for local places employees can take a yoga class. Often yoga establishments will offer a free introductory class for National Yoga Month, or will upon your request. I called three places in Bismarck and they all agreed to offer one free yoga class for Tax Department employees. They are always looking for new students.
  - If free classes are provided, have a **Yoga Challenge** to enter a drawing for a prize/s if you go to a yoga class in the month of September.
• Various - Disseminate information about different, unrelated health tips. Ex: Healthy weight facts, healthy recipes, strategies for managing stress, technology addiction (unplug!), better sleep tips, list healthy options at familiar fast food restaurants.

• Water Drinking Challenge - Drink eight-8 oz. glasses of water for a week to enter a drawing.
  o Education: Drinking water reduces stress, tips for drinking enough water each day, harmful effects & symptoms of dehydration, benefits of drinking water.

• Fruits & Vegetables - Nutrient information about fruits & veggies, the My Plate concept of half your plate being filled fruits & vegetables (choosemyplate.gov)
  o Healthy fruit & veggie snacks, what is a serving of fruit or vegetable
  o How fruits & veggies help blood pressure and cholesterol levels,
  o Ways to add more fruits & veggies to your recipes.
  o Program: Have the produce person at a local grocery store come and talk about the benefits of produce and what’s in season. Sometimes they bring free fruits & vegetables to try.

• The Positive Workplace - type “positive workplace” in the search window to find information about positive thinking in the workplace, positive things to do at work and avoiding negativity in the workplace.

• National Mental Health Month/May - Relaxation techniques for relief of anxiety & stress, mental health benefits of physical exercise, how stress effects the body & how to cope, definitions and info about panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder and signs & symptoms of depression.

• Know Your Numbers - provide facts about healthy number ranges for high blood pressure, cholesterol and blood glucose, foods and recipes to help prevent high numbers, how exercise effects these readings.

• A Year of Fruits & Vegetables - Healthy North Dakota (healthynd.org) has an easy to use program with emails to send to employees once a month for one year. They provide fruit & veggie eating tips, recipes, health information and what’s in season.

• Choose My Plate/USDA - Go to ChooseMyPlate.gov to find ready-made flyers entitled: smart fruit and vegetable shopping, tips for choosing protein, kid-friendly fruits & vegetables, make half your grains whole, and liven up your meals with fruits & veggies.

• National Humor Month/April - Type “benefits of humor” for lots of sites. WebMD: laughter is good for your health, Discovery.com: 10 Reasons Why Laughing is Good for You, Humorproject.com

• Osteoporosis Month/May - Go to the National Osteoporosis Foundation for a complete toolkit.

• Diabetes Awareness Month/November - Go to the American Diabetes Association website for definitions of the different types of diabetes, nutrition and exercise advice and symptoms of diabetes.

• National Positive Attitude Month/October - Type “positive attitude” to find material. A positive attitude can be learned.
  o Look up “The Optimist Creed.”
  o How to shift from negative to positive thinking.
  o Give examples of positive affirmations.

• Healthy Foods Month/July - Post nutrition and health benefit information about one food at a time. Ex: Avocados, nuts, sweet potatoes, broccoli, salmon, beans, olive oil, oatmeal. Find easy, fast, healthy recipes with some of these as ingredients.

• Conscious Relaxation Challenge - That’s right, challenge your fellow employees to relax. Set 10-20 minutes aside each day for a week to allow yourself to relax.
  o No TV, no radio, not even a book or magazine ... just be.
  o Resist the urge to unload the dishwasher or do laundry.
  o Do not feel guilty. It is a productive use of your time. You cannot take care of others unless you take care of yourself first. It’s good for your family as well as yourself.
- Education: How to meditate & its benefits, go to WebMD.com and go to their Stress Management Health Center/Blissing Out: 10 Relaxation Techniques to Reduce Stress On-the-Spot. Type “relaxation” into HealthDiscovery.com search window. Go to pickthebrain.com to find “7 Powerful Relaxation Techniques.” Provide a how-to for “progressive relaxation.” Look up the yoga pose “legs-up-the-wall” (Called Viparita in Sanskrit.)

