Laughter is Good for Your Health

(April is National Humor Month)

By: Tammye McCollum

April 2009 is the 33rd anniversary of National Humor Month! National Humor Month was founded in 1976 by Larry Wilde, Director of the Carmel Institute of Humor. It is designed to heighten public awareness on how the joy and therapeutic value of laughter can improve health, boost morale, increase communication skills and enrich the quality of one’s life.

Research indicates that laughter can increase pain tolerance and immune function, reduce stress hormones, improve circulation, burn calories and reduce blood sugar. Laughter causes the pituitary gland to release pain-suppressing opiates. Immune cell production increases when people laugh. Laughter also can reduce epinephrine (adrenaline), which can contribute to heart disease, hypertension and anxiety, by 70%. Oxygen flow and circulation within the body is improved with laughter. A study was done which had subjects eat a meal and then watch a tedious lecture on the first day and then had the same subjects eat the same meal the following day but watch a comedy afterwards. Subjects’ blood sugar was lower after watching the comedy than it had been after attending the lecture. A minute of laughter generates the same heart rate as 10 minutes on a rowing machine, and laughing for 10 to 15 minutes burns 50 calories.

Statistics show that people are 30 times more likely to laugh in the presence of others than just by themselves. There are many things a person can do in order to laugh. Be open-minded and on the look for humor because it exists anywhere. Watch a funny TV show or movie or just sit back and reminisce about past events with friends. Everyone laughs from time to time, but as adults, humor seems to take a back seat to our busy schedules of work and school. Statistics show that children laugh on an average 400 times a day whereas adults only laugh about 17 times a day.

During this National Humor Month, don’t be afraid to be funny. Spread the joy of laughter and we will all feel a little better and maybe a little less stressed.
In a collaborative effort to reduce paper and help the environment, your Fidelity account statement is available online via NetBenefits.

Accessing your account online is fast and easy — simply log on to NetBenefits (www.netbenefits.com) to check your account balance and personal rate of return, and review your investment mix. In addition, you can view and print statement information from the past 24 months.

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Wellness Quotes:

The I in illness is isolation, and the crucial letters in wellness are we. ~Author unknown

Health is a state of complete harmony of the body, mind and spirit. When one is free from physical disabilities and mental distractions, the gates of the soul open. ~B.K.S. Iyengar

Physical fitness is not only one of the most important keys to a healthy body, it is the basis of dynamic and creative intellectual activity.” – John F. Kennedy

Yoga Classes

Yoga is a great wellness tool for the mind and body. The Yoga Class is taught by Debbie Tompkins. Classes are held on Tuesdays & Thursdays from 5:15PM to 6:30PM. The cost is $30 for 8 sessions to be used within 60 days. Contact Caryn Vorsas for more information at Ext. 7293
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY HELPS INDIVIDUALS LIVE LIFE TO ITS FULLEST

Occupational therapy enables people of all ages live life to its fullest by helping them promote health, prevent—or live better with—injury, illness, or disability. It is a practice deeply rooted in science and is evidence-based, meaning that the plan designed for each individual is supported by data, experience, and “best practices” that have been developed and proven over time.

Occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants focus on “doing” whatever occupations or activities are meaningful to the individual. It is occupational therapy’s purpose to get beyond problems to the solutions that assure living life to its fullest. These solutions may be adaptations for how to do a task, changes to the surroundings, or helping individuals to alter their own behaviors.

When working with an occupational therapy practitioner, strategies and modifications are customized for each individual to resolve problems, improve function, and support everyday living activities. The goal is to maximize potential. Through these therapeutic approaches, occupational therapy helps individuals design their lives, develop needed skills, adjust their environments (e.g., home, school, or work) and build health-promoting habits and routines that will allow them to thrive.

By taking the full picture into account—a person’s psychological, physical, emotional, and social makeup as well as their environment—occupational therapy assists clients to do the following:

- Achieve goals
- Function at the highest possible level
- Concentrate on what matters most to them
- Maintain or rebuild their independence
- Participate in daily activities that they need or want to do.

The focus of occupational therapy on the “full-picture” has its origins in the varied disciplines of the profession founders. In 1917, architect George Barton assembled a meeting of five individuals who all realized the therapeutic value of engaging in meaningful daily occupations. This initial group consisted of architects, a psychiatrist, a physician, teachers, and a nurse. Together, they started the National Society for the Promotion of Occupational Therapy, which evolved into the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA).

The American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) represents the interests and concerns of more than 140,000 occupational therapists, assistants and students nationwide. The Association educates the public and advances the profession of occupational therapy by providing resources, setting standards including accreditations and serving as an advocate to improve health care. Based in Bethesda, Md., AOTA’s major programs and activities are directed toward promoting the professional development of its members and assuring consumer access to quality services so patients can maximize their individual potential. For more information, go to www.aota.org.
As many of you already know, the state of individual health has taken front stage among a variety of socioeconomic concerns. 2009 marks the fifth anniversary of Governor Rick Perry’s Health and Fitness initiative, the Texas Round Up, which includes a variety of events around our state, concluding with a walk in Austin in late April.

