

## **Be Active Your Way in the *President's Challenge***

Do you remember earning, or trying to earn, The Presidential Physical Fitness Award when you were in school? You earned this award by achieving a certain level in five areas: flexibility, endurance, abdominal strength, speed and agility, and upper body strength. Whew! How many of us could pass that test today?

Well, the physical fitness test, designed to measure the overall fitness of youth ages 6-17, has evolved into a program that includes adults too! **On September 14, twenty-four MDCH employees accepted the President's Challenge and for six weeks tracked all their physical activities. This means ALL physical activities including walking from the car into work and back, scrubbing floors, raking leaves . . . you get the idea?** Participants logged their activities at <http://presidentschallenge.org>. A wide variety of activities exist, making it ideal for people of all activity levels. *Be Active Your Way* is the theme of this year's President's Challenge program, and participants really liked being active in their on ways!

*And for me, personally, I really liked how this incorporated everyday activities (like housework and walking to/from your car). It really gave you an opportunity to think about how much you're doing already and give yourself some credit, rather than just making yourself feel guilty about not doing enough (which is often what I do to myself). I found myself trying to add a few more minutes to a walk, or add an extra stretch to yoga or a little extra scrubbing to the bathtub. It made me feel good about myself and all I can and do accomplish during a very busy day, and still gave me enough motivation to do more. – The President's Challenge participant, fall 2009*

Courtney Pendleton and Holly Nickel, the challenge coordinators, sent a weekly email to provide ideas for physical activities and help keep up motivation. Along with weekly emails, small incentive prizes, thanks to the Child and Maternal Health's bottle return money, were awarded to keep team members moving and shaking! At the end of the challenge, the three top point winners were given prizes purchased from local businesses, all provided by funds contributed to the Wellness Committee by Washington Square Building employees. Each participant was also given a t-shirt donated by a challenge participant's mother (we're never too old to get a little help from Mom) and a certificate with President Obama's signature! We hope to see them hanging in cubicles with pride. Six weeks of physical activities is an accomplishment to be proud of!

Here are some examples of changes participants made during the six weeks:

*...you certainly can say that I have been somewhat of a "weekend warrior" with activity, and this challenge has encouraged me to find a way to fit in ten more minutes into more weekdays ( I have a 10-minute walk one-way from car to office so that gives me 20 minutes per weekday).*

*I used to choose a parking spot that was closest to our building. Now I park in a spot on the far side of the lot so I can get more walking in.*

And a favorite one:

*Instead of saying 'Who needs chocolate?' we now say 'Who needs to take a walk?'*

Interested in learning more? Go to [www.presidentschallenge.org/](http://www.presidentschallenge.org/) for great information to get you started.