- Healthy Recipes/ Provide healthy recipes all month long. Should provide recipes now and then so they can put healthy eating into practice. Type in “fast and easy healthy recipes.” They will not do recipes with 100 ingredients or ingredients that aren’t readily available.

- Ergonomic Stretching - The Mayo Clinic web site has an ergonomic stretches slide show. Just type “ergonomic stretches” for access to several web sites.

- Fiber - Provide a list of foods that are high in fiber.
  - WebMD has “Fiber, how much do I need?”
  - Encourage them to eat more beans and provide bean recipes.
  - Choose whole grain products, use brown rice instead of white, find recipes that include barley, eat whole wheat pasta.

- Parks and Recreation Month/July
  - Order the ND State Parks Guide from the ND Parks & Recreation Department and put one on each person’s desk.
  - Look up the “benefits of being in nature.” It is therapeutic.
  - Provide trail maps for your town. Call the city for free maps.
  - Provide indoor and outdoor maps of walking paths for your workplace if you have them.
  - Email physical activity recommendations for children and adults, look up “activity pyramid.”

- National Sleep Awareness Week/March or National Better Sleep Month/May Challenge -
  - Allow 7-8 hours of sleep every night for 7 nights in a row during the month of March or May.
    - “We say “allow” sleep because if you have trouble sleeping, you may not actually get that many hours sleep a night. We just want you to get to bed, lights out, TV off, and dedicate 7 - 8 hours to sleep.”
  - Visit bettersleep.org, sleepfoundation.org, sleepeducation.com, cdc.gov/sleep
  - Find Better Sleep Tips that address your bed, your room, regular exercise, get some light to set your body clock, napping can interfere with sleep, effects of alcohol, caffeine & smoking at helpguide.org/life/sleep
  - Look up sleep meditation.
  - Benefits of sleep, sleep problems and disorders, what is sleep?, sleep debt
  - Consequences of sleep deprivation, drowsy driving
  - How to improve your sleep environment

- Good Fats/Bad Fats - mayoclinic.org (Trans fat is double trouble for your heart health.), be a trans fat detective ... read labels.
  - Trans fats banned from restaurant food in New York City, Philadelphia, Boston, state of California. Minneapolis is considering it.
  - What bad fats do to you.
  - Benefits of good fats such as olive oil and canola oil.

- Skin Cancer Awareness Month/May /Sunscreen Wellness Challenge - Put on sunscreen every day for 2 weeks to enter a prize drawing.
  - Education: Skin Cancer Prevention Guidelines from skincancer.org, “Who gets it and causes” from American Academy of Dermatology
  - Provide the safe sunscreen guide from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), ewg.org
  - Skin cancer facts
    - What are basal and squamous cell skin cancers?
• What is melanoma skin cancer?
• Provide information about Tanning Beds and their safety.
• Go to cdc.gov (Centers for Disease Control) and type “the truth about tanning” into their search window to get a graphic poster.
• Go to cancer.org for resources such as the “Slip, Slop, Slap” campaign.
• Skincancerprevention.org - for “Don’t FRY Day” flyers. This is the Friday before Memorial Day.

• High Blood Pressure Education Month/May
  o How does exercise affect blood pressure?
  o Promote healthy eating with information about the D.A.S.H. Diet. (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Provide D.A.S.H. Diet recipes and food ideas.

• Gratitude Challenge - Gratitude is an emotion expressing appreciation for what one has—as opposed to a consumer-oriented emphasis on what one wants or needs. Studies show that we can deliberately cultivate gratitude, and can increase our well-being and happiness by doing so. In addition, grateful thinking—and especially expression of it to others—is associated with increased levels of energy, optimism, and empathy. There are great benefits to actively practicing gratitude.
  o Each day for a month, write down 5 things you are grateful for.
    ▪ This will hopefully get people into the habit of looking at what they do have rather than what they don’t have.
  o Type “How to be grateful” into the internet search window to finds lots of web sites and ideas for cultivating gratitude.

• Meatless Monday Challenge - Don’t eat meat on Mondays for a month and enter a prize drawing.
    ▪ Reduces heart disease and stroke
    ▪ Limits cancer risk
    ▪ Fights diabetes
    ▪ Cuts weekly budget
    ▪ Reduces greenhouse gases
  o Provide meatless recipes and menus