



# Employee Newsletter

## February 2017



FEBRUARY 3RD

**HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY**  
**Happy President's Day**

### **FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS**

Rhonda Taylor	2
Joe Wood	2
Gary Gladson	3
Robin Kline	3
Richard Chant	4
Danny Cross	4
Charlotte Schwalm	4
Terri Stiles	5
Jason Murphy	6
Cody Luther	7
Mitch Morgan	7
Debbie Ambler	9
Winfield Clonts	9
Lydia Gerbino	9
Beth Rutledge	9
Kevin Carter	11
Janet Crisp	11
Matt White	11
Karen Freyre	12
Michael Smith	13
Melody Johnson	15
Amanda Martin	16
Ryan McDaris	16
Kathy Pratt	18
Danny Clayton	21
Jeremy Lance	21
Erin Martin	21
Tonya Chastain	22
Jessica Orton	22
Regina Swanson	23
Daphne Browning	24
Nolan Queen	24
Mark Thigpen	25
Courtney Flowers	26
Linda Rahn	26
Samantha Barnes	27
Brandon Morgan	27
Kaitlyn Bailey	29
Mike Reid	29

Ages 18 to 75

### **Tax Withholding for 2017 Vacation and Sick Balances**

Everyone should have their W2 by now and some of you have probably already had your taxes prepared or prepared them yourselves. Now is the time to make changes to your tax withholdings if you did not have enough withheld last year or if you were close.

The W4 and NC4 may be found on the County's website by going to Departments, >Human Resources, >Employee Information or you may get forms in my office or the MUNIS Self Service website.

Your leave balances will still not be "normal" on the 1/27 pay notice. The earned leave shown will be the entire January accrual. I don't think it will show the total used since that happened after last pay day's pay notices were printed, but the way our payroll system starts a new accrual year is to zero out all leave balances and transfer any vacation over the annual limit to sick and then start the new year with the new total. The ending leave balance should be correct and normal looking accruals will occur again on the first pay day in February.

### **Tax Preparation Assistance from Local Government Federal Credit Union**

**Volunteer Income Tax Assistance\* (VITA) program:** If you are a member of the LGFCU and your 2016 household income was \$54,000 or less you may be eligible to have your standard income tax return prepared and filed at no cost to you.

**Low-Cost Tax Preparation Service<sup>≠</sup>:** If your 2015 household income exceeded \$54,000, you can have a standard income tax return prepared and filed in one of the Credit Union branches for only \$75.

Choose to have your return filed electronically and receive your refund as quickly as 8-15 days! Visit [lgfcu.org/taxprep](http://lgfcu.org/taxprep) for more information and a list of what to bring with you when you go to your local branch.

\*VITA is an IRS-sponsored program available to help taxpayers with a household income of \$54,000 or less prepare and electronically file basic tax returns.

<sup>≠</sup>The Credit Union's fee-based tax preparation program is not affiliated with the VITA program.

### **AllyHealth Telemedicine**

By now, if you are a full-time employee, you should have received information and a card in the mail from AllyHealth. If you have not yet registered online ([www.AllyHealth.net](http://www.AllyHealth.net)), try to go ahead and get that done. It speeds things up if you have to use the service—or if you aren't computer savvy, you can call them (1-888-565-3303) and they'll enter your information for you. There was also an email early in January with a link where you could set up your username and password.

This is available at zero cost to you, your spouse and your children who are still dependent children, regardless of whether you have them covered on the County's insurance. That sounds too good to be true, doesn't it, but it is. I've had feedback from a few people who have already used this service and so far, what I'm hearing is positive.

Please take advantage of this fantastic benefit that is now being provided to you. It isn't intended to take the place of your regular healthcare provider and you can even set it up to have reports sent to your healthcare provider when you do use the service. They will also tell you if your issue is above what they can treat, so don't hesitate to give it a try.

They do not prescribe narcotic medications, so if your issue needs that, you need to go ahead and see your regular healthcare provider.

### **Commission Meetings**

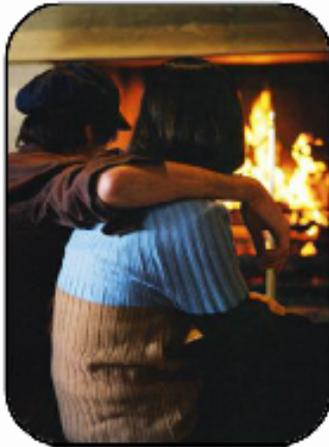
February 6th 6:30 pm  
February 20th 6:30 pm

Congratulations to Nancy Hartsock, Nurse Practitioner at the Health Department, who is retiring at the end of February after five years with the County. Good luck, Nancy!



