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**Report as of October, 2022**

"The wind is rising, and the air is wild with leaves. We have had our summer evenings; now for October eves!" – Humber Wolfe

What a beautiful time of year it is, with leaves changing colors, and temperatures cooling down, to enjoy the outdoors and all that nature has to offer. Sadly, with our busy and hectic schedules, often times we don't consciously think about our health and wellness and what it means for us as individuals and our families.

So what is health and wellness? While it means something different to different people, and the two terms are often used interchangeably, health refers to a state where we are physically free of disease, while wellness refers to an overall balance of our physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, occupational, and social well-being. This topic is rising in the ranks of popularity as more and more people are becoming attuned to their bodies and their emotions with an increased focus on obtaining helpful information to improve their overall quality of life. And that is why, my goal throughout this year is to bring these reminders to our PTA communities so we may actively prioritize our health and overall well-being.

Let's briefly talk about our immune system. After two years of wearing masks to survive the pandemic, our immune systems are recalibrating to fight all the bacteria and viruses we come in contact with every day. What may have been a common cold pre-pandemic, may now be a bad cough that lasts longer than usual. While we cannot ward off all ailments completely, we can give our immune systems a boost by eating foods high in vitamin C and antioxidants that help our bodies fight germs. Fruits, such as pineapple, oranges, blueberry and elderberry, amongst others, activate antioxidant enzymes in our bodies that help protect our cells from free radicals and help us fight the 'bugs'. So remember to pack fruits for your kids every day; mine loves a little extra burst of flavor and sprinkles a bit of Tajin seasoning to fruits, and I must say that it tastes absolutely delicious!

When it comes to wellness, each of our goals and pathways to our goals look very different, but we should all prioritize activities that help us attain overall well-being. Part of what works us in our household is having mommy-daughter exercise sessions, either doing strength routines in our living room (with the few dumb-bells and bands we have, trust me you don't need a full-on home gym) or taking brisk evening walks around our neighborhood. Often times, this is when I have some of the best conversations with my child as we try to stay connected to each other's lives, which may otherwise be difficult during the daily grind. Also part of our overall wellness, is our ability to navigate each day peacefully, respectfully and with love, while reducing as much anxiety and friction as possible. Bedtime routine for us is especially challenging, and I find that adding a fun twist to these steps/chores help my daughter feel empowered and happy at the end of each day. So I make putting on PJ's, brushing teeth, and all other bedtime activities a friendly competition and whoever comes in last, has to read a book to the other. Naturally, my daughter always wins because she wants mommy to read to her and not the other way around, and I am no longer

finding myself yelling at her to go to bed while she experiences major FOMO (fear of missing out) thinking I am having the best time of my life being able to stay up longer than she can.

Prioritizing our overall wellbeing also requires staying abreast of information and current events that may affect us, our families and our communities. In a world that is thriving on technology and on the use of social media, we must remain extra vigilant and equip ourselves with helpful information and resources. Our school districts are doing a great job of helping keep our parent and teacher communities in-the-know, but periodic reminders from other parent/teacher resources such as the PTA, are also very helpful.

- Please be aware of a social media trend called Paqui : One Chip Challenge, which some students are participating in. According to a school notification, it is a “high voltage chip [that] contains super-charged Carolina Reaper Pepper and stinging Scorpion with a shocking twist.” While this is only one of many challenges circulating the internet, it is important to keep an eye on our children’s social media activities and having frequent talks with them about the dangers of participating in such challenges.
- For families of Commack UFSD, there is now a new program to support our families this year. Commack is one of the first districts in Suffolk County to become a part of the Northwell Health School Mental Health Partnership, through which Commack families and families of all participating districts, now have access to a dedicated Health Center, allowing them to access timely mental health services. The center is located at 2171 Jericho Turnpike, Suite 345, Commack, NY.
- October is National Bullying Prevention month and we each have a role to play in ensuring we raise/help raise tolerant and compassionate children who respect others and celebrate their differences. Diversity is a beautiful gift that should be celebrated, not something to be afraid of or angry about, and the first and best place our children learn good habits and humanity is at home. Let’s talk to our children and remind them to talk to us and their trusted school officials if there is ever an issue at or outside of school. Our children should feel safe, accepted and happy at school in order to learn, grow and thrive in life.

And as a final note to parents, please remember that parenting is about connection, not about perfection. It’s about the long-term, not the short term. Health and wellness is a journey and with a more focused approach, we can all attain it for ourselves and our families.

“Take some time to tell your child you like them today, and list the reasons why. Then watch in wonder as they blossom before your eyes.

Words of recognition and appreciation to a child are like sunshine and rain to a flower” – L.R. Knost