



Competitive crosswords for brain health

Regular activities such as crosswords help keep our brain neurons active. However, experts say that the benefits of such activities are amplified when you complete them with other people. As social animals it seems that completing tasks as a group cause us to learn better. We are also motivated to learn better if we are recognized for our achievements such as in competition amongst others. (www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1357065/Want-healthy-brain-Then-crossword-friend.html#ixzz1yAW26DQv)

The following is an update from our resident crossword champion, having completed her best finish ever in the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament. Congratulations, Emily!



Snapshot from the edge

By Emily O'Neill

For those of you who are just dying to know (and I'm sure there are scads of you out there)—2012 marked the 35th anniversary of the American Crossword Puzzle Tournament, and I celebrated by having my best finish ever. I ended up in 28th place overall, out of 591 competitors, putting me in the top 5% of solvers. I also ranked 5th among women in the tournament. Most importantly, though, I edged out my Arch Nemesis, Jeffrey from Victoria, who came in 29th. We actually finished with tied scores, but I won the International Division title because I outdid him on four of the

seven puzzles. Jeffrey was gracious in defeat, though I know he's now even more motivated to beat me next year. I may have to start my training regimen a couple months earlier than usual.

There was a fair bit of press coverage for the tournament this year because a software engineer from Oregon created a crossword



Emily (right) with Liane Hansen, former host of NPR's "Weekend Edition Sunday," who provided the playoff commentary.

Photo by Donald Christensen

puzzle-solving computer program called "Dr. Fill." Though Dr. Fill was not officially entered in the tournament, we were privy to its (his?) scores on each puzzle, and I certainly felt some pressure to out-rank the machine. Nobody likes to lose to a computer, as far as I know. In the end, Dr. Fill did outstandingly well on the more straightforward puzzles, finishing them in mind-bogglingly fast times. Fortunately, he was no match for the more complicated puzzles, which had themes that required solvers to think way, way outside of the box. Luckily for me and my pride, Dr. Fill finished in 141st.

2012 BCTF Flu Immunization Clinic
Thursday, October 25, 2012
Ovans meeting room
8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

You must sign up for the immunization.

You will find the consent form, fact sheet, and sign-up sheet on the small desk at the front of the Human Resources department to your right as you enter.

It is important to stay in the clinic after your shot for 15 to 20 minutes.

How active are you?



According to the Statistics Canada, 50 percent of Canadian adults believe they are meeting the recommended level of 150 minutes a week of moderate to vigorous exercise.

However a StatsCan study released last year revealed we are kidding ourselves. By utilizing tracking technology, StatsCan was able to measure just how much exercise study participants were really getting. Only 15 percent of the participants were achieving the recommended level of physical activity. StatsCan says nearly 50 percent of Canadians are not managing even 30 minutes of exercise a week.

www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health/statscan-report-says-many-canadians-not-as-active-as-they-think/article1876586/



Lots of calorie-burning options

150 minutes of activity in a week does not have to involve a gym membership.

If you weigh 150 lbs., in 30 minutes you will burn:

Activity	Calories
Dancing slow, (waltz)	104
Dancing (disco, folk, square)	197
Dancing fast (ballet, twist)	215
Walk 3 mph (moderate)	125
Walk 4.5 mph (brisk)	179
Frisbee general	107
Frisbee ultimate	125
Golf: carrying clubs	197
Golf: power cart	125
Gardening: general	179
Hiking (uphill)	362
Horseback riding	143
Ice skating	251
Jumping rope (slow)	286
Jumping rope (fast)	430
Chopping & splitting wood	215
Mowing Lawn: push, hand	215
Mowing lawn: power	161
Kayaking	179
Running: (12 min/mile)	286
Running: (9 min/mile)	394
Running: (6 min/mile)	573

www.fatburn.com/free_tool_activity_burn.asp

Congratulations to the 12 members of the BCTF Run for the Cure team (lead by Pat Hamilton and escorted by a greyhound named Sugar and a whippet named Myles). This year the team raised \$1265 for breast cancer.



