Wellness Ambassador of the Month – October 2017
Gina Flaharty

How long have you worked at UC Davis?

I've worked at UC Davis for 7 years in the Heart and Vascular Center.

What does wellness mean to you?

Wellness is a balance of a healthy state of mind. According to me, wellness also includes being physically fit.

Why did you become a wellness ambassador?

I have always been interested in wellness, especially because I'm a Nurse Practitioner. In the Cardiology Department, where we are so focused on preventative medicine, I saw how wellness tied in with my career field. When I got an email from Staff and Faculty Health and Well-being about the Wellness Ambassador program, I knew that being a Wellness Ambassador is something I could see myself doing. I wanted to be more committed to having a better work life balance and I really wanted to practice mindfulness in my workplace.

How long have you been a wellness ambassador?

I have been a Wellness Ambassador for 1 year.

What has been rewarding or positive about your experience thus far?

I love seeing my coworkers and teammates participate. It’s a wonderful feeling when someone notices and actually says “I appreciate that”. Simple breaks like spending 5 minutes to work on a puzzle in the breakroom with teammates, or doing a walking meeting can really make a difference. More than anything else, knowing that people are able to take breaks with my initiatives to feel re-energized shows how easy it is to make a positive change, and how everyone is benefiting from it. I have noticed a shift in the attitude here. People in my department automatically bring a puzzle in when we have completed one in the break room. We even did a puzzle of a group picture we took together.

What are some of the challenges you face as a wellness ambassador?

Similar to many things we face in life, it is difficult to find time. To take time out of your day, to simply practice wellness is demanding, but it is so important to do so. I faced this challenge at first, and then realized how effective taking a break was for my colleagues and me. It made us more productive, and we felt better too.

What is one piece of advice you would like to share with new wellness ambassadors?

Remember that everyone might have hesitations in participating, but do not let that stop you from organizing events or programs. Ask the people around you questions like “Do you enjoy doing this?” or “What do you want to do?” and use those ideas for suggestions and feedback.

Staff and Faculty Health and Wellbeing aims to build an environment that makes the healthier choice the easier choice, while providing staff and faculty with the required support to make UC Davis the healthiest community. How do you feel you have contributed to our mission?

I have incorporated wellness into staff meetings by inviting speakers to talk about aspects like mindfulness and financial wellness. Once I asked a diabetes educator to come speak to my department. I am currently organizing a silent disco in our department, which everyone is really looking forward to! I hope to extend my initiatives beyond the 28 members who actively attend, and I would like to spread wellness through the whole cardiology department.

What is your favorite thing to do in your spare time?

In my free time, I travel as much as possible. I also really enjoy being outdoors. So far, I've travelled to over 46 countries, and have visited some places more than once!

To be part of wellness initiatives with Gina Flaharty please email gflaharty@ucdavis.edu or visit her at the Heart and Vascular Center, at UC Davis Health.