

Staff Invited to Show Team Spirit on Wellness Walk

By Anya Armes Weber

The Cabinet Wellness Committee has invited all staff to join the CHFS March Madness Walk next week.

Staff from offices across the state is invited to join the walk for wellness on Friday, March 19. It's not only a walk for your health, but also a time when you can support the team of your favorite Kentucky college or university.

Log on to this intranet [site](#) and take a simple five-question survey. Click "Respond to Survey" on the upper left side of the page to begin.

On Friday, March 19, wear the colors or gear promoting your favorite Kentucky college basketball team and take the time to walk during work hours. Many offices will schedule group walks that you can join, or you can walk on your own. Even if you don't take the survey, you can walk for your health.

The CHFS March Madness Walk is part of the Cabinet's efforts to support the Personnel Cabinet's Journey to Wellness.

Employees should use their lunch or break times to walk.

Visit the [CHFS Wellness Web site](#) to learn more about how your healthy decisions can improve your well-being.

Check out the [Personnel Cabinet's Journey to Wellness Web site](#) for more information about how you can take steps toward a healthier life.

E-mail [Julie Brooks](#) or [Kris Hayslett](#) for more information about the March Madness Walk or other Cabinet wellness activities. If your office coordinates a walk, take photos and send them to Focus Editor Emily Moses for inclusion in the Focus newsletter.

CHFS Names New Ombudsman

Chip Ward has been named ombudsman of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Ward, who has extensive experience in customer relations, was most recently a manager with Mettler-Toledo, Inc./Automation Services, Inc. in Lexington. Ward replaces Mary Begley, who was named CHFS inspector general.

National Nutrition Month: Is There Truth in Packaging?

American Dietetic Association Offers Help in Translating Food

Each year brings a host of new food products and trendy terms and claims to describe them. Too often, however, blurry definitions and vague usage can lead to consumer confusion. For National Nutrition Month, the American Dietetic Association (ADA) offers help in navigating grocery aisles to learn which food marketing phrases can help you make healthier choices—and which terms won't make much of a difference to your diet.

The ADA lists some recent food marketing terms and deciphers their meanings:

Natural

According to the Mintel Global New Products Database, “natural” claims were the most common on food and beverage launches in 2008. What does natural mean? Neither the Food and Drug Administration nor the U.S. Department of Agriculture has formally defined it. The FDA holds to its 1993 policy: [FDA] has not objected to the use of the term on food labels provided it is used in a manner that is truthful and not misleading and the product does not contain added color, artificial flavors or synthetic substances. Use of the term “natural” is not permitted in a product's ingredient list, with the exception of the phrase “natural flavorings.” The USDA is currently defining the conditions under which it will permit “natural” to be used in meat and poultry product labeling, but a final rule may not appear until late 2010.

Processed and unprocessed

“These terms are frequently misunderstood,” Melinda Johnson, registered dietitian and ADA spokesperson, says. Many people think of “processed” as unhealthy packaged foods with empty calories and loads of additives, and “unprocessed” as foods that are not canned, frozen or packaged. Neither of these beliefs is entirely correct.

According to a 2008 federal law, “processed” refers to food that has undergone a “change of character.” Examples include raw nuts (unprocessed) versus roasted nuts (processed); edamame (unprocessed) versus tofu (processed); a head of spinach (unprocessed) versus cut, pre-washed spinach (processed).

Local

“The local food movement refers to buying food that is grown close to where you live,” says Johnson. This movement is connected to a broader philosophy of environmental sustainability and supporting the local economy. “Still, even ‘local’ can have a variety of nuances depending upon who you ask,” says Johnson. The term “locovore” is used to describe someone who eats food grown or produced locally.

Whole

“There is no regulatory definition of whole foods,” says Johnson, “but it's a term consumers hear often.” “Whole foods” generally refers to foods that are not processed or refined and do not have any added ingredients. By most definitions, whole foods include fresh produce, dairy, whole grains, meat and fish- any food that appears in its most pure form with minimal processing.

Organic

Of all these terms, “organic” has the most specific criteria and legal meaning. As defined by the USDA, organic meat, poultry, eggs and dairy products come from animals that are given no antibiotics or growth hormones. Organic plant foods are produced without using most conventional pesticides, fertilizers made with synthetic ingredients or sewage sludge, bioengineering or ionizing radiation. A government-approved certifier must inspect the farm to ensure these standards are met. In addition to organic farming, there are USDA standards for organic handling and processing.

There are three levels of organic claims for food:

100-percent Organic. Products that are completely organic or made of only organic ingredients qualify for this claim and a USDA Organic seal.

