



## Employee Wellness Spotlight

### Cheri Cousens, Greater Lawrence Sanitary District

Cheri Cousens, who works in North Andover at the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District (GLSD) accepts every challenge she encounters with determination and exuberance. Everyone's wellness journey is different. Pre-COVID, an immediate family member of Cheri was diagnosed with a complex, chronic digestive disorder, which served as the wake-up call that sparked her lifestyle change.

A close colleague of Cheri at GLSD introduced her to Ompractice. In early March of 2019, Cheri began using the online, live classes to manage stress as well as to increase flexibility, strength and balance. She was so grateful for the introduction to Ompractice and even more happy that it had become a habit in her life once COVID lockdown occurred. When asked about what she liked most about Ompractice, she shared her appreciation for the financial savings (~ \$180.00 annually), ease of use, and caliber of instructors. Once she opened up to the program, practicing a few times per week, layering on another wellness activity seemed natural for her. Ompractice acted as a wellness portal. Cheri's perspective shift, and as she says "unlearning dietary habits of a lifetime" has been a process.

Her evolution has been supported by many MIIA Well Aware offerings. During COVID, Cheri attended weekly Zoom nutrition classes. In addition, she participated in monthly self-directed Wellbeing Smorgasbord and Webinar Buffets learning information, tips and strategies to improve her health.

Cheri credits her success to the MIIA Well Aware educational offerings, which encourage lifestyle changes versus “quick fixes”. She especially enjoyed the Sleep webinar and the Healthy Diets from Around the World program which highlighted fermented foods and new foods to try. Through her experience and engagement in the Mediterranean Diet challenge, she began incorporating more legumes (beans, lentils, and split peas), fish, whole grains, nuts and seeds. Knowing that her family’s medical problems involve an abnormal immune inflammatory response, she was especially motivated to implement these changes to mitigate her own health risk, while instilling better health habits in her family. Cheri found it easier to add these items into her diet with the help of a MIIA Well Aware three-week, self-directed challenge. She has consistently added new programs, classes, and services to her health regime. She looks forward to playing Quizzify each month and noted that it has sparked conversations at work between colleagues. She is currently utilizing the support and guidance of a certified health and wellness coach, which she is enjoying. Her recommendations for others? “Try one thing. There are so many different options, that you’re bound to find something that you can try that would appeal to you.”

MIIA Well Aware programs, services, and offerings have taught her how important it is to take good care of yourself. She now prioritizes her self-care. Because of her improved health, she is more available to her family, friends and colleagues. Her spirit and willingness to experiment with new recipes and activities is an inspiration to all.