

## **CHFS Employees Participate in Capitol Steps**

Department for Public Health employees Mike Schardein and Victoria Greenwell were chosen to take part in the Capitol Steps Challenge, an initiative of several governors to draw attention to the growing problem of obesity across the country.

Texas Gov. Rick Perry asked other states' executive agency leaders to compete in the Capitol Steps Challenge. The designated teams competed for two weeks by tracking daily steps managed by Virgin HealthMiles. The winning team will receive a \$50,000 donation to the state's childhood obesity program.

In addition to Kentucky, the challenge attracted 13 other states: Alabama, Alaska, California, Florida, Idaho, Indiana, North Dakota, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia and Wisconsin. In the final tallies, Kentucky's team came in eighth.

Schardein and Greenwell talked with the Focus last month about the challenge.

Schardein is an environmental biologist consultant who has worked for the state for more than four years. Greenwell is a coordinated school health administrator who has been with the state for 22 years.

### **Share your interest in the Capitol Steps Challenge and why you agreed to participate.**

M.S.: I figured it was a way to track my everyday activity level.

V.G.: I thought the challenge sounded fun. I always enjoy a challenge as I have a bit of friendly competitive nature in me.

### **What impact do you hope to have on CHFS employees?**

M.S.: I would love for co-workers to improve their health by increasing their daily activity level while improving their overall lives.

V.G.: I hope employees can find and enjoy many different types of physical activities that bring happiness and health to their lives.

### **What suggestions or thoughts do you have for readers on how this program might help further develop the worksite wellness culture for CHFS employees?**

M.S.: It will allow individuals to better track their activity level, show improvements, set and hit goals, and bring it all under one program.

V.G.: To support and challenge one another to achieve our best.

## **Weathering Out the Next Winter Storm**

*By Barbara Fox, Communications*

Last week's winter ice storm served as a stark reminder that we all need to take the necessary steps to prepare for the worst scenario. I am sure you are well aware that it takes time and money, but wouldn't you rather have peace of mind when the power goes out for an indefinite amount of time rather than begin to panic and wonder when someone will come to your aid? Becoming self-sufficient during a power outage or disaster is not a trait we are born with, but rather one that we can acquire by taking some time to prepare for the unexpected. While spring is only seven weeks away, another storm could move into the area before winter's wrath is over.

Here are some tips that may be helpful in planning for winter storms and emergencies:

**Alternative energy source.** The most important action step we can take to prepare for a power outage is to acquire an alternative source of energy. Ultimately the best alternative would be a stand-by home generator. These are costly and require an electrician to install a transfer box attached to your home's electricity fuse box so that the power can be transferred to the generator to operate preset circuits in your house when the power goes out. The generator is powered by natural gas or propane. If you are considering building a house or purchasing new construction, integrating a stand-by generator is a wise choice and will give you peace of mind when the power goes out. Gas-powered generators are a cheaper alternative to the stand-by generators and offer less wattage, but still are a good choice for alternative power. Ensure the generator is well-vented, located a safe distance from the house and not overloaded. Be sure to have plenty of fuel on hand to power the generator.

Fireplaces, wood stoves and kerosene heaters are also good alternative sources for heating your home, but they must be carefully watched and never left unattended. Large metal forks come in handy for roasting hot dogs and antique wire popping corn baskets can be used to pop corn over a hot fire. Be sure not to cook any foods that may catch fire or drip grease into an open flame. Remember to always have an ample supply of wood available. The summer months are a good time to stock up on firewood and heating supplies.

**Priority list for power restoration.** Contact your local electric company or cooperative if you or someone in your household has a medical condition that requires some type of powered device such as an oxygen machine. Electric utility companies maintain a priority list that may allow you to have priority in having the power restored to your residence although they cannot make any promises, especially during widespread outages.

**Standard telephone.** Consider purchasing a plug-in standard landline telephone. Yes, several models are still available at retail stores and older models can be found at thrift stores such as Goodwill. Newer home phone models are now powered with electricity so having a standard plug-in model will come in handy because often electricity goes out, but telephone lines remain working. Cell phones may not work if the battery goes dead or

cell phone tower operations are brought down to allow only emergency response workers access.

