

Penwith Community Development Trust



PCDT STEPS UP ITS BID FOR A HEALTHY WORKPLACE AWARD

38 Employees

Staff at Penwith Community Development Trust (PCDT) are putting their best feet forward to trek across the United States – without leaving Cornwall. Almost 30 members of staff jumped at the chance to pick up a free pedometer and join one of four teams competing to be the first to walk 3,452 miles – the distance from San Francisco to Maine.

Taking on the Pedometer Challenge is part of PCDT's bid to gain the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Workplace Health Award. The award, a county standard of good practice, and a quality mark of health and wellbeing in the workplace, aims to achieve national recognition for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as the healthiest places in Britain to work.

PCDT's Human Resources and Central Liaison Manager Anna Hopkins, who has been plotting the teams' scores on a giant map of America, said: "The pedometer challenge has been a success story in so many ways. We were pleasantly surprised at the number of staff joining the challenge. Interest just seemed to snowball, and we were soon having to order more pedometers.

"It has provoked a huge amount of rivalry - mostly friendly! - amongst the teams. Staff are certainly motivated to walk more and the additional exercise means they are becoming more fit and healthy.



"It has been good to hear the different ways that staff have managed to boost their number of steps. This has included parking the car further away from the office, going for a walk at lunchtime, walking to meetings instead of using the car, and walking the dog regularly."

Chief Executive Sue Guard and her dog Rocky now go out for a long walk every morning and evening. Sue was delighted when a neighbour told her: "I can tell you've been doing a lot more walking" – until the neighbour added: "...because the dog's lost weight"!

Sue said: "It wasn't until I had the pedometer that I realised how little walking I do - home to car, car to



office, etc. However, I now give myself a challenge of at least three miles a day, and I feel much better for it. Much to my family's surprise, I go out walking whatever the weather, having bought myself some lovely new wellies and wet weather gear!"

Meanwhile, Had of Finance Clive Harrold, who has built up an impressive number of steps, is being jokingly accused by colleagues of clipping the pedometer to his dog's collar to increase his score!

Staff have also been getting a bit of green therapy by turning a scruffy courtyard into the Oasis, a garden which is both peaceful and productive. Val Johnson, who is co-ordinating the scheme, said: "The idea came about through discussing our Pass It On sessions - teaching people the basics of cookery - with my colleague Tina McNaughton.

"We thought it would be good to source as much produce as possible locally, and I said: 'Wouldn't it be great if we could transform that dull, empty area into a lovely green

space, growing flowers and veg - somewhere where people could have lunch, or just grab 10 minutes space in a busy day?'

"I arranged for tyres to be delivered for containers, plus paint to decorate them, bags of compost and various plants and seeds: courgettes, runner beans, sweet peas, lettuce, mint, tomatoes. In May we painted, positioned, filled with compost, planted and watered. Eight weeks later we cut our first harvest of courgettes and French beans.

"The space has been totally transformed and greatly admired," said Val. "It's great to be able to show people that you don't need a huge garden or a horticultural background to be able to grow veg in containers.

"Gardening keeps you active, being outside gives you fresh air and sunshine (hopefully!), and being in an area of green plants helps lower blood pressure and reduce stress. All



in all, benefits all round."

Val, a qualified aromatherapist, is also involved in a PCDT scheme to offer staff one free session of a complementary therapy of their choice, with the option of paying for further sessions during working hours. Besides aromatherapy, staff can choose massage, reflexology, reiki or Emotional Freedom Technique (which aims to correct imbalances by tapping on the face and fingers whilst focusing on a particular problem).

Volunteer recruitment officer Sue Ryan certainly appreciated her session.

"I found it extremely beneficial - as if a weight had been lifted off my shoulders," she said.

Other elements of PCDT's bid for a Workplace Health Award include the introduction of a new health insurance scheme for staff, and the installation of photovoltaic panels on the roof of the company's offices in Parade Street, Penzance.

Staff are now being encouraged to get on their bikes to come to work – and if they don't have a bike, help is available. Under the Cycle Purchase Scheme, due to be rolled out shortly, staff can pay for a new bike in up to 12 monthly instalments taken from their pre-tax salary.

The Pedometer Challenge is now reaching its final stages, with a neck-and-neck race to the finishing line. But Anna Hopkins stressed that staff won't be handing back their pedometers. She said: *"We're already talking about the next challenge - across Australia!"*