

Juan Pablo Montes

Hidalgo County Wellness Program Champion of the Month

Juan Pablo Montes says while he generally keeps to a healthy and active lifestyle he still enjoys the “bad things” in life, “All the bad foods. The parties. The going out. I want to keep it balanced. Like hey, I had a cheeseburger at two in the morning, let me wake up the next day and go on a nice two-mile run.”

When Montes started his wellness journey about four years ago, he figured out that time management is essential to finding a balance. His sister introduced him to CrossFit and he became instantly hooked.

“I was working out to the breaking point,” Montes explained. “I’d come home and go straight to bed. No dinner. No rest. No shower. I had to balance. To manage my time.”

He focused on improving his daily routine which included time to prepare his lunch and dinner, make some time for his hobbies, and meditate.

“I did have to meditate for 10 minutes, at least,” he says. “And I meditate and name one good or happy thing that happened today. And that’s it. To just be present.”

Montes credits his meditations with improving his mental health. He believes it’s changed his personality, the people who surround him, and how he sees the world.



Juan Pablo Montes - Clerk, Commissioner Precinct 3

Prior to going to CrossFit classes, Montes was a professional folkloric dancer, a skill he developed as a student at La Joya Independent School District. It earned him a scholarship to a dance institute in Dallas.

“I liked the rigorous training. Ten hours of dancing a day, then having to study, then get ready for performances,” Montes recalled. “I like to stay busy.”

Staying busy had Montes lose focus on his diet.

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“..we cannot change the past. Right? But we can change the end result. Our actions that we’re doing right now, the ending result can be different.”

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He says a pack of ramen and a Coke Zero was his go-to meal at the time. He was losing weight by being so active with dance but admits he did not feel healthy.

Into his third year of college, when Montes took a nutrition course, he started focusing on his eating habits. He tried to teach what he learned to his family because of a history of diabetes.

After a couple of years, his family is more informed about their health and what they should eat.

“Now that my parents are older, they’re now nutritionally aware,” he described. “My mom has lost a lot of weight. My dad stopped smoking. My brother is a gym fanatic and my sister watches her food. It’s pretty interesting.”

Montes started working for Hidalgo County a year ago. He’s a clerk at the Precinct 3 Administration Office. He first heard about the Employee Wellness Program and the free fitness classes at the Precinct 2 Indoor Sports Complex from his coworkers. .

He started attending wellness ambassador meetings, tuning in to the Deer Oaks EAP webinars, and participating in the wellness challenges.

At work, Montes tries to encourage his colleagues. He is constantly checking in with those who have their own routine. He believes just talking to his coworkers about health topics benefits them.

“[Two of my coworkers] take walks during their lunch break,” he said. “I didn’t influence that, but we talk about it. People don’t want to talk about it. Weight problems or weight issues is such a taboo still.”

Montes says the office will usually have a webinar playing from someone’s computer as they all listen in while working. Depending on the topic covered, he says he and his coworkers will discuss the webinar.

He has also incorporated his hobby of drawing to create birthday cards for his coworkers.

“I like to work on a picture, then cut it and put it on a real card,” Montes explained. “You never know what people are going through. Maybe just a little comment. Something positive can not just brighten their day, but can change their lifestyle.”

Montes is grateful the county has a Wellness Program for its employees. He mentioned the wellness campaigns that are sent out every month make him want to wear an awareness ribbon every month. “I didn’t know every month had something,” he said. “It’s an icebreaker. We can talk about it. ‘What’s the ribbon for?’ ‘Oh, it’s for mental health.’”

Montes says he wants people who want to start their own journey to not be afraid to ask questions, whether it’s about their physical health or to improve their mental health.

“Be happy with what you do,” he said. “Think for the next generation. You may not be running or trying to stay active for tomorrow, but in a couple of years, you might have some kiddos or grandchildren, or nieces and nephews. Do it for them. Set an example and you want to spend time with them.”