# Home Fire Safety: Checklist

## Is your home free of hazards?



## Safety at HOME

### National Safety Council

saves lives by preventing injuries and deaths at work, in homes and communities, and on the roads, through leadership, research, education and advocacy.

1121 SPRING LAKE DRIVE  
ITASCA, IL 60143  
(800) 621-7313 • [nsc.org](http://nsc.org)  
[customerservice@nsc.org](mailto:customerservice@nsc.org)

- Check electrical appliances for loose or frayed cords. Do not place wires under rugs.
- Check for outlets overloaded with plugs; including TV, computer, stereo, and printer.
- Install GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlets in your home; especially near sources of water like your bathroom, kitchen and laundry room.
- Use the correct bulb wattage for home light fixtures.
- If any appliances spark, smell unusual or overheat, replace or get repaired by a professional.
- Lamps and nightlights should not touch any fabrics (bedspreads, drapes).
- Electrical blankets are unplugged when not in use. Check for frayed or loose cords and any odd smell. If a problem is detected, replace.
- Supervise children around the stove and microwave.
- Candles should be out of reach of children and pets, curtains and furniture. Never leave candles unattended.
- Annual inspection of furnace or heating system
- Space heaters:**
  - o Keep out of walking paths.
  - o Keep away from children and pets.
  - o Placed away from beds.
  - o Newspapers, magazines, and any fabrics, including curtains, sheets, tablecloths, are not within 3 feet of a space heater.
  - o Unplug when not in use.
- In the kitchen**
  - o Keep an eye on appliances when in use.
  - o Make sure appliances are turned off and unplugged when not in use.
  - o When using pots and pans, use the rear burners and turn the handles inwards.
  - o Do not wear loose clothing while cooking.
- Fireplaces**
  - o Keep the fire place clean.
  - o Cover your fireplace with a screen.
  - o Only burn wood. Papers and other materials can escape while burning and ignite something nearby.
  - o The fire should be completely extinguished before leaving the room.
  - o Have your chimney cleaned professionally once a year.

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## Study: Gratitude is a Healthy Attitude

By AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION NEWS ([www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org))

When most people think about Thanksgiving, they focus on food, family and football-watching. But putting the “thanks” back into Thanksgiving is a good start in improving your heart health, researchers say.

“Somebody once said a grateful heart is a healthier heart, and that’s what we saw in this study,” said Paul Mills, Ph.D., a professor and researcher at the University of California-San Diego whose study was published last year by the American Psychology Association.

Mills and his team studied 186 men and women with asymptomatic (Stage B) heart failure to see how their sense of thankfulness and gratitude affected their overall health. First, they focused on psychological health and found that patients who expressed higher levels of gratitude had less depression, less anxiety and slept better.

Next, they turned to the heart. Using blood tests, they discovered that the patients with more gratitude had lower levels of inflammation and better heart health.

“That was a lovely surprise,” Mills said. “Based on past literature, we thought people that had more gratitude would have a better sense of well-being, but we didn’t expect to see changes in the biology as well.”

The study didn’t surprise Robert A. Emmons, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at University of California-Davis, author of *The Little Book of Gratitude* (Gaia, 2016), and a researcher who has spent decades studying the effects of gratitude.

“Gratitude is good medicine,” Emmons said. “Clinical trials indicate that the practice of gratitude can have dramatic and lasting effects in a person’s life. It can lower blood pressure and improve immune function ... grateful people engage in more exercise, have better dietary behaviors, are less likely to smoke and abuse alcohol, and have higher rates of medication adherence.”

Defining gratitude can be tricky. Webster’s New World Dictionary describes it as “a feeling of thankful appreciation for favors or benefits received; thankfulness.” But Mills said he and other researchers consider thankfulness to be just one component of gratitude.

“Thankfulness is when we feel thankful for specific things – thankful that I have a roof over my head or that I just ate a good meal. With gratitude, it isn’t that we’re grateful for any one thing. It’s more a state of our soul, of just being grateful for our existence,” Mills said. “As people cultivate thoughts and feelings of thankfulness, it moves their consciousness away from just thankfulness into actual gratitude regardless of what they do or don’t have.”

