

At Valassis a heavy workload and health go hand in hand

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Cherie Hauser plans on fitting in a 60-minute yoga class between a morning meeting with sales associates and a business luncheon with her production team.

With her busy workload the Westland resident doesn't have time to fight morning traffic to make it to her local fitness club or gym either — she has the good fortune of having a workout facility just down the hall from her office as an account coordinator at Valassis Communications, Inc. in Livonia.

The marketing service company has placed a greater emphasis on wellness and preventative medicine with the advent of the Valassis Learning Network — a diverse series of training opportunities that impact organizational performance and personal well-being including Personal Productivity, Leadership Development and Life Management courses.

VLN was launched in January and has been well-received by VCI employees. Life Management courses are focused on helping employees "manage their personal life more effectively."

Balancing act

According to Marcia Hyde, vice president of Human Resources/Corporate Communications at VCI, the programs are offered at a variety of times both during and after work to accommodate the busy schedules of their employees.

Class offerings include such topics as: controlling blood pressure, fit for golf (emphasizes posture, flexibility to avoid common injuries), diabetes education (carbohydrate counting and label reading), stretching and flexibility, cancer awareness, headache management through prevention and physical therapy, child safety, weight loss, smoking cessation, controlling allergies, adult and infant CPR certification, and yoga.

"I have taken classes on nutrition, target toning, step aerobics, allergy classes, to learn how to help my children make it through allergy season with less problems, stretching classes, CPR for infants and children, as well as, adults. I participate as much as my workload will allow," said Hauser.

The Human Resources VP says wellness and health-related initiatives have been offered for more than 15 years to Valassis employees, however, it's the "method of delivery" that's

changed with the times.

"It wasn't unusual 10 years ago for employees to stay after work for a couple of hours," said Suzanne M. Gornowicz manager, Investor Relations and Public Relations. "I know I did. But that's not the case today."

Gornowicz went on to say that it's comparable to put in another workday after 6 o'clock with family commitments, recreational activities, travel time and household related responsibilities.

Fitting in a four-hour CPR course or a class on managing your diabetes through carbohydrate counting and label reading — isn't that viable for some individuals.

"Internal training courses for employees are offered seven days a week, 24 hours a day for the different office and manufacturing shifts," said Hyde.

VCI has solved those time management issues with early morning, mid-day and evening classes to suit a variety of schedules. Classes are not only offered at the corporate headquarters on Seven Mile and I-275 in Livonia but at nearby medical centers, and at their printing and production facilities in Livonia and Plymouth.

"The times are usually during lunch and/or during the day so I can adjust my time and come in early or whatever I need to do so I do not feel I am invading my family time," said Hauser.

Hauser, 33, said she exercises for 90 minutes at Club VCI on the treadmill, exercise machines and free weights after work and fits in VLN classes around her steady workload.

Programs are taught by company staff as well as individuals from the community whose field of expertise relates to health (medicine, nutrition, exercise). VLN programming is also free of charge to VCI employees.

The need for such programming came about after a Wellness Committee was formed in 1998 made up of employees representing various departments throughout the company. Staff conducted health assessment surveys to determine what employees felt were important lifestyle issues. Responses such as fitness, diet, stress, and time management were used to create programs such as carbohydrate counting and label reading, effective stretching and flexibility, how to use at-site workout equipment, losing weight and feeling great, and positive self-body image.

A May class called "Eating Right on the Run," attracted 106 employees bringing about two additional sessions to be scheduled.

to accommodate more staff.

Evolving

One of the newest enhancements to Valassis' efforts toward total employee well-being is the addition of an on-site physician. Dr. Quentin R. McMullen of St. Joseph Mercy Hospital in Ann Arbor has an office at the company's corporate headquarters and the Livonia printing facility called VAL-Care. He also answers medical questions and provides advice for employees and their families through an Internet service call "Doctor On-Line."

Hyde, Valassis Human Resources vice president, says a lot of research and planning goes into the initiatives launched by Valassis but at the same time the company is flexible enough to "make things happen overnight."

For instance, the "Family Room" located at each Valassis site, came about after a female employee expressed the wish to have a private place to nurse her baby and express breastmilk when she returned to work.

Hyde said before the company built its current facility there were a number of enclosed offices at their former location that made this possible. The new building however, is very open and features cubicle-type partitions making breastfeeding nearly impossible.

The Family Room was put together on a moment's notice and modeled after a residential room. It features a refrigerator, couch, television, desk, computer, toys for young children, a breast pump and child-care essentials for emergency day care such as diapers and wipes.

Whether it's the annual health fair where employees receive free health screenings or the easy-to-use medical reference book that was mailed to each and every employee home — Valassis realizes that the health of its employees and their families is something that shouldn't be taken for granted.

"I am a firm believer that if employees feel they are cared about as people, then they will be more productive employees. The company wins and so does the employee. By Valassis supporting a healthy lifestyle, it shows they care about their employees even when they are off the clock. It creates loyalty and a positive work environment. People will work harder for a company like that. Check out the Valassis employees and you will see what I mean," said Hauser.

Working out 12-year-old regains strength

When 12-year-old Ryan Griebek of Livonia was diagnosed with B-cell lymphocytic leukemia last winter, his parents feared the worst.