Organic. Products in which at least 95 percent of its ingredients are organic qualify for this claim and a USDA Organic seal.

Made with Organic Ingredients. These are food products in which at least 70 percent of ingredients are certified organic. The USDA organic seal cannot be used but “made with organic ingredients” may appear on its packaging.

“It’s important to know what terms mean and to know what to look for when you’re trying to make positive changes to your diet,” says Johnson. “The best information on whether a food is healthful can be found on the Nutrition Facts label.”

Living Well

In last week’s column, I discussed five acts that can help you regain feelings of personal happiness and may also affect your physical health. Those things were:

- Be grateful.
- Be optimistic.
- Count your blessings.
- Use your strengths.
- Commit acts of kindness.

So how can you apply these actions to health and fitness? Let me share some examples.

In the recent Winter Olympic Games, Canadian Alexandre Bilodeau won his country’s first ever gold medal on home turf. He did this in the moguls skiing event. After completing his gold-medal run, Bilodeau sought out and hugged his brother, Frederic, who has cerebral palsy. In interviews after his win, Bilodeau told the world about how his brother’s limitations were his inspiration and help him put his own life into perspective. He said every day he didn’t feel like training, he would make himself do it anyway because he would remind himself he could do things his brother could not.

My son had an experience recently that helped him put his health into perspective. His baseball teammate became ill over Christmas break, was diagnosed with an auto-immune disease and has been in and out of the hospital. The young boy cannot go to school, play with his friends or participate in sports. My son loves video games. But after his friend's illness, he has decided he should be more active and play with friends and practice his sports when he can.

When I was 17, my uncle was in a terrible car accident that caused him to be wheelchair bound for the rest of his life. While he is unable to be physically active, my aunt has used her life since the accident to do the things he cannot. She is always posting on my Facebook page her activities from running, soccer, kayaking, skiing, snowboarding and biking. This spring, she will be doing a 60-mile walk for the Susan G Komen Foundation benefiting breast cancer awareness and prevention.

All of these examples are to remind all of us that we can take control of our own happiness by staying positive, remaining grateful for the people in our lives and those who have had a positive impact through their own adversity, use our strengths to benefit our bodies and commit acts of kindness whenever the opportunity presents itself. Regarding health, these examples should remind us to get out and move more because there are people who cannot and would love to. Don't take your health for granted. Instead, use it to build a healthier and happier life.

CHFS Health Tip

Maintain a Healthy Salt Intake

Salt is in many foods we eat. Maintaining a healthy level of salt intake can be challenging, but is beneficial to your blood pressure. Read the facts about salt from the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute.

- Most sodium is consumed in the form of sodium chloride, which is table salt. Other forms of sodium are also found in food, so watch out for salt AND sodium.
- Try to have fewer than 2,400 milligrams of sodium a day — that's the same as 6 grams of salt a day, or about 1 teaspoon.
- That includes ALL sodium and salt — what's in the product, and added in cooking and at the table.
- Processed foods account for most of the sodium and salt consumed.
- Check food labels — sodium is in some foods you might not expect, such as soy sauce and some antacids.
- Kosher salt and sea salt are just that — salt. Don't forget to include them in adding up your sodium intake for the day.
- Reducing salt in the diet can lower blood pressure.

Employee Enrichment

By Anya Armes Weber

Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. on Sunday, March 14. That's when we "spring forward" and lose an hour on our clocks. And we also lose an hour of sleep that day. Our body clocks may feel off schedule for a day or two, but quality sleep has to be a priority. Here are some tips from Sleepnet.com that may help you regularly get a good night's rest.

Keep regular hours. Try to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Getting up at the same time is most important. Getting bright light, like the sun, when you get up will also help. Try to go to bed only when you are sleepy.

Stay away from stimulants like caffeine. This will help you get deep sleep, which is the most refreshing. If you drink any caffeine, have it in the morning. In the evening, avoid stimulants including chocolate and caffeinated sodas, coffee or tea. They will delay sleep and increase arousals during the night.

Start a bedtime routine. These are helpful for good sleep. Drinking a warm cup of herbal tea or reading a book are good ideas.

Avoid screen time in bed. Don't watch TV or use your laptop in bed.

Avoid bright light around the house before bed. Even reading in bed can be a problem if you use a bright light. Dimmer switches can be helpful.

Avoid exercise near bedtime. Get your workout at least three hours before you go to bed.

Don't go to bed hungry. Have a small snack, but avoid a heavy meal before bed.

Get up if you can't sleep. If you can't get to sleep for more than 30 minutes, get out of bed and do something boring in dim light until you feel sleepy.