Ruby Best photo

2012 Commuter Challenge

I recently attended the awards party for the 2012 Commuter Challenge, where I received a Nikon Coolpix waterproof camera for my entry in the “Best commuter story” contest.

Also awarded were the top three companies in each category size. BCTF came in 4th in the category of 101 to 250 employees, beaten by MMM Group by only 0.3 percent. BCTF had 38 percent participation.

British Columbia came 3rd in Canada with 164 workplaces participating and an employee base of 121,340 (double the employee base from 2011). Vancouver placed 2nd in Canada for cities of over 1 million people. In BC 93,333 kg of CO2 were avoided and 40,674 litres of fuel were saved.

Full results and further information about the 2012 Commuter Challenge can be seen at www.commuterchallengebc.ca/.

Thank you to the BCTF TRAC team for organizing our challenge and supplying prizes.

—Dawn McCormick

Please wash your hands

With the classic summer cold now working its way amongst us, please commit to protecting yourself and your co-workers with one simple task—wash your hands, with soap, often. Our work surfaces (from door handles to keyboards to coffee pots) become germ-transfer points when you sneeze into your hands or use the restroom without washing.

When to wash?

- after using the toilet
- after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- before and after meals
- before and after preparing food
- after using shared office equipment like photocopiers, keyboards or phones
- after handling money
- any time your hands are dirty
- wash more often when you are around someone who is sick

Plain soap and water works best

According to the Public Health Agency of Canada,

Plain, ordinary soap has ingredients that help to remove dirt and grease from your skin. The mechanical action of handwashing - rubbing your hands together with soap and water - breaks down the tiny bits of grease, fat and dirt on your hands that bad germs cling to. Soap doesn't actually kill the bad germs, instead, it's the combination of soap, rubbing, rinsing and drying that helps these bugs slide off your hands.

www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/iif-vcg/wh-lm-eng.php#b

Antibacterial soaps do not appear to have any greater effect than plain soap in reducing the transfer of germs, and may or may not have the adverse effect of creating superbugs. Alcohol-based hand sanitizers can be used when water and soap is not available.

Let's make a reduce-getting-sick plan. Wash your hands frequently, sneeze or cough into your elbow, and stay home when you are sick. These are all solid ways we can protect ourselves and our co-workers.



Food bank tally



Soup day, Jan. 2010	\$300.00
Soup day, Dec. 2010	\$852.00
Dessert day, Feb. 2011	\$259.00
Salad day, Jun. 2011	\$218.00
Soup Day, Nov. 2011	\$470.00
Dessert Day, Feb. 2012	\$254.20
Salad day, Jun. 2012	\$207.70
Total to date	\$2,560.90

EFAP

The Employee and Family Assistance Program offers confidential counseling services 24 hours per day for you and your extended family. The following are just some of the problems they can help with:

- Family and marital relationships
- Work and personal/family balance
- Personal and emotional difficulties
- Depressions, anxiety and stress
- Workplace stress, conflict and harrassment
- Alcoholism, tobacco, gambling, and drug dependency
- Grief and bereavement issues
- Childcare/eldercare issues
- Legal and financial concerns
- Health and diet planning

For more information go to www.workhealthlife.com or call 1-800-387-4765 (English) or 1-800-361-5676 (French) for immediate, confidential help 24/7/365.

Tips to get, and keep on, moving

How I learned to love my pedometer

A long long time ago someone gave me a pedometer. Because I couldn't figure out how it worked in under 10 seconds I put it aside and never thought about it again. It was a lost opportunity.