### **Stockpile supplies.**

- Food and water. Make sure you have several days' supply of food and water (at least one gallon of water per person per day) on hand that requires no cooking or refrigeration such as canned foods, dried fruits, bread, crackers or cereal. Don't forget extra baby formula, food and diapers.
- Battery-powered weather radio and TV. Weather radios can provide you with alerts and warnings for extreme weather in your region. Small battery-powered TVs and radios can keep you informed of the latest news without the use of electricity.
- Batteries. Have extra batteries on hand in all sizes, including spare charged cell phone batteries. Power supply packs are available for under \$100 and provide enough power to charge cell phones or power a small appliance. Some models come with jumper cables attached, an emergency light and a handy air pump for inflating tires and balls. The use of candles is discouraged because they can be very dangerous if left unattended. Battery-powered lanterns and flashlights will provide ample light during periods of darkness.
- Snow and ice clearing. A snow shovel is necessary for clearing walkways and driveways. Be careful not to strain your back while clearing snow. De-icing materials and cat litter can provide traction. For added traction on ice, consider purchasing a pair of slip-on ice treads for the bottom of your shoes.
- Medications. While it is hard to predict when an extended emergency will occur, make sure you have ample medication available (both prescription and over-the-counter) for you and your family members.
- Money. Following large disasters where vast regions of the state have been affected, ATMs may not have power to dispense funds. Since banks may also be closed, it would be helpful to have cash on hand for food and supplies.
- Pets. Remember that your pets will need extra care in the cold weather. Bring them inside if possible to protect them from the elements. In deep snow events, shovel out an area for them to take care of business in your yard.
- Keep children busy. Make sure you have plenty of activities planned to keep your children busy, such as games and puzzles.
- Check on your neighbors. Don't forget to check in on your neighbors to see if things are OK, especially if they are elderly. Often they may be in need, but are afraid to ask for assistance.

### **Living Well: Wear Red Day for Heart Month**

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S., and a major cause of disability. Every 26 seconds, someone in the U.S. suffers from a coronary event, and about one person will die from one every minute.

In recognition of February as American Heart Month, the American Heart Association is encouraging people to learn more about heart disease and prevention. Knowing the signs and symptoms will help people affected seek care immediately, which can ultimately change the outcome. Here are some signs and symptoms of a heart attack:

**Chest discomfort.** Discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or pain that goes away and comes back. The discomfort can range from an uncomfortable pressure, to a squeezing or full feeling, to moderate or severe pain.

**Upper body discomfort.** Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.

**Shortness of breath.** This may occur with or without the chest discomfort.

**Other signs and symptoms:** Breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness.

The American Heart Association stresses the importance of immediate action if you suffer from any of these symptoms and has launched a new campaign called “Act in Time” to increase the awareness and importance of calling 9-1-1 as soon as possible.

#### **Specifically for women:**

In the past, heart disease was viewed as a “man’s disease” or an “older woman’s disease,” but it’s actually the leading cause of death for both men and women. Women account for 53 percent of total heart disease deaths. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women ages 65 years and older; the third leading cause of death among women ages 25-44; and second for women ages 45-65. This is no longer a gender-specific disease. Often, heart disease can be prevented. Be sure to maintain regular check-ups and screenings for chronic disease risk factors and maintain a healthy lifestyle that is also tobacco free.

#### **Specifically for men:**

- The average age for a man’s first heart attack is 66 years old.
- Approximately half of the men who have a heart attack under the age of 65 die within eight years.
- Between 70 and 89 percent of sudden cardiac events occur in men.
- Maintaining healthy behaviors to prevent these statistics is a great start. Also, take charge of your own health by participating in regular recommended health screenings and knowing your risk factors. Please visit the American Heart Association at [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org) for more information and interactive tools to help you make better lifestyle choices.

Friday, Feb. 6, is Wear Red Day. Support heart health and awareness by wearing red to work.

#### **Employee Enrichment**

*By Anya Armes Weber*

Want to improve your customer service skills this year? Dartnell Corporation, a publishing company that serves the business community, offers these tips.

Set personal goals for good customer service. Create your own definition of quality service – use a checklist with each client if it helps.

Adapt basic customer service skills to co-workers. They are just as important to your work as the clients you serve.

Develop a good dialogue. Ask comprehensive questions and be an active listener.

Never say, “I don’t know.” Whether it’s a customer, co-worker or a supervisor asking a question, say you’ll find the answer. Then make the time to get information and respond quickly.

Know your customer. Tailor the service you provide by knowing what is important to each of your clients. Don’t assume – ask.

Be polite. Using mindful manners and phrases like, “please,” “excuse me,” and “thank you” will keep you on the right track.

Don’t be caught off guard. Keep notes about customers and assignments organized so you can access them quickly.

Treat everyone like your best customer. Even if one of your closest friends calls you with a request, treat him or her with the same respect you would a priority client.