



# Employee **Wellness News**

Mercer University / June 2011

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## **Improve Your Health in Just Eight Hours**

Wish there was a magic pill that fought against aging, weight gain, disease and mental decline? Well, it's not a pill, but it doesn't take long to reap the benefits: just eight hours (per night). Between 1960 and 2010, the average night's sleep for U.S. adults fell from 8 hours to just 6.5. While many of us may not be consciously aware of the negative effects of chronic sleep deprivation, they are taking their toll. Sleep deprivation research found that people who slept 6 hours per night suffered from significant cognitive decline compared to subjects who slept 8 hours per night. Inadequate sleep also impacts your waistline: people who sleep less weigh more and are 15% more likely to be obese than those who get 8 hours. So this summer, you should absolutely take your health lying down. If you ever have trouble falling asleep, visit the American Sleep Association for [Sleep Hygiene Tips](#).

## **Mulberry Street Market: Delicious, Fresh and Making a Difference**

"What's for dinner tonight?" How about local fruits, vegetables, meat, milk, eggs and baked goods? Conveniently located near Mercer's campus in Mulberry Street Park (in the green space in front of the Grand Opera House), Mulberry Street Market is open each Wednesday from 4 – 6:30pm. Learn more about what makes the Market healthy, economical and good for our community – [read our interview](#) with Mercer's own Mark Vanderhoek, Director of Media Relations.

## **Mercer Announces New Healthy "U" Incentive Program**

Mercer just announced a new university-wide Wellness incentive program that allows eligible employees to earn either days off or dollars off for participating in recognized Wellness events. I sat down with Associate Vice President, Cathy Smith, and asked her to share with us a little more about the program and why she thinks it is so important.

Learn more about Healthy U and what you can expect to gain by clicking [here](#).

## **Special Concerns for Caregivers**

More than 44 million Americans act as caregivers to an elderly person or an adult with disabilities. Caregivers receive no financial compensation and nearly 60% have other jobs. While care-giving has numerous benefits, many caregivers, especially women, report emotional, physical, or financial stress. In severe cases, a caregiver may experience depression, anxiety and chronic health conditions. [Many organizations](#) exist to help caregivers get support, find respite and identify local resources. You can also learn more about estate planning and adult aging issues at our upcoming Lunch and Learn with attorney Amy Boyer on June 29<sup>th</sup>.

## **Recipe for the Busy Cook: Local Beef Crockpot Meatballs**

If you think you're too busy to cook, you should be using your Crockpot! Here's an easy recipe for a delicious entrée that's ready when you get home from work:

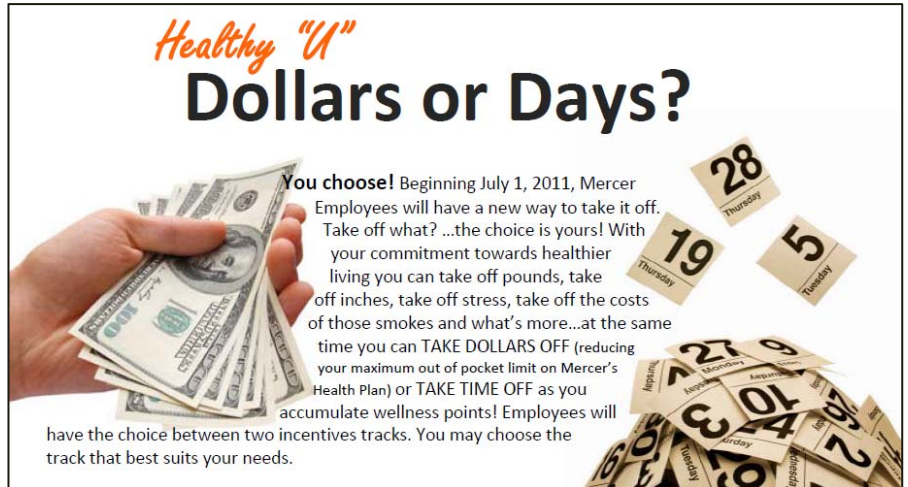
**Ingredients:** 2 pounds ground beef & 2 eggs (available at Mulberry Street Market); 10 oz frozen chopped spinach (cooked); 1 red onion (chopped); 2 TB garlic (diced); 1/3 cup almond flour; 1 jar spaghetti sauce.

**Prepare:** 1) Mix all ingredients except spaghetti sauce; 2) roll meat into large balls; 3) Line the bottom of Crockpot with meatballs and top with spaghetti sauce; 4) Cook on low for 8 hours. As a healthier (and faster) alternative to pasta, serve over spaghetti squash.

