

Commissioner's Comments: Stepping up for Wellness 2005

February 3, 2005

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THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

OUTLOOK

Last year, in support of Governor Douglas's health care initiatives, the Department of Human Resources (DHR) Wellness Program introduced our first statewide walking program, *Stepping up for Wellness 2004: Walk around Vermont*. The program proved to be extremely popular with nearly half the state workforce participating and collectively "walking around" the perimeter of Vermont 1200 times. At the completion of the eight-week program one employee wrote, "I have not felt as good as I do today for over two years. This program has picked me up and moved me on."

To build upon this success and in continued support of the Governor's ongoing health care initiatives, the Wellness Program will be launching our second annual statewide walking program in early May 2005.

Remember, the key ob-

jective of *Stepping up for Wellness 2005* is to encourage all of us to increase our physical activity and to have some fun while we're at it. This year, along with setting a goal to increase your physical activity, why not take the opportunity to set another health goal during the program. Perhaps you would like to focus on ways to decrease your stress, improve your diet, or maybe cut out the use of tobacco. Research shows that poor diet, physical inactivity, stress, and tobacco use are key risk factors for cardiac conditions and many other chronic illnesses.

I encourage you to join your fellow employees throughout the state to "Step up for Wellness" this year and to have some fun with the support of others at your worksite, family, and friends. Together we can become an even healthier workforce and do our best to control health care costs as we make healthy lifestyle choices.

Don't forget that when you complete the program your name will automatically be entered into the drawing for prizes. We will also be awarding "Top Stepper" prizes again this year.



Cindy LaWare

As we gear up for this year's event, you will receive more detailed information with your payroll statement of February 17th. Registration for *Stepping up for Wellness 2005* will take place through worksite coordinators during late February and early March. If you have not heard about program registration through your worksite by the end of February, please feel free to contact Dianne VanderBush of the Wellness program at 828-5484 or dvanderbush@per.state.vt.us.

Benefits Briefs

VERMONT HIGHER EDUCATION INVESTMENT PLAN (VHEIP)

Over the past few months, we have been providing you with information about the Vermont Higher Education Investment Plan (VHEIP). Informational presentations with question and answer periods will be held during February 2005 to provide details on how this program can assist you in saving for your child's post-high school education. Attending will be representatives from the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) and TIAA-CREF, the plan's investment manager. All presentations will begin at 11:30AM and 12:30PM at each location, except Waterbury, where presentations will be at 10:30AM and 11:30AM. Additional presentations will be held at other state worksites around Vermont in the coming weeks. Be sure to check upcoming editions of Outlook for the schedule.

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Address</u>
Tuesday	02/08/04	Burlington	108 Cherry Street – Conference Room #2B
Wednesday	02/09/04	Montpelier	109 State Street – Pavilion Auditorium
Thursday	02/10/04	Waterbury	Vermont State Colleges – Stanley Hall #100
Tuesday	02/15/04	Rutland	Asa Bloomer Building – Room 228
Wednesday	02/16/04	Bennington	200 Veteran's Memorial Drive
Thursday	02/17/04	Brattleboro	DCF – 232 Main Street – 2 nd Floor

Additional information regarding the Vermont Higher Education Plan can be found on the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation Website at www.vsac.org. You may also call the Employee Benefits and Wellness Division at (802) 828-3455.

LOOKING FOR AN EASIER WAY TO FILE YOUR TAX RETURNS? **E-FILE**

Filing from Your Computer: Tax preparation software offers an **e-filing** option. Press the "Send" button to file both your IRS and VT tax returns at the same time from your computer.

Filing with a Preparer: If you use a preparer, ask him or her to **e-file** your returns.

Free Filing: Some taxpayers may be eligible to **e-file** returns *free* through IRS Free File Alliance. For free filing, you need to access the on line filing software through the VT Department of Taxes web site.

E-File Benefits:

- Most refunds issued in 5 business days or less
- Filing programs perform math for you
- Secure on-line filing available at your convenience
- Direct Deposit option available for refunds
- Filing programs screen out common errors
- Acknowledgement showing IRS and VT received returns



Own a home? You can *e-file* the declaration of homestead on VT Department of Taxes web site for free.

More Information: Please go to the VT Department of Taxes web site at www.state.vt.us/tax for information on software approved for VT returns, filing the declaration of homestead, and the eligibility requirements for *free* on-line filing.

Vermont Department of Taxes 109 State Street Montpelier, VT 05609-1401 1-866-828-2865 (toll free in VT) 802-828-2865 (local)

2004 W-2 Forms

The Department of Human Resources Payroll Division mailed employees' 2004 W-2 statements to your homes on Tuesday, January 25, 2005. If your W-2 statement does not arrive in a reasonable amount of time, please contact the Payroll Division at 828-2314.

In an effort to help you better understand the information on your W-2 statements, Payroll has also created a help document entitled "Understanding your 2004 W-2". This document can be found on the Department of Human Resources' Website at <http://www.vermontpersonnel.org/employee/payroll.php> in the Forms and Document Box at the bottom of the page.

Come on and Take a Free Ride



On January 5, 2005, the FREE Capital Shuttle began running **every 15 minutes** from The Department of Employment & Training (DET) on Green Mountain Drive to the State House and other buildings in the Capital Complex. The route also includes FREE RIDES to the National Life building and downtown

Montpelier. Parking at DET is free and passengers may get off the shuttle anywhere on the route—provided that the shuttle can safety stop.

Try the no hassle way to get into the Montpelier Capital Complex and avoid all the parking problems.

**** Important Notice ****

457 Deferred Comp Plan FEE CHANGES

If you participate in the Stable Value Fund in the 457 Deferred Compensation Plan, please visit the Plan's Website at www.vermont457.com for information regarding changes in the fee payment structure.

Contact us at:

THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES

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Phone: 802-828-3491
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With comments, suggestions, or ideas for future OUTLOOK articles

Wear Red For Women's Heart Health

February 4, 2005

The Vermont Department of Health and the Vermont State Wellness Program are joining the American Heart Association's national campaign called **Wear Red to Work** to raise awareness about heart disease in women. Heart disease is the number one killer of women over the age of 25. We are urging all state employees, both men and women, to:

- **WEAR RED** on Friday, February 4, 2005 to raise awareness about heart disease in women.
- Take a peek at the American Heart Association website to learn more about women and heart disease – www.americanheart.org and how to stay healthy and strong.
- Look for posters in your offices and encourage your co-workers to participate as well.