

Morris Heights Health Center promotes employee health, wellness program

By **India Dansby**

With the upsurge of remote work and the erosion of work-life balance, the wellbeing of employees has become a top priority for many employers.

Frontline health care workers are still plagued with unprecedented levels of stress and anxiety during this pandemic. According to a 2021 survey conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Washington Post, 62% of frontline healthcare workers express feeling stress relating to the pandemic. In response to workforce changes precipitated by COVID-19, Morris Heights Health Center (MHHC) has refocused their health and wellness efforts, launching a new employee-based wellness program called Wellness 365. The pro-

gram, which launched earlier this year, was designed to meet the employee where they are at, offering hybrid wellness coaching options. MHHC employees can choose to engage in the program in the comfort of their own home or at the office. The goal of the program is to encourage work life balance and maintain a healthy lifestyle to sustain a healthy workforce.

“The employees’ well-being is paramount to our organization’s overall success,” ex-

pressed President and CEO Mari Millet. “Our employees are our most important asset and their health matters. “When employees feel their best, they perform at their best.”

The Wellness 365 program offers employees options that are tailored to their needs. The program is offered two days a week and includes:

- * morning and evening sessions
- * in-person and virtual options
- * group sessions
- * a one-to-one session
- * Afro-fusion dance and fitness
- * nutrition education.

“Wellness is not just about losing weight or eating healthy, it’s a holistic approach,” says TsiTsi Merritt, MHHC’s

Health and Wellness Coach. “Your mental health is just as important as your physical health.”

TsiTsi, also known to program participants as Coach Mai, brings a substantial amount of healthcare and personal experience to the program. She has been a registered nurse for over 20 years working in adult and child intensive care. She has worked and cared for patients with end-stage renal disease in a chronic acute setting. She is also an accomplished athlete qualifying for Team USA 2018 in three races, placing second in her age group at the Duathlon National Champions in 2019 and a Regional Champion in 2018.

“I’ve participated in the Wellness 365 program since it began,”

says Karen James, Dir. of Patient Relations at MHHC. “The program is a great way for employees to relieve stress. It keeps me energized and gives me the motivation I need to improve my lifestyle, from changing my eating habits to working out more.” The Wellness 365 program is a catalyst for positive change in the workforce at Morris Heights Health Center. The program aims to build a supportive wellness culture and influence health behaviors among their employees.

In addition, the health center expanded their health and wellness initiatives to community members in the Bronx. In the month of January, the Healthy Start program as part of MHHC’s Healthy Families began hosting virtual Fitness Friday classes once a month for their prenatal and post-natal patients. One of MHHC’s goals is to pull the Bronx up from its #62 ranking in health outcomes and health factors for the ninth straight year, according to the 2019 County Health Ranking and Roadmap led by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation & the University of Wisconsin. MHHC is committed to making the Bronx healthier. Bronx residents can look to MHHC to provide more prevention and wellness programs in the upcoming months to help prevent diseases that plague the residents like diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

