



VOLUME 2
MARCH 2026

The ROVER RECHARGE

Caring for Ourselves Together

District Step Challenge

The Wellness Committee would like to give a HUGE round of applause to everyone who participated in our district STEP Challenge! Congratulations to Donna Lawson, Eileen Fritz, Ginger Zehnbaauer, Kate Reilly, Kristen Wade, Tonia Oakes, and Madison Cesanek — our truly steadfast steppers! Your commitment, consistency, and competitive spirit made this challenge a success.

Have you ever wondered what motivates someone to walk 32 miles in a single week? For one of our winners, Donna Lawson, those miles are building toward something big — her very first 5K! Donna has been training alongside her daughter, walking together and hitting the gym as often as their schedules allow. When she heard about the STEP Challenge, she was immediately excited. “I work well when there’s a goal,” she shared, adding that she loved how it felt like a group effort. Knowing the results would be shared kept her accountable and motivated — even on days when the couch looked more inviting than her sneakers.

Not long ago, Donna never imagined she’d become a runner. But over Christmas break, her daughter encouraged her to try jogging. They began running together when they could, and Donna was introduced to the Nike Run Club App to track her progress. Fast forward to today — she’s now running a full mile on her own and steadily increasing her distance.

Her routine includes a rotating schedule of walking during the week and strength training at the gym with her daughter. While lifting weights may not be her favorite activity, she knows it’s an important part of staying healthy and building endurance. Donna also credits her summer habit of walking 10,000 steps a day for laying the foundation. The STEP Challenge gave her that extra push to keep going — even on the days when motivation was low.

Way to step up, Donna — and congratulations again to all of our amazing participants. You’ve inspired us to keep moving!



Waddle Your Way to Winter Safety: Walk Like a Penguin!!

According to Kariline Bringe, M.D., writing for the Mayo Clinic Health System, maintaining proper balance during winter storms is crucial to prevent slips, falls, and injuries — ranging from broken bones in the arms, legs, or hips to back injuries and concussions. Dr. Bringe specializes in Orthopedics and Orthopedic Surgery.

Bringe refers to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, which notes that slips and falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injuries for nearly every age group, except those aged 10–24. She adds that roughly one in five falls results in a serious injury, such as a head injury or fracture, sending more than 800,000 people to the hospital each year.

Staying balanced is the key, which depends on evenly distributing your weight across your feet. Bringe says that our bodies rely on many systems to help us stay steady — muscles, bones, joints, vision, the inner ear’s balance center, nerves, the heart, and blood vessels all play a part. When any of these systems aren’t working properly, balance issues can develop.

So, what is the suggestion for maintaining balance? Your arms! Your arms play a major role in helping you stay balanced, especially on icy surfaces. Keep your hands warm by wearing gloves — this keeps them out of your pockets so your arms are free to extend outward, giving you better stability as you walk.

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Crockpots and Serving Spoons *Lisa Simon*

Sounds like a strange name for an article, right? But stick with me—I promise there's a point. Before Thanksgiving break, we held our annual Friendsgiving at Tracy Elementary. I signed up (last-minute, of course) to bring Tortellini "something or other." On Monday morning, I walked into school feeling prepared for an event I thought was on Tuesday. When I realized I had planned to make food a day late, I felt ridiculous. Cue the negative self-talk. But instead of spiraling, I decided to switch the script: no dish today. I can't change that now, so I'll just help clean up afterward.

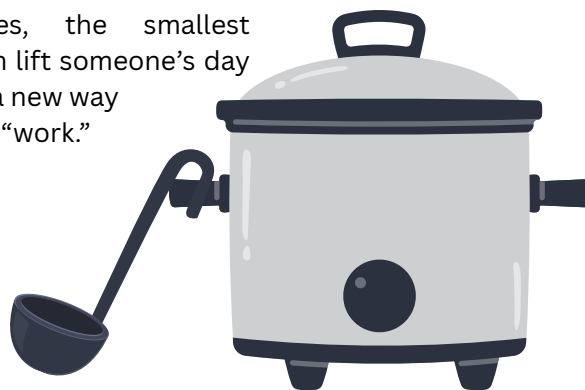
As the last lunch closed, I headed to the faculty room. Five or six crockpots were full of delicious leftovers, and I had no clue what to do with all of it. On a colleague's advice, I emailed staff letting them know I planned to unplug the crockpots and clean up, inviting them to grab one last bite. Then I rolled up my sleeves. As I emptied, stored, and cleaned, a few more colleagues arrived and jumped in to help.