# Healthy “U”: Interview with Cathy Smith

**Q. Why do you believe that participating in Wellness is important for employees individually and for Mercer as a whole?**

Cathy: The obvious of course – health care costs are alarming! Medical spending is out of control in the United States with an estimated 75%-85% of costs being self-inflicted through lifestyle choices. But then there’s the not-so-obvious. A great number of people in the Mercer family are attuned to healthy lifestyle choices. Unfortunately, just as many have not given “living in a state of health” a fair shake. I truly believe that the success of our Wellness department is measured in



*Healthy “U”*  
**Dollars or Days?**

**You choose!** Beginning July 1, 2011, Mercer Employees will have a new way to take it off. Take off what? ...the choice is yours! With your commitment towards healthier living you can take off pounds, take off inches, take off stress, take off the costs of those smokes and what’s more...at the same time you can TAKE DOLLARS OFF (reducing your maximum out of pocket limit on Mercer’s Health Plan) or TAKE TIME OFF as you accumulate wellness points! Employees will have the choice between two incentives tracks. You may choose the track that best suits your needs.

how many people we can get to sample the alternative to feeling tired, inflamed, achy, grouchy, and uninspired; whether that be through fun activities, educational resources, weight loss programs, or just plain old exercise classes.

**Q: Healthy U has been a Wellness program for many years but will have a whole new look beginning in July. What are the new incentives employees can receive when they register and participate?**

Cathy: Employees may now accumulate enough Healthy “U” points to get a couple days off each year or as an alternative, up to \$500 off the maximum annual out-of-pocket on our Health Plan.

**Q. Obviously, receiving dollars or days off are nice incentives, but what do you think employees really gain when they participate in Wellness activities?**

Cathy: Well, we can’t ignore that Wellness is different from person to person. Just the phrase “Wellness activities” can stir up feelings of intimidation for the not-so-outgoing. Also, it’s not everyone who looks to physical exertion for a good brain break during the work day. But to those I would say this: You don’t have to be outgoing to enjoy Wellness Activities. Hardly anyone in my exercise class ever speaks! They file in, get the job done, and leave feeling like they checked something important off their list for the day. As far as what “employees really gain,” let me just share what I’ve seen being affiliated with Wellness over the years. I’ve seen people gain friends, gain muscle tone, gain self-respect, gain awareness of how to shop, eat, and prepare meals. I’ve even seen people gain a new lease on life! Sorry for the cliché’ but Wellness is truly a win-win.

Get [Healthy U Program](#) details here or email [Rachel May](#), Director for Employee Wellness, to register.



## Mulberry Street Market: Interview with Mark Vanderhoek

**Q: Mulberry Street Market is a new addition to Macon. What is it and what can I buy there?**

Mark: Mulberry Street Market is Macon's first producers-only farmers market, which means that vendors must either have grown or made the items they sell at the market. This

ensures that the money you spend at the market benefits the vendors directly, and it helps you to know the source of your food. We have as many as 25 vendors each week, selling food products from milk, butter and ice cream, to freshly baked breads, cookies and desserts to grass-fed meat and pork and hundreds of pounds of fresh, in-season vegetables.

**Q: What are the advantages to buying food at a local Farmer's Market instead of a major grocery chain?**

Mark: At a farmers market, you will only get fresh food, made from fresh ingredients. Any number of fruits and vegetables have a higher nutrient content when picked fresh, versus something that has been picked several weeks (or months) before it reaches the super market shelf. Freshness means more nutrients, but also more taste. I firmly believe that children (and adults) struggle to eat their vegetables because those vegetables are tasteless. They are tasteless because they are not fresh. At the Mulberry Market there are no tasteless vegetables – or fruits, or milk, or butter, or eggs, or meat. Another advantage is that you can ask where your food came from and the farmers who take the time to grow and sell at a farmers market can tell you its story. Your money also remains in the community, and if not directly in Macon or Bibb County, definitely within the state of Georgia. So 100 percent of your food dollar goes to build our local economy.

**Q: Eating healthy can be expensive. Can I get my money to stretch farther by shopping at the Market?**

A: Prices at the market are comparable to the grocery store, and in many cases better, particularly in regard to organics. While none of the vendors at the Mulberry Market are traditional, "USDA Certified Organic," many of them adhere to the same practices, or are even more sustainable than the larger conglomerates that offer such certified organic produce at the supermarket. In addition, unlike a traditional grocery store, season matters at the Market. All of what is sold at the Market was grown in Georgia and that means everything is in season which brings the price down: what is abundant at the Market is also what is least expensive. When you shop local and in season, your wallet and your taste buds will thank you.



**Q: What should I ask the farmers at the market?**

A: One great aspect of the Market is that you can get your questions about your food answered. Some good questions to ask are: How was this grown? What variety of fruit or vegetable is this? How should I prepare this? What can I serve with this? How long should this last? How should I store it? What will you have next week? When will my favorite fruit or vegetable be in season? How is your food different from what I can get at the supermarket?

The people who grow our food have interesting answers, and I hope you will come out and have a conversation with them.