He had a different dilemma in mind — he wondered if he'd ever play football again.

But thanks to a successful series of chemotherapy treatments and a routine physical fitness regime, Ryan will be getting up to play football this fall as originally planned.

In the cold dark days of February, while his parents Leon and Nancy Griebek nursed their son through his illness, Ryan kept his focus on one main issue — staying in shape for his team. Ryan plays guard and tackle for the Livonia Eagles Junior Varsity football team.

For four months, Ryan endured extended stays at University of Michigan's Mott Children's Hospital in Ann Arbor for intensive chemotherapy treatments, which caused severe side effects. He battled mouth sores, fevers, shingles and eye infections, not to mention the loss of 23 1/2 pounds from his athletic frame. His parents watched him drop from a strapping 120 to a mere 97 pounds. Today, he weighs in at 127 pounds, most of it being muscle.

But despite the side effects and weight loss, the treatments worked, and Ryan's hematologists recently gave him the green light to play football this fall. While this thrilled Ryan, his parents worried he might not be as strong as he was prior to his illness. That's where Mom came to the rescue.

As a human resources administrator at the corporate headquarters of Weight Watchers in Farmington Hills, Nancy Griebek advocates healthy nutrition and physical fitness for her family.

Since she trains with Weight Watchers' personal trainer Ed Ruiz at work, she thought it

"Ryan never lost sight of what he wanted and that's what motivated him to work out even though at the beginning he was weak and tired. But I'll be the first to say the work-outs definitely helped him get over the hump and back into the lineup."

Ed Ruiz
—Personal trainer


might be a good idea for Ryan to start working out with Ruiz as well.

Within just four weeks, Ryan had gained back his prodigious strength. During his first practice on Aug. 9, spectators on the sidelines were amazed to see this young man, so physically ill just months earlier, burning up the field. His mom attributes his strength to his training sessions.

"Working at Weight Watchers taught me the importance of exercise," said Griebek. "I'm amazed at how much stronger Ryan has gotten through these workouts. I'm sure he might have been weak to be ready in time for fall had he not done this."


Trainer Ed Ruiz is not surprised by Ryan's recovery. He says Ryan's recuperation had much to do with his own willpower.

"Ryan never lost sight of what he wanted and that's what motivated him to work out even though at the beginning he was weak and tired," says Ruiz. "But I'll be the first to say the work-outs definitely helped him get over the hump and back into the lineup."



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Chemical sensitive

MCS (Multiple Chemical Sensitivity Friends) is a free support group for anyone who is hypersensitive to chemicals and/or environmental irritants such as smoke, fragrances, pesticides, cleaning supplies, new construction materials, etc. Informal monthly meetings are held at various locations. The next is

scheduled from 2-5 p.m. Sept. 11 at the Good Food Company - West at 42615 Ford Road, Canton (1/2 mile west of I-275 at Lilley Road). For a newsletter call (248) 349-4572.

Stroke prevention

The Livonia Family Y will host Life Line Screening's Stroke Prevention program. The state-of-the-art ultrasound tests include a Carotid Artery scan, an Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm scan, and a test to detect peripheral arterial disease. Also, bone density screening for women only will be offered for the detection of osteoporosis. Interested persons must register at least 24 hours in advance. Please call (800) 407-4557 to schedule an appointment for the tests on Tuesday, Sept. 14. The tests are offered for \$35 each, which compares to between \$300-\$500 for similar diagnostic tests offered by hospitals and imaging centers.

Macrobiotic recipes

Macro Val will host healthy cooking classes in her home, based on macrobiotic recipes and meal preparation. Learn step-by-step instruction during this hands-on experience. "Fun Foods" will be demonstrated from 6-9 p.m. Sept. 8 including cinnamon rolls, flaming volcano, tempoh sandwiches and lemonade. Sept. 15 from 6-9 p.m. "Late summer dishes" will be prepared such as buckwheat burgers, herbed parsnips and peach pie. To register call (734) 261-2856.

Bone density tests

The F & M drug store at 35715 Warren Road in Westland will be the host site of an osteoporosis screening/heart health screening from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sept. 11. No fasting is required for the cholesterol test. Osteoporosis cost: \$10; cholesterol test, \$8. Call (800) 543-WELL to register.

Acupuncture from page B4

outcome until at least the third treatment.

"Unfortunately acupuncture is not covered by any insurance companies in the state of Michigan so if people want treatments they have to pay for them," explained Shah. "But some people feel that if it helps alleviate their pain it's worth it."

While acupuncture has slowly been gaining in popularity in the Western countries over the

last two decades, traditional health institutions have closely scrutinized its effectiveness as a method pain management.

However, promising results have emerged showing efficacy of acupuncture in adult post-operative and chemotherapy nausea and vomiting and in post-operative dental pain.

"There are other situations such as addiction, stroke rehabilitation, headache, menstrual

cramps, tennis elbow, fibromyalgia, myofascial pain, osteoarthritis, low back pain, carpal tunnel syndrome, and asthma where acupuncture may be useful as an adjunct treatment or an acceptable alternative or be included in a comprehensive management program," according to a statement released by the National Institute of Health in November of 1997.