



Jane Charmelo

OUT AND ABOUT

Healthy Lombard expanding into workplace

It often takes small, grass-roots organizations to make a big difference in a community, and Healthy Lombard is doing just that after being created with the goal of eliminating childhood obesity.

Founder and board President Jay Wojcik, along with the late Bill Mueller, launched Healthy Lombard in 2009-10 as a way to reduce the obesity statistics for children in our local communities. Since then, she has been coming up with ways for not only children to increase their activity level and learn healthy eating habits, but parents and community members as well—thanks to the addition of business and community partners and supporters.

Her latest endeavor involves going into the workplace to help employees live a healthier lifestyle, and as she tells it, the idea came about like many often do—serendipity, or being in the right place at the right time.

Wojcik said she had applied for a grant through the State Health Improvement Program, or SHIP, to help augment what is basically a frugal budget. In order to do so, she had to make a one-minute video about Healthy Lombard.

“That was the easy part,” she said with a chuckle, adding that it was harder to decide what to do with the \$1,500 grant she received from SHIP.

The president said she happened to be at the Westin Hotel in Lombard, talking with the general manager, Mike Feigenbaum, and the idea to bring Healthy Lombard to a work setting was born.



Photos courtesy of Jay Wojcik

HEALTHY LOMBARD IS EXPANDING into the workplace, where currently a program is being put in place with the Westin Hotel in Lombard. When asked, employees indicated they want help with stress reduction. In the top photo, Carrie Santucci, fitness instructor at the Downers Grove Park District, offers staff a sample yoga lesson. In the lower left photo, videographer Curtis Sehy from the Illinois Center for Broadcasting in Lombard tapes Lou Ann Chvatal, a nutrition and wellness consultant and Certified Personal Trainer with the Lombard Park District.

“We wanted to expand in the workplace,” she continued, which is a new concept for Healthy Lombard.

The Westin is serving as somewhat of a test run, and Wojcik said she is using a model she calls the “Triple A Approach.”

The president explained how she used a SHIP model to survey the employees about what they want to work on, saying, “We wanted to make people aware that we wanted to know what they thought they needed.”

“We didn’t want to start a program that nobody wanted,” she added.

“Help us alleviate the stress,” was what the employees indicated, Wojcik said, and it was up to her to figure out “what might help.”

So, the first A was to promote awareness. Awareness, that is, of resources available to the employees, such as the tools on SHIP’s Web site, the Health Priority Area Resource Page Healthier Worksite initiative.

Additionally, employees watched a video on using the hotel’s fitness

room, and were given access to informational pamphlets.

Also, Wojcik said Healthy Lombard shared information about the DuPage County Health Department’s Web site, which has information on such topics as smoking cessation and weight loss, among others, including “Rethink Your Drink” (focusing on sugary beverages).

“We’re trying to get them more aware there are a lot of resources,” she outlined.

The second A focuses on employees being introduced to activities.

Wojcik said there are a number of ways the workplace program will address stress reduction through activities, including a workshop on “holistic ways to reduce chronic stress and fatigue.”

According to Wojcik, statistics show that stress in the workplace costs U.S. companies over \$300 billion annually in health care costs, lost productivity, employee turnover, absenteeism, workers’ compensation claims and more.

Wojcik said the hotel is even taking steps internally to reestablish its own Wellness Committee as well.

There are sample yoga and Zumba classes to introduce employees to those activities, the president said, noting that there are many such classes offered through a number of local venues.

Wojcik is enlisting the assistance of Jennifer McGrath, MSTOM, L.Ac., Dipl.OM, one of her Healthy Lombard partners.

McGrath is a licensed acupuncturist and herbalist, and NCCAOM Board Certified, and is the owner of Points to Wellness, Inc. in Oakbrook Terrace, which offers such services as acupuncture, herb consultations, cupping (activates the lymphatic system and is an adjunct to a detox program), Gua Sha (increases cellular turnover, stimulates the immune system and more) and Eastern nutrition (healing through natural foods versus medications).

McGrath, who was chosen to coordinate the grant program, is slated to present a video “demonstrating how to create simple, easy, healthy meals to reduce the stress caused by having to figure out what to cook after a hectic day at work,” Wojcik described.

Once the program is completed, she said, the third A, achievement, will be measured.

That is, she continued, around June a post-program survey will be given to participants on how the initiative worked for them, and in turn, she will turn the results over to SHIP.

Her goal, the president commented, is to promote “workplace wellness.”

“That’s what we’re hoping for when we get done,” she continued, adding that she hopes Westin employees realize they are not alone in trying to manage stress.

In fact, Wojcik said, she hopes that other companies and businesses will take an interest in the Healthy Lombard workplace wellness program, saying of the hotel employees that stress in the

workplace is common.

“What they’re experiencing, lots of people do,” she added.

