

# Creating "Healthy" Connections: What Role Can the Library Play in Fitness and Wellness Programs?

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# Abstract

Working with a committee of members from across the campus, a librarian took a dwindling fitness team of college employees from 5 participants to almost 100 participants in one year. Annually, the team participates in a 5K with fitness and wellness events scheduled throughout the year leading up to it. By leveraging the library's strength in collaborative and campus-wide work, interest in participation was revived and grew until the day of the race. The group includes participants from all divisions of the college and from diverse groups. In addition to the increase in fitness and wellness levels, relationships between employees grew and the connectedness to the college was strengthened. The group drew attention and support from the President as making a strong contribution to two of the strategic goals of the campus.

In this presentation you will learn how to foster fitness and well-being in your library and workplace. This event encourages employees to use either the employee fitness center or the “gym” on campus, in hours before or after work, or during the lunch hour. It also includes individual exercise, as well as other activities like short walk breaks or “walk and talk” meetings. Advantages for the library include: increased contact with faculty and staff, leading to additional instruction sessions and requests to create or tailor LibGuides for courses and programs; a fun “healthy” competition between library and IT staff (who are housed in the library); and an exemplary way to exhibit a better work/life balance. Learn about the events that were held leading up to the race, including successes and failures, and return to your campus invigorated and ready to run, walk, or roll!



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# A little bit about me

- Librarian for 15 years at SUNY Brockport
  - Liaison to the KSSPE (Kinesiology, Sport Studies, and Physical Education) Department
  - Liaison to REL (Recreation and Leisure Studies)
- Participant in the EFP (Employee Fitness Program): our students act as our trainers
- Intrinsic motivation for wellness & exercise for health and disability reasons
- Enjoy meeting and working with people from across the campus.
- A walker and a runner. Favorite activity is hiking and mountain climbing.
  - ADK 46er in 2018
  - None of the NE100



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# Background

- Chase JP Morgan Corporate Challenge
  - 3.5 mile run/walk/roll “race”
  - Employees of local businesses plus non-profit organizations
  - Occurs annually in Rochester, near the end of May
  - 10,000 participants
- SUNY Brockport Team
  - Participated for over 15 years
  - Faculty & Staff from all divisions, including the REOC (Rochester Equal Opportunities Center and Brockport Downtown campus.)
  - 2018, had dwindled down to 5 participants
    - Change of venue, not as convenient and no hospitality tents
    - Had been supported by the Employee Wellness through HR and BASC (Brockport Auxiliary Services Corporation, our food and catering company)



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# Revival?

- Folks were interested in continuing but needed re-organization and leadership.
- Participation helped to meet two of the college's strategic goals for "Building a Better Brockport."
  - To be a college engaged with its community
  - To be a great college at which to work
- Cross-campus collaboration with folks from every major division:
  - Advancement
  - Academic Affairs
  - Student Affairs
  - Wellness Coordinator
  - Bookstore Manager
  - Facilities
  - KSSPE Faculty
  - EFP coordinator
  - Mail Room supervisor
  - Alumni Relations



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# Preparation

- Monthly meetings in the library
- Set goal of 100 participants for 2019
- Recruitment and funding
  - Daily Eagle announcements (our electronic bulletin board)
  - Friendly competitions between departments
  - Signs in the EFC
  - Fitness events, e.g. yoga
  - SLACK : we tried this, but it did not catch on like we had hoped
  - Registration: \$38, employees paid \$20, and the remaining \$18 was paid through funds raised.
  - Employee unions spread the word too. One of the unions has an active group of folks who go to these events.



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# It takes a village ...

Support came from multiple areas across campus:

- Advancement: Set up the registration website and fund.
- Athletics: Donated the team shirts
- Mailroom: Distributed packets & shirts
- BASC: sponsored our mascot at the race
- Academic Affairs: Employee fitness program support
- President: Support and a runner
- HR: \$\$ from Wellness fund to offset registration cost



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# Pre-race/Alumni Event

- A Mixer with folks from Brockport plus alumni in the area who were planning to participate in the challenge.
- Held on May 30, 5 days before the Challenge.
- Beer Market on 1401 Mt. Hope Blvd, from 5 – 7 pm.
- Alumni office provided swag
- BASC provided green wristbands for alumni to wear during the race
- SERC provided a free gym membership for a raffle prize
- Not as successful as we had hoped, we would not do it again.



