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# Wellness at Work

April 2, 2019



Over the past three years, Georgia Southern University Statesboro Campus has teamed up with the City of Statesboro to improve the health and wellness of city employees. Faculty members from the Department of Health Sciences and Kinesiology, Bridget Melton, Ed.D., Greg Ryan, Ph.D., Ron Snarr, Ph.D. and Amy Jo Riggs, Ph.D. have spearheaded a customized worksite wellness program to meet the needs of the city's diverse workforce.

The mutually-benefiting partnership not only allows for unique learning experiences for undergraduate and graduate exercise science students but also provides wellness education and programming to city employees. "Through courses such as Tactical Strength and Conditioning and Worksite Wellness, we are able to provide experiential and service learning opportunities for our students as well as help those who provide for our city," stated Melton.

The City of Statesboro Fire Department (SFD) was one of the first city departments to solidify their partnership with Georgia Southern. Deputy Chief Bobby Duggar stated, "we take the health of our firefighters very serious and know improving our health has a positive impact on how we perform on the job and in life. It is nice to receive advice from experts in the field on how we can improve." Each Friday, the fire department participates in training sessions led by Georgia Southern graduate students, Brandon Loewen and Macy Weeks. During the training sessions, undergraduate students volunteer to assist and provide physical training to help the firefighters better prepare for emergency calls, prevent injuries in the field and build positive morale. "The Friday fitness training definitely helps promote a culture of health and safety at the fire department, in a setting and spirit that really works for our firefighters" added Chief Merritt Kearns, SFD health and safety officer.

Additionally, the fire department along with the police department have welcomed Georgia Southern to be a part of their recruit training programs. During the recruit training programs, exercise science graduate students provide morning training sessions to help new recruits prepare for their careers in fire service and law enforcement. "Along with providing services, we are able to track the effectiveness of the different programs by conducting pre/post fitness assessments, which also aids with faculty and student research," said Ryan.

Each year, the fire department is required to complete fitness testing protocols to meet the National Fire and Prevention Association standards and more. The testing is usually contracted out, but this year they utilized their partnership with Georgia Southern. Assistant Chief Jason Baker stated, "our relationship with Georgia Southern has really grown and we were confident they would be up for the challenge of testing our department." Snarr stated, "Emily Langford, a graduate student in

the Exercise Science program, took a leadership role in the fire department's fitness testing project." Langford plans on using the information from the fitness testing project for future research. The testing of the 44 fire department staff members required the efforts of four faculty mentors, five graduate students, and over 20 undergraduate students along with the assistance of the City of Statesboro's Wellness Center staff.

Along with the programs currently being offered to the police department and fire department, each Monday Georgia Southern interns lead wellness movement breaks called "Brain Busters" at City Hall. These breaks provide the opportunity for employees to get up from their desks and recharge both their bodies and their minds. "I have really enjoyed my internship with the city. I have been exposed to a whole new world with worksite wellness," stated Catherine Gallagher, a senior exercise science major.

This spring the wellness programming has expanded to preventing Type 2 Diabetes by implementing a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Program entitled "Prevent T2." The year-long program will focus on small health changes that make a big difference in employee health. "We meet weekly and talk about realistic strategies to improve wellness; it is great to see the support of the workers," stated Weeks.

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