Here's what we all know about crockpots: if you don't clean them right away, whatever's inside basically turns to cement. So I rinsed and scrubbed, water sloshing over

the small sink and onto the counter. Soon, the crockpots and spoons were clean and drying. With help from others, the faculty room looked as if nothing had happened.

Later, colleagues emailed to thank me for cleaning their bowls and crockpots. To me, it was no big deal—but for them, it meant one less thing to worry about. That got me thinking: why do small tasks feel so meaningful? Research shows it's all in mindset. Label a task tedious, and frustration follows. See it as a chance to help or a small challenge, and you feel purpose, curiosity, or even satisfaction. The work doesn't change—our perspective does. Even scrubbing cemented macaroni can become a meaningful moment.

Sometimes, the smallest effort can lift someone's day or spark a new way of seeing "work."



- Get in and out of your vehicle slowly, holding onto the door and steering wheel while stepping on or off a slippery surface.

Waddle Your Way to Winter Safety: Walk Like a Penguin! *cntd.*

Your feet also contribute significantly to maintaining balance. Treat any wet or dark patch on the pavement as if it could be icy and slick. Move slowly, begin with small cautious steps, and adjust your speed based on the conditions. Or try the "penguin walk": turn your feet slightly outward and keep your center of gravity positioned directly over your feet as much as you can.

Other tips to tackle tricky walking conditions include:

- Use a backpack or a cross-body bag when carrying something to free up your hands. If you need to carry groceries or heavy bags, take them one at a time.
- Wear winter assistive devices with built-in grippers over your shoes or boots. Or wear lace-up shoes that fit well and have deep-grooved, nonskid, rubber treads.
- Wipe your shoes and boots thoroughly on the floor mat when coming inside.
- Use a cane or walking poles when out in winter weather.
- Avoid texting when walking on snow or ice. It can be an accident waiting to happen.

Getting back on your feet

If you do fall, make sure you're not injured. Then, roll onto your hands and knees. Take one foot and place it between your hands, then bring the other foot between your hands. Keep your feet shoulder-width apart, and push yourself up from there.

If you think you might be hurt or are unsure if an injury is serious, seek medical care immediately. Once you've recovered, think back on the fall and ask yourself: "What was I doing?" and "What could I have done differently to help prevent that fall from happening?"

<https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/keeping-your-winter-balance>





Nutritionist's Nook

Janet Barry

Feel younger! Look better! Have more energy! Turn on your TV or scroll social media and you're bound to be bombarded by ads proclaiming this vitamin or that supplement a game

changer. The industry, which grows each year, was estimated to make \$69 billion (2025) in the United States alone. Globally, estimates are an eye-popping \$168 billion. Anyone who has found themselves in the vitamin and supplement section of a store knows that there are supplements for most anything that ails you. How though, do you choose the one that is best for you?

Jennifer Doane, a nutritionist who founded the Lehigh Valley-based Advantage Nutrition, explained that while some supplements are proven to have value, there are others to look at more critically. The companies selling supplements, she cautioned, are looking to make a profit, so it is "buyer beware" when looking for something to meet a person's needs.

One supplement that Doane believe to be vital for the health of everyone – from children to adults – is vitamin D. She stressed that in the Lehigh Valley, which doesn't get a lot of sunny days outside of late spring and summer, most people don't get enough of this essential vitamin.

"Know your numbers," Doane stressed. "Most people need vitamin D and a lot are deficient, so everyone should get their numbers checked."

