

The Best Of Both Worlds!

by Hélène Sinclair, CAP-OM



I have been an administrative assistant for over 25 years and I have enjoyed working in a range of workplaces, from children's services to university student recruitment.

In November 2010, I joined the Healthy Active Living and Obesity (HALO www.haloresearch.ca) research team, which is part of the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario Research Institute. Their vision is to provide national leadership and research excellence in healthy, active living for the prevention, management and treatment of obesity in children and youth.

What particularly drew me to this position was my own life experience with my family and the diseases they suffered that come from obesity, such as high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, and my own struggles throughout life to maintain a healthy weight.

Working with HALO has been like a dream come true! I get to do the work I love, providing support to my director and the team, but more than that, it allows me to pursue my own passion in helping others get healthier. Thanks to my very supportive director, Dr. Mark Tremblay, I am continually encouraged to become involved with activities that continue to drive the message home about the importance of reducing our sedentary time, which is by far what most of our work is at our computer desks, and to provide ideas for doing so.

An example of this would be my contribution to a recent implementation

of some walking meeting rooms. A total of 12 mapped-out routes were created as walking meeting rooms ranging in time from 15 minutes to 60 minutes. Our team has been doing this for some time, but now we're promoting the idea throughout the research institute and the hospital as well. Our hope is that we'll be able to track these and get some statistics on the use and continue to encourage staff to use this whenever it's possible.

Most recently, as part of my 2013 commitment to sitting less, I transformed my desk into a standing desk. I purchased a \$40 laptop tray, wireless keyboard/mouse and with an adjustable monitor I am able to quickly switch from sitting to standing, allowing me to reduce my sedentary time by a few hours each day.

As a member of our health and safety committee, beyond helping to ensure we have a safe work environment, I am pleased to provide my input around wellness and tips for us to include more activity into our workday.

The other aspect that my work with HALO has helped me to become more aware of is how we organize catering

for meetings. We're trying to implement a practice of ensuring a good balance of choices, including healthy alternatives whenever possible.

Working here has allowed me to grow in many ways. As the only administrative assistant for a team of 30 staff, 15 graduate students and many volunteers, things are always moving and changing as we embark on new initiatives and research projects. My work ranges from providing the basics of administrative support to human resources and financial services assistance. I am inspired daily by the people I work with in how we "walk the talk" and ensure *we* make physical activity a part of our day. We also have access to wonderful gym facilities on site for very reasonable rates.

It's no wonder that our institution was voted one of the region's top employers and best places to work. I certainly consider myself very fortunate to be a part of the team. I hope to be here for many years to come!

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Interested in submitting your own story about why you love your job? Please submit your 600-word essay with your picture to Editor Emily Allen at eallen@iaap-hq.org. Your picture must be a minimum of two inches tall and 300dpi. For questions concerning picture submission, contact John Naatz at jnaatz@iaap-hq.org.