In 2011 we decided that we would hike Ireland's Dingle Peninsula. We realized that we would have to train ourselves to walk up to 20 km a day over rocky, sometime boggy and only occasionally even terrain. We decided that along with raingear, suitable footwear (i.e. expensive), walking poles and sock liners, we would each get a pedometer to monitor our progress prior to and during our trip. Everything worked as it should: the raingear kept us dry in the daily morning rain; boots and sock liners prevented any blister at all from slowing our pace; and at the end of each day, as we sat down for a Guinness in the village pub, the information on our pedometers instantly confirmed that we had taken tens of thousands of steps and travelled many a mile (I mean a kilometer) and that we deserved a pint or two or more.

When we came home, I put the pedometers away with the "Ireland stuff"—the pamphlets, menus, handbills, ticket stubs and other detritus that one accumulates during a vacation. Then, this July, as I was making yet another attempt to "declutter", I came across my pedometer. Surprisingly it was still working and still showed the number of steps from the last time I wore it. I can't quite recall the amount, but it was over 25,000. I confess I felt an urge to pour myself a Guinness at that point, but as it was early morning, I decided instead to take my dogs for a long walk in Pacific Spirit Park. I thought, "Why not see how many steps it takes to complete the Huckleberry to Clinton trail circuit?" I donned my pedometer and headed out. It takes 14,894 of my steps to complete the trail. From that point on I wore the pedometer nearly every day for the whole of July and August. I found myself aiming for a daily total of at least 10,000 steps, a feat I was able to achieve most days while I was away from work.

to my daily count. It seems easier to remember to take the stairs to the third floor or to take a "walking break" or even to agree to a "walking meeting"*. On days that I know I won't get anywhere near the goal, I try to add some time on the treadmill at the gym or I decide to average out two or three days. I've even toyed with the idea of getting a small used treadmill on Craig's list and using it in the office when I'm reading hard copies of documents or cases.**

I have to bring this to a close now. It's time for my walking break.

—Carmela Allevato

* *The Wellness Committee experimented with a walking meeting in September.*

** *With prior approval of the employer and the OH&S committee.*

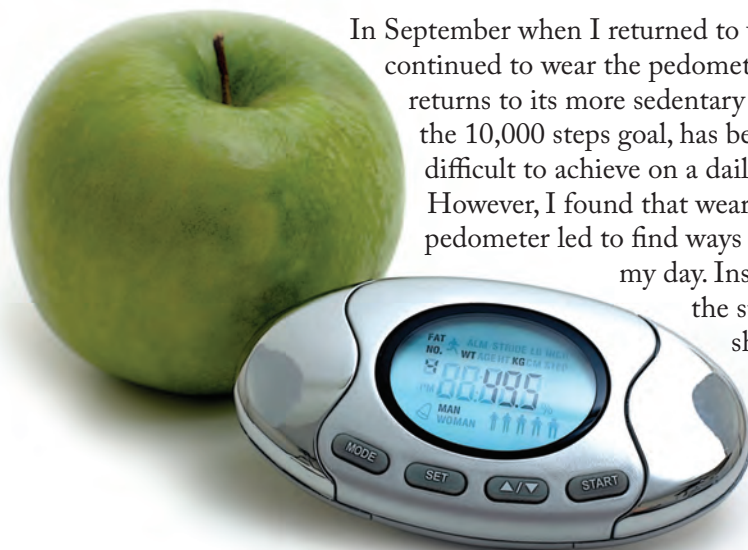


Upcoming fall event
Soup Day—Stay tuned!

BCTF Wellness Committee Members

Donna Coulombe	(BCTF)
Anne Guthrie Warman	(CEP)
Carmela Allevato	(CEP)
Una Walsh	(HR)
Margaret White	(TFEU)
Karen Steel	(TFEU)

The contents of this newsletter are intended to encourage better health decisions, not to provide medical advice. Please consult a qualified health professional before embarking on any new diet or exercise regime.



In September when I returned to work, I continued to wear the pedometer. As life returns to its more sedentary "normal", the 10,000 steps goal, has become more difficult to achieve on a daily basis. However, I found that wearing the pedometer led to find ways to add steps to my day. Instead of taking the straightest and shortest route to work, I sometimes add a detour down to the seawall to add "points"