Mood, metabolism, bone, muscle, and joint health are all aided by vitamin D, so not having proper levels may negatively impact you in a variety of areas. Most doctors will check D-levels via routine bloodwork on a yearly basis, though it is best to have the test run during the winter (February, March, and April) to get an accurate reading.

Being an educated consumer is beneficial, as well, when looking for supplements to boost health. If something seems too good to be true, it may be just that. Reading labels and being able to separate the gimmicks from the benefits may help you make better decisions, though Doane joked, "understanding some labels is like trying to understand IRS tax laws."



Jennifer Doane is the president of Lehigh Valley-based Advantage Nutrition. She can be reached at 610-433-1885

When choosing vitamins and supplements to add to your daily routine, Doane cautions that things should be started one at a time so that you know what works and what doesn't. She isn't a proponent of proprietary blends, though, because oftentimes there is such a variety of ingredients it will be hard to pinpoint what was beneficial.

If you are looking for things that may help combat stress and don't want to go the prescription route, Doane suggests trying ashwagandha, saffron, L-theanine, or gaba. Curcumin, which is in the root of turmeric, is an anti-inflammatory aid. If taking turmeric, Doane advises to make sure it also includes curcumin.

When adding any vitamins and supplements to your routine, a doctor and/or pharmacist should be consulted to make sure there are no potential negative interactions with prescribed medications. Knowing the time of day to take supplements, as well as whether they should be taken with or without food may help optimize the benefits.

As always, a balanced diet with minimally processed foods may be the best things to do for yourself. Making sure you are getting the proper calories, a variety of foods, and healthy fats may fill in some of the gaps in a diet.



Resolutions Reboot: How to Stay on Track After January

Did you make any New Year's resolutions? Are you still working toward them—or have they quietly faded away? We all know how difficult it can be to stick with something over an extended period of time. Our intentions are good, but life has a way of getting in the way.

In a January 6 article from *Psychology Today*, the authors shared practical suggestions for sticking with those well-meaning promises. Their central message? Small, incremental actions can lead to meaningful progress. They emphasize the importance of setting realistic goals, creating a clear plan, and—most importantly—following through.

The article explains, “Goals are future outcomes,” while “Intentions are present-tense commitments.” For example, instead of vaguely resolving to “exercise more,” you might say, “When I wake up on weekdays, I will move my body for 20 minutes—whether I feel like it or not.” Often, success comes down to how we frame our self-talk. Rather than focusing on Friday's looming deadline, think about the specific steps you can take each day to ensure you're finished by Friday.

The authors also address relationships, encouraging readers to be more present. That might mean putting your phone away, asking thoughtful questions, and showing genuine interest in the people around you.

They conclude with this powerful reminder: “The key is making intentions specific and situation-linked: ‘When X happens, I will do Y.’ Ground them in your values, not your mood.” Doing so turns commitment into automatic behavior, reduces procrastination, and helps close the gap between wanting to do something and actually doing it.

So, which resolution has been the toughest to stick with? What clear “if-then” commitment could move you forward? Think about a predictable moment in your day and attach a specific action to it so your progress becomes automatic rather than optional.

February is American Heart Month

Megan Fehnel

Even as February's focus on heart health has come to a close, the truth is—any time is a great time to start caring for your heart. Small, consistent choices can make a big difference in your overall health and well-being.

Tips for a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle:

- Stay active with regular movement you enjoy
- Choose balanced meals with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins
- Limit sugary drinks and highly processed foods
- Manage stress and prioritize sleep
- Keep up with regular health checkups

In addition to healthy habits, learning CPR is one of the most powerful ways you can protect heart health—yours and others'.