In terms of optimism and hard work, Wojcik has become somewhat like the “Little Engine That Could” when it comes to getting a program off the ground, considering that Healthy Lombard has added so many components, thanks to interested partners—and participants.

There’s the Flat Apple summer activity program, the Fitness February Fair, the G.Y.M. Bags program for second-graders that is taking off and the “Health Local” show on cable TV.

The Healthy Lombard Web site is another resource for those looking to improve their health and well being, with healthy recipes and information on its partners.

With nearly a million hits on the Healthy Lombard site in two years, Wojcik has deduced that people are “looking for healthy, interesting things.”

The president said she looks at running Healthy Lombard “from the ground up, versus systemic,” meaning, she added, that rather than working from the top down, she is “very organic, from the bottom up.”

“We started where the people are,” she added.

However, Wojcik said she not only wants to expand program offerings, but also the number of partnerships and initiatives, saying modestly that she wants to see enough growth in the next five years that people will say, “It’s not just Jay Wojcik.”

The bottom line for Wojcik, though, is that she is hopeful the launch of the workplace wellness program will be successful, and that other businesses and companies will want to borrow the Healthy Lombard model to use as a stepping stone to their own programs.

“I can’t change the world but I can help you get back on track,” she concluded.

For more information, visit www.healthylombard.com, or contact Wojcik at 630-916-0519 or jay@healthylombard.com.

Meet Princess Erin Elizabeth Millett

This is the third in a series of five profiles of the 2015 Lilac Court.

If you talk to Erin Millett, the word “passion” inevitably comes up: passion for faith, passion for achieving goals and passion for family, to name a few.

Now the Lilac Princess will have the opportunity to spread that message as a member of the 2015 Lilac Court, and she’s seemingly not shy about expressing her feelings on the subject.

Princess Erin, a senior and honor roll student at Glenbard South High School, lives her passion, in part through her involvement with the Young Life Christian Youth Group, which she said is facilitated by students from Wheaton College, and which offers her opportunities to meet people and travel.

The princess said she has been involved in the group since her freshman year, and having spent her elementary school years attending Sacred Heart Catholic School, meeting with other young people of faith seems to be a good fit.

“My faith is very important to

me,” she commented.

Princess Erin is also passionate about volleyball, playing at her high school and also for the New Wave Volleyball Club.

The princess said she has been with the club about eight years, and enjoys the opportunity to travel all over the country. She also mentioned that she is a volunteer coach, along with track, at her former elementary school.

The Lilac Princess said that besides focusing on academics, volleyball and working as a restaurant hostess, she also has taken time to volunteer with PADs in Lombard and for Feed My Starving Children.

“Volunteering is something I love to do,” she added.

When she’s not enjoying her hobbies of listening to music, playing volleyball and hanging out with friends, Princess Erin is settling into her role as a member of Lombard royalty—getting to know her fellow Lilac Princesses and learning more about her community.

“I have a longtime family history in Lombard,” she related, explaining



Photo by Steve Spoden

PRINCESS ERIN MILLETT

that her 96-year-old grandmother has lived in Lombard a very long time, and “she actually encouraged me to [apply]” to this year’s Lilac Court.

Additionally, the princess said she got a chance to look at pictures from

past Lilac Court members, and realized that she had an aunt who was a Lilac Queen and also another relative who was on the first Lilac Court.

“Twenty, 30 years down the road that could be something I’m in,” she said with a chuckle.

Princess Erin said it is an honor to be chosen for the Lilac Court and that even though Lombard is close to other large communities and Chicago, it is “traditions like this that bring it back to a small town.”

She believes being a Lilac Princess will also help her gain poise and public speaking skills, and boost her confidence, and added, it is about “getting a chance represent my community in a positive way.”

The Lilac Princess said she plans to be a role model, which for her is “someone who is completely passionate about what they do,” putting oneself fully into something and “does everything in their power to reinforce that.”

She wants to tell her peers and those who look up to her, “Never really give up on what you’re

passionate about.”

The princess said that in addition to demonstrating good character and earning respect, being a role model is also about putting forth one’s best effort and taking pride in one’s community.

“I believe in having a strong character. Never really closing any doors,” added the princess.

Along the way to achieving goals, she emphasized, there is “a journey and a story to tell.”

“This has been nothing but good for me,” the Lilac Princess said, and of her fellow princesses, she commented, “It’s been great getting to know them.”

“I don’t think any one of us has the same personality. It’s so diverse. We all have different interests,” she added.

As for being chosen to represent Lombard, the Lilac Princess said, “This is just the beginning. This is such a good thing for Lombard.”

“I’m absolutely ecstatic that I get the opportunity,” she concluded.

Princess Erin is the daughter of Maribeth and Mark Millett; and sister of Kathleen, 12.