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# Logistics

- Advertising the link to sign up involved Daily Eagle announcements, and emails from the Provost.
- We reached 50 participants, 5 days before registration closed. Made a concerted effort and reached 96.
- Participants had to register in two places: the official website plus the alumni affairs website.
- The week before the race involved a lot of coordination and communications: to distribute the t-shirts and race packets, arrange for a place to meet in downtown Rochester, let participants know where to park and where to meet after the race.
- Enthusiasm grew the closer we got to the race.
- Much of this work was done after commencement!



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# 2019 Team before race





# Race Day





# Post-Race food and fun



Rochester Redwings Stadium





# Post-race comments

“Thank you and the rest of the committee members for working so hard to organize this event! I had such a good time with our Brockport group and got to meet a ton of new people. Can't wait for next year!”

“THANK YOU FOR THE EXCEPTIONAL WORK!!!! It was a great event that truly embodied the team approach. This epitomizes what is meant by "A Great Place to Work!"

Interview with one of our employees on the public television station

<https://www.wxxinews.org/post/thousands-brave-little-rain-and-run-and-walk-through-downtown-rochester>

“We really did a push at Brockport to bring a bunch of people out, of course I like getting out and exploring the city and also working out a little bit, but really just being here with our big community, our big group representing Brockport, we're super excited.”



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# 2020 and beyond..

- Fall 2019 Convocation: We wore our orange “Finisher shirts,” with recognition by the President.
- Started raising \$\$ in the spring of 2020, but the race was postponed.
- Encouraged folks to enter virtual races and share opportunities and photos. (Pink Ribbon Walk Run for Breast cancer survivors, Walk MS)
- Encouraged participation in the Billion Steps Challenge, sponsored by the Public Health department.
- The Corporate Challenge was held virtually in the fall. We had 66 employees participate.
- Get motivated and Get Moving! New group – 2021
- Canalway Challenge: Erie Canal challenge for Summer 2021





# #Bporttogether

April 23, 2020 was a day chosen to show your support for SUNY Brockport and post on social media. Several of us dedicated our runs or walks that day to Brockport.



"JP Morgan Challenge Day. Wonderful meeting new people and joining co-workers and friends for a day of giving. I have enjoyed journaling experiences such as this during the pandemic which assisted me by both being peaceful and appreciative of moments as this one. Have a great day!



# Benefits for the college

- Connections made cross-campus.
- Librarians ideal to help with details and organization.
- “Healthy competitions” between departments.
- Foster fitness and well-being.
- Exercise at the employee fitness center & SERC
- Sense of community
- Fun





# Advantages for the Library

- Met people from all over campus.
- Partnered with Prevention and Outreach for LibGuides.
- Worked with the international students office on cultures LibGuide.
- Comradery among staff in library (IT staff located there, too.)
- Late night @Drake: offered yoga and healthy snacks.
- Healthier employees taking mental and physical breaks during the workday.



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# Testimonial

“On the personal side, my spouse and I have set a goal of hiking the Grand Canyon Rim to Rim and Back Again in 2025.... We have been hiking at least 5 miles at least once a week and walking 1-2 miles daily. I want you to know that you are a role model when it comes to me wanting to focus on my physical health. ” – Library staff member



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# Recommendations

- Start small
  - Meet to walk during lunch hour
  - Walk & talk meetings
  - Friendly challenges: Keep track of steps
  - Healthy lunch / salad & sandwich day
- Monthly meetings
- Look for 5K events or other physical activities, both on and off-campus.
  - Veteran's Day 5K
  - Purple Run 4K
- Partner with student organizations.



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# Thank you's

## Corporate Challenge committee

- Jennifer Kegler, Captain
- Mike Andriatch
- Kelly Gotham
- Liz Lenz
- Pam Beach
- Lisa Barbato
- Sucie Pedraza
- John Carlson
- Colleen Fagan Crouse
- Patricia Williams
- John Osowski

## Sponsors:

BASC: mascot and prizes; paid for the complete registration for its employees

Athletics: Brockport T-shirts

Mailroom: Tshirt and packet distribution

President Macpherson

Brockport Foundation: underwrote registration fee

HR: grant to help cover fee



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