Emmons defined gratitude as “a trait, a state, an attitude, a way of coping, and a virtue all rolled into one. Gratitude is an affirmation of the goodness in one’s life and the recognition that the sources of this goodness lie at least partially outside the self,” he said.

Perhaps the only thing harder than defining gratitude is actually practicing it.

“Busyness, forgetfulness and a sense of entitlement all diminish possibilities for gratitude,” said Emmons, who suggested the people “take life ‘as granted’ rather than ‘for granted.’ Instead of saying ‘I have to do this’ try saying ‘I get to do this.’ Sense that you are lucky or graced rather than deserving of good fortune. Repeat the phrase to yourself ‘I am gifted.’ ”

Mills suggests a more concrete approach: Write it down.

As part of his study, Mills asked participants to keep a journal of things they were grateful for. After two months of journaling, their heart health improved, including reductions in circulating levels of inflammatory biomarkers and improved heart rate variability.

“Journaling about gratitude is a reliable exercise. The more things you can identify, the more your perception of well-being begins to change,” Mills said.

After awhile, people become so grateful they no longer need to write down their feelings, he said.

“Gratitude journaling can lead to a more permanent transformation in a person’s mind and psyche,” Mills said. “They sense gratitude more continuously and then they stop journaling because they’ve made the transition — they’ve changed how they view their moment-to-moment life and the world around them.”

November 21st, 2016|[Blog](#), [Healthy Living](#), [Heart Disease](#), [Heart Failure](#), [Patients](#)

## 5 Steps to Loving Exercise...Or At Least Not Hating It

We all know the benefits of regular physical activity – increased energy, better cardiovascular health, reducing the risk of [heart disease](#) and [stroke](#) and looking more svelte.

But about 80 percent of Americans don't make exercise a regular habit, and, according to a 2012 American Heart Association website survey, 14 percent say they don't like exercise.

So how do you overcome an exercise aversion? Mercedes Carnethon, Ph.D., associate professor of preventive medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine, has some tips to help you incorporate exercise into your life – and maybe even learn to like it.



### 1. Exercise That Suits You

Find an exercise that best fits your personality, Dr. Carnethon said. If you are social person, do something that engages you socially – take a group exercise class, join a kickball team or walk with a group of friends. Or, if you prefer having time alone, walking or jogging solo might be a better fit for you. [Finding a peer group](#) is the perfect way to connect with others who share your goals, lifestyles, schedules and hobbies. Try some of these ideas to help you [get moving](#) – at home, at work or at play.

### 2. Make it a Habit

It can take a little while for something to become a habit, so give yourself the time to create a regular routine. One way is to try to exercise around the same time each day. "Exercise can become addictive in a positive way," said Dr. Carnethon, who is also an American Heart Association volunteer. "Once it becomes a habit, you'll notice when you aren't doing something."

### 3. Build Exercise Into Your Lifestyle

Be honest with yourself. If you don't live close to a gym, it may be harder to become a habit for you. Likewise, if you are not a morning person, don't plan on somehow getting up at the crack of dawn to make a boot camp class. "The key is building activity into your lifestyle so it is not disruptive," Dr. Carnethon said. There are many ways to [fit exercise into your life](#), and it doesn't mean you have to make a big financial investment. You can borrow exercise videos from the library or DVR an exercise program. Do weight or resistance training with items around your home (for example, use canned goods as light weights). Walking is great option, as well. The only investment is a good pair of shoes.

### 4. Do Bouts of Exercise

It's OK to break up your physical activity into smaller segments, Dr. Carnethon said. The American Heart Association recommends 30 minutes a day of exercise most days, but if that sounds overwhelming, try three 10-minute workout sessions. You could do a quick calisthenics routine when you wake up, take a brief walk after lunch at work and, if you commute with public transportation, get off a stop earlier and walk the rest of the way.

### 5. Keep Going

If you miss a day or a workout, don't worry about it. Everybody struggles once in a while. Just make sure you get back at it the next day. "It doesn't take too long to get back on track," Dr. Carnethon said. "It's easy to make something a habit again. You will see same benefits before. Any little bit you can fit in will show benefits."

Information from American Heart Association website: [www.heart.org](http://www.heart.org)

Deja Moo: The feeling that you've heard this bull before.

I went to buy some camouflage pants the other day. I couldn't find any.



Idea for Airline Security  
Here's a solution to all the controversy over full-body scanners. Have a booth that you can step into that will not X-ray you but that will detonate any explosive device you may have on you. It would be a win-win for everybody.

