Finding Your Balancing Act

It’s been a while since we’ve published this newsletter, and there’s a reason for that! Our old editor, Adrienne Mullock, moved to a different job at the Oregon Health Authority, and I eventually moved into her position permanently. Meanwhile, Susannah Lowe (who you might recognize as one of the voices that used to answer the App Support line) was promoted to my old position. It’s taken a while for things to get settled, but we believe it’s important not to let this workplace wellness initiative fade away. Which is why we’re excited to launch what we’re calling Wellness@WIC 2.0!

What’s the difference you ask? We’re hoping it’s you. Whether you’re a certifier, clerk, breastfeeding peer counselor or supervisor, we want your input on what wellness means to you. We’re looking for article ideas for upcoming newsletters, any bragging you want to do about your agency for our Kudos Korner, or what’s been working for you individually to achieve or maintain wellness. And we mean wellness in all its forms: emotional, physical, occupational, intellectual and social. You can e-mail us (we love getting pictures!) or connect via social media (#Wellness@WIC).

This quarter, we asked staff at the state office: What do you do outside of work to stay balanced? For example, do you participate in:

- hobbies
- artistic activities
- volunteer work
- educational endeavors
- musical pursuits
- cultural activities?

Check out what they said on the following pages, and then tell us: How do you find balance between work and life? Contact us, explaining your balancing act, and if we feature you in a future newsletter, you’ll receive a small gift of thanks.

-NIANI DUNNER, editor | niani.dunner@state.or.us
KUDOS KORNER
by Sherri Tobin, Josephine County

What did your agency do? On our first day of eWIC rollout, each staff person received an eWIC Toolkit (or “fun kit”) to help them through the transition. The intent was to create some laughs, and decrease any stress or anxiety about the new process. Two weeks later the candy bar sign arrived, which highlighted our journey, and gave kudos to everyone for such a great eWIC kick off!

What motivated it? I remember the day we rolled out TWIST, and my WIC Coordinator provided morale boosters for each of us. Back in college, I received my first candy bar sign, and the memory is still there. It was meaningful that someone took the time to create a message in such a fun and unusual way; it felt so positive and uplifting. So, to support our team, I wanted to re-create those feelings for the staff here!

What was the positive impact on staff? There were “high-fives” and smiles! Staff were seen playing with their silly putty at break time and writing down questions in their notepads. Now, we are seeing a mini-movement, which recognizes and celebrates our staff in various ways. Last month a “Fun Committee” created a recognition board for a staff member and included personalized kudos from various staff. Also, the Fun Committee added a message on the billboard outside the building about IBCLC day, in recognition of our lactation staff. Last week, there was a Spring Fling potluck to recognize everyone at the Health Department for their hard work. There seems to be a “wave of recognition” rolling around our department, and moods are “surging”!

Martha - in your eWIC Toolkit you will find:
- Cheese to guide you as you navigate the bright food package screen
- Magic towel to wipe away any mistakes as you learn the new system
- 100% juice to provide a healthy dose of Vitamin C
- Notepads to keep track of questions you may have
- Super silly putty for your break time!

Dear WIC Team - You have survived eWIC and you always come through in a I Love You Crunch! The debit card is an essential step of the WIC process and it’s been a bit of a whirlwind lately with webinars and a stack of a schedule. Thank you and enjoy the treats! You are worth more than $1,000 Grand! You certainly are both! There are so many, many why you are. Why you are... Your Pay Day is coming... Enjoy!
“One of the things I am doing this year for balancing work and life is obedience training with our new puppy Ozzie. It has certainly been intellectually stimulating for me since consistency is key for both his behavior and mine! My goal is that we both do well enough so he can advance to agility training later this year.”

Sara Sloan
Operations Manager

Balance = work stays at work + home stays at home.
Balance = lots of talk at work + lots of quiet at home (reading, listening).
Balance = lots of computer at work + no electronics at home, other than favorite TV shows or movies.
Balance = colleagues at work + family, family, family at home.

