

WELLNESS CHAMPION

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HECTOR GARCIA

DIVISION MANAGER - CONSTRUCTION
PURCHASING DEPARTMENT

Hector Garcia participated in the latest wellness challenge over the holiday season. He ended up losing 19 pounds between Thanksgiving and New Year! He mentioned he put a lot of effort into exercise and watching what he ate during the holidays and plans to keep it up.

It was not the first time Garcia had put a tremendous amount of effort into his health. A couple of years ago, he remembered losing around 70 pounds within 18 months. However, he admitted he fell back on that commitment.

"That was one of the biggest accomplishments – weight-wise," he said. "Eventually I fell back, because of work and other stuff. It's on and off. I'm not getting any younger, so it's something I'm pushing for to just stay healthy moving forward."

Garcia has worked for the county for nearly eight years in the Purchasing Department. He had been aware of the Hidalgo County Employee Wellness Program and its wellness challenges for a few years, but he believes he saw more of a push over the past year.

"I know they had done [the challenges]



before, but I think last year was when there was more involvement – not only from [the wellness] staff but from everyone else. We started hearing more about it, so it was more interesting," he stated.

He spoke about other health challenges

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that go on within his department. Garcia recalled, "There was one we had that was walking or something. We had to jot our miles or how many steps we took."

Although Garcia enjoys sports, he says he did not grow up participating in many physical activities. However, he mentioned he was in the high school marching band.

"If you weren't there, people don't understand," Garcia chuckled. "It really is a physical activity. I played tuba, so I was always carrying the sousaphone around."

Now at the age of 35 and more attentive to his health, he tries to help his parents stay healthy.

“When I’m with them, I just want to make sure they’re doing good,” he said. “We want to keep them here as long as we can.”

Additionally, he says his 4-year-old daughter keeps him and his wife active. Garcia says even though he and his wife both work for the county and have their own to-do lists, they try to work around their priorities.

“I just want to be as healthy as possible for [my daughter] and my family to make sure we live a long healthy life ...

“We try to exercise and walk. We try to help each other out, especially with the food and diets, you know,” he said. “Making sure we try to eat as healthy as possible. Try to make it a lifestyle, not just do it during the week.”

Garcia says despite being successful over the holidays in controlling his diet, he says he still wants to improve his eating habits.

“I was able to cut back on all the bad processed foods and carbs. I think it helped a lot. It was a drastic change,” he said. “Mentally, I’m not saying I’m not going to eat them again, but I will in moderation. Give it time and make sure it’s not temporary. Cut [those foods] moving forward.”

He added that he and his wife will cook

and prep meals at home to have lunches ready for the week.

For his current exercise routine, he tries to work out at least four days out of the week. Garcia is hoping to keep up with this habit.

When it comes to Garcia’s mental health, he says music is a good escape. While at work, just to have some kind of noise, he will play ambient music to concentrate on what he needs to do. Additionally, since he picked up exercise again, he has developed more energy.

“I don’t feel as stressed. I feel better overall,” he said. “I used to feel like I never wanted to do anything. I’m not really a lazy person, but, you know, when you get home it’s just – ugh! Now, with all this energy, you just want to burn it. So once I’m ready to go home and take care of some stuff, then eventually I’m ready to work out and burn that energy off.”

As a manager, he says his work-life balance is not as stressful as it used to be, “We’ve worked together here to better things – within the divisions and the department as a whole. I mean, yes, obviously I go home with work thoughts that I can’t get out of my head. I’m always trying to think ahead and get prepared for what’s coming up.”

He spoke about a struggle that many face at the office, where his determination is truly tested.

“It’s hard when [there’s breakfast tacos or donuts] just there. You think about it and think, ‘It’s just one.’ Then that one goes to two,” said Garcia. “Once you

can set up some discipline, it makes it all easier because you don't feel the craving for it."

He credits the latest wellness challenge to losing his cravings for bread, chips, sodas, fries, and other junk foods.

Aside from the wellness challenges, Garcia has attended a few of the presentations the wellness staff have held at his department. He mentioned that he does try to tune into the Deer Oaks Employee Assistance Program Services webinars when he can.

Another way Garcia has addressed his health is to see a doctor, "Last year was the first time in a long time I went to see one. I did my screening and exams," he recounted. "I need to definitely go back for my annual visit. Obviously with this [current health] change, hopefully, it's gotten a lot better."

Garcia mentioned, that before last year he was always hesitant about seeing a doctor. He knew he needed to change his negative mindset towards doctors and voiced his main motivation to improve his health.

"My wife, my daughter, my family," he smiled. "If I'm not good, I can't be there for them. I think with my daughter growing and being more active, I have to stay on top of things. You have to be there for them. I just want to be as healthy as possible for her and my family to make sure we live a long healthy life; so we don't have health issues later that can be avoided now."

As his department's newly appointed Wellness Ambassador, Garcia says he's going to do his best to help spread the word about what the Employee Wellness Program offers and its upcoming events.

"It's nothing that you can get for free anywhere else," Garcia said. "Anywhere you go, any consultation, they're going to charge you for it. Just to weigh you in, they're going to charge you for it. To give you a meal plan, tips, any information – anywhere you go outside, there's going to be a charge to it."

In Hidalgo County, "It's a service that's free and [county employees] can take advantage of it and help themselves," he resumed. "Not only them but even their family. I'm glad that there's more activity and implementation to get people involved. [The program] is doing a great job."