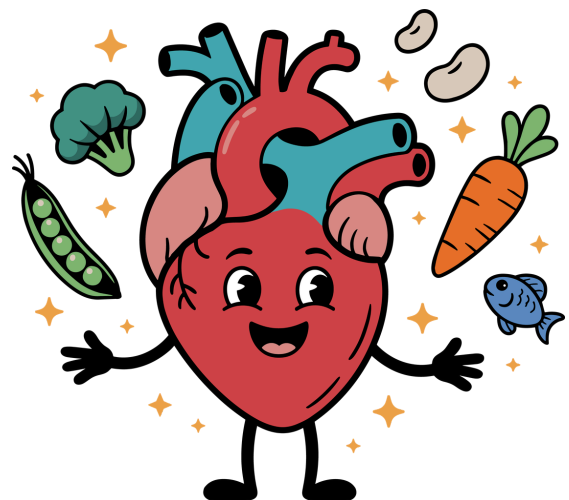
Why Knowing CPR Matters:

- CPR can double or even triple survival chances during cardiac emergencies
- It empowers you to act confidently in critical moments
- You could save the life of a loved one, coworker, or community member

Being Proactive- Become a Lifesaver:

- Use the link below to learn more from the American Heart Association with CPR classes, AED overviews, and more!
- <https://www.heart.org/en/nation-of-lifesavers>

Even though February is coming to an end, heart health doesn't stop. Whether you're making lifestyle changes or learning a life-saving skill like CPR, every step you take matters—today and every day.



MARCH

This month's self-care menu highlights heart health. Remember—these are simple, effective ways to recharge your batteries! Start with an appetizer or two, then work your way up to a main course and/or dessert.

We've also created a Self-Care Selfie Google folder to share the fun. If you try something that makes your heart happy, snap a photo and post it! Simply go to Shared Drives, open the "Wellness Committee" folder, and you'll find the "Self-Care Selfies" folder inside. Add your photos and inspire others to join in. We will select our favorite(s) and highlight them in our next issue!

March Theme: Reflection and Focus

Choose something small each month to nourish yourself. Wellness grows when we take care of us together!

Appetizers (5 minutes or less)

Take one minute to notice your breathing.
Sit in silence for a few minutes.
Clear your desk before starting a new task.

Main Course (10–30 minutes)

Practice mindful eating—savor your lunch without screens.
Try a guided meditation video.
Journal about what's been bringing you peace lately.
End your day with three deep breaths and reflection.

Desserts (Feel-good extras)

Take a tech-free evening.
Read or listen to something inspiring.
Spend time in quiet reflection or prayer.

Specials (Longer-term care)

Begin a 30-day mindfulness challenge.
Attend a workshop or class on meditation or yoga.
Plan a silent morning or afternoon just for calm reflection.
Create a mindfulness jar or toolkit for ongoing use.

Win the Morning, Win the Day

You don't have to be a "morning person" to create a morning routine that sets you up for success. The way you start your morning can either protect your energy or quietly drain it.

One of the most powerful ways to set yourself up for a successful day is by creating a steady, intentional morning routine—especially one that doesn't begin with scrolling through your phone. Research suggests that a calm, structured start helps protect your energy and mindset rather than depleting them before the day even begins.

Science supports several simple habits that can make a meaningful difference:

- Hold off on your phone - Give yourself 30–60 minutes before diving into emails, news, or social media. This helps prevent early stress triggers and allows you to begin the day with clarity and focus.
- Hydrate right away - Your body becomes dehydrated overnight, so drinking water soon after waking can help restore balance and improve alertness—ideally before reaching for coffee.
- Incorporate movement - Even 10 minutes of stretching, yoga, or light exercise can increase blood flow, elevate your mood, and energize your body.
- Seek natural light - Exposure to sunlight within the first hour of waking supports your internal clock, helping regulate sleep patterns and boost attentiveness.
- Center your thoughts - Consider meditation, journaling, or writing down a few priorities for the day. This practice can sharpen focus and create a more positive, intentional mindset.
- Choose a nourishing breakfast - Including protein and/or fiber in your morning meal can help stabilize energy levels and reduce mid-morning crashes.
- Start with a small win - Making your bed or completing another quick task right away provides an early sense of accomplishment that can build momentum for the rest of the day.