Kim McGee
Training Coordinator
Carrie Lafferty was recently promoted to App Support Specialist, so you may talk to her if you have troubles with TWIST. To balance work and life, she does short mindful walks at work, and she attends a meditation meeting at least once a week. She also practices mindfulness at secondhand stores any chance she gets. Oh, and sometimes, she makes things. Check out the clay leaf she made (left)!

Susannah Lowe is an Administrative Specialist. To stay balanced, she likes spending time with friends and family, taking Barre classes, exploring nature and eating good food. She also loves learning new things. She just completed a User Experience Design class at a local art school which included researching, testing and mocking up plans for a made-up website (see below).
“For me, ‘staying balanced’ means trying to keep everything in perspective so that no ball that I am juggling feels bigger or heavier than the others. This includes caring for myself, but making sure that it’s not all about me. Here are things I try to do:

- Practice my faith in some way every day, and stay active in my parish (church) community.
- Make sure to exercise every day.
- Deliver quarterly newsletters for the Kenton Neighborhood Association, which combines volunteering and exercise.
- Manage to see my family every week, usually on the weekend.
- Allow myself TV veg time every evening.
- Make time to connect in some way with my hubby every day, which is another way to remind me that it’s not all about me.
- Zentangle whenever I can (see photo).”

Maria Menor
Vendor Team Coordinator
Erin Doherty is one of the newest employees at the state office. She began work as an Administrative Specialist supporting managers this winter. Here are some activities Erin enjoys to help her stay balanced:

“• Take my tiny dog, Aoife, to the small-dog dog park, even though she mostly just sniffs things and stands by my feet wondering what we’re doing.

• Read sci-fi/fantasy and linguistics books (the picture above, is actually a feminist sci-fi book about alien linguistics!).

• Go out to listen to music/dance at my DJ friend’s events: Queer Country Junction (classic country, pictured) and Sugar Town (classic soul).

• Knit! Usually small things, usually for myself, but sometimes for friends and babies.”
Pi Winslow is a Vendor Trainer for the Oregon WIC Program. She travels around the state providing training and authorizing new stores to accept WIC. Traveling and speaking in front of large groups can be tiring and stressful, but she’s found an outlet that helps keep her balanced. In her free time she’s immersed in music, whether it’s preparing for her next radio show or playing a gig in one of her bands. Playing music helps clear her mind, fosters creativity, provides exercise and she has a ton of fun! Having never played an instrument in her life, she picked up the drumsticks just after her 37th birthday – proof that you can learn how to play music at any age!
Robin Stanton is our joint WIC and Maternal Child Health Nutrition Consultant. She loves to create, use her hands, and be surrounded by color! She finds bits of time during the week to engage in her passions, and spends chunks of most weekends doing things she loves, both inside and outside; the only determining factor is the weather. Her top three favorite activities are: sewing projects, especially from repurposed items; canning the massive amounts of produce she grows (she has an orchard!); and gardening. As you can see... she doesn’t relax too much!

Julia Hakes (left, center) is another new employee at the State WIC office. She is an Office Specialist who helps out with App Support and Farm Direct Nutrition Program administration, among many other projects. Julia is an Oregon native and devoted Timbers fan. When the Timbers are playing, you can usually find her at Providence Park cheering with the Timbers Army. She’s looking forward to the 2016 season and hoping they’ll bring home another MLS Cup!
Niani Dunner is the WIC Health Educator. After finishing graduate school, while working for WIC over the past 3 years, she has a greater appreciation for her free time, now that it doesn’t involve being in class or doing homework. There are a few things she has counted on to stay balanced during times she’s felt spread thin. Every day she spends quality time with her cat, Bruce. On weekends she can be found in her garden, planting veggies and flowers, weeding, or chasing away squirrels. Ever grateful for her precious vacation time, she recently spent a week watching whales in Maui.
Sara Sloan’s new puppy Ozzie plays on the beach in Seaside.