Last year, The University of Texas Health Science Center at Tyler and The University of Texas at Tyler took the lead in our community through the establishment of the Texas Round Up-Tyler Fun Run, held on the campus of UT Tyler. Along with a free online activity tracking program sponsored through the Governor’s Office, this event served as a reminder to our community that the individual health of our employees, students and volunteers, is directly related to the health of our great organizations.

The Fun Run will be held on Saturday, April 18th, 2009 at 9 a.m. on the University of Texas at Tyler Campus Walking Trail, located at 3900 University Blvd. Participants will meet in front of the Herrington Patriot Center by 8:45 a.m. The Fun Run will cover a scenic 2k trail through the UT campus and will also feature a 5k Race for those of you that wish to participate. All 5k Racers will begin at the head of the line as both the Fun Run and the 5K Race will begin at the same time.

In addition to the Fun Run itself, we will have free chair massages, a healthy cooking demonstration, free snack samples, questions and answers with a health and wellness expert, door prizes, giveaways and more.

Registration is not necessary. We encourage you to wear your UTHSCT t-shirts! Family and friends of employees are also encouraged to participate! To utilize the free online activity tracker, go to www.texasroundup.org. There are a variety of activities for all ages, including the First Lady’s t-shirt design contest.

We look forward to seeing you April 18th on the University of Texas at Tyler campus.

Sincerely,

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BCBS Online Resources for Health Care Information

www.bcbstx.com/ut

Hospital Comparison Tool

When your physician has recommended a surgical treatment, you can easily find and review the outcome history of procedures previously performed at hospitals. You can review a hospital's performance based on factors such as:

- Mortality
- Length of stay
- Complications
- Number of procedures performed
- Cost

To review hospital outcome data, log onto Blue Access® for Members (www.bcbstx.com/ut), click on the My Health section and select Compare Hospitals.

Treatment Cost Advisor

Through the Treatment Cost Advisor* tool, you can find the typical cost of a health care procedure from a list of common medical conditions. You simply need to enter information, such as age, gender, and state or ZIP code to help determine a cost estimate for a specified medical procedure. To get started, log onto Blue Access® for Members (www.bcbstx.com/ut), click on the My Health section and select Treatment Cost Advisor.

* All information is intended for your general use only and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment for specific medical conditions. You should seek prompt medical care for specific health issues and consult your physician before taking any action on your health conditions. Use of this online service is subject to Terms and Conditions.

Delta Dental – DPO Provider vs. Delta Premier Provider

By: Tammye McCollum

You may be wondering when you log on to Delta Dental’s website, what the difference is between a DPO Provider and a Delta Premier Provider is, under the UT Select Dental plan. The UT Select Dental plan allows you to receive services from a DPO or Delta Premier Provider. A dentist in the DPO network has contracted a lower out-of-pocket cost for dental procedures than a Premier dentist, which means more savings to you. All of the dentist in the Premier network are also in the DPO network, which is the reason for the DPO network being larger. The UT Select Dental Plan allows you the freedom to visit any dentist of your choice, even if out-of-network. Non-contracted dentists will have a higher out-of-pocket cost to the patient than the DPO or Premier dentists.

Delta Dental’s website (www.deltadentalins.com/universityoftexas) allows you to print temporary identification cards and see your benefit information. The website also gives you easy access to view your claims that have been processed to date. A new feature to the website allows you to find an average fee charged for a particular procedure in your area by other dentists.
10-Minute Italian Chicken Stir-Fry

By: www.bcbstx.ut.com

1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
¾ lb. skinless, boneless chicken breast, cut in 3/4" pieces
1 16-oz. bag frozen mixed vegetables with peppers and zucchini
1 tsp. garlic, finely minced
½ cup fresh mushrooms, pre-sliced,
1 tsp. dried basil
1 tsp. dried oregano
½ cup fat-free, reduced sodium chicken broth
2 Tbsp. Parmesan cheese, grated
salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
2 cups cooked instant brown rice

Place large skillet over high heat. Add oil; swirl to coat pan and heat oil until very hot. Add chicken and stir-fry until it loses pink color. With slotted spoon, remove chicken from pan and set aside. Add vegetables and garlic to pan. Stir-fry until garlic is fragrant, about 2 minutes. Add mushrooms. Stir-fry another 2 minutes. Return chicken to pan. Add basil, oregano and chicken broth. Stir-fry until chicken is opaque throughout, about 4 minutes. Add cheese and toss. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately over brown rice, including juices from pan.

Yield: 4 servings

Each serving provides: Calories: 316 Fat: 7 g Protein: 27 g Sodium: 244 mg Carbohydrate: 27 g Fiber: 6 g