

Exercise key for Fulton County employees

BY JANET JONES KENDALL
Contributing Writer

Teresa Atchison's annual trips to the doctor for a physical are all the proof she needs that **Fulton County's** wellness program works.

"My doctor brags on me when I go and continues to tell me 'whatever you are doing, keep on doing it because your health is great,'" said Atchison, an administrative coordinator for Fulton County.

It's a far cry from where Atchison was three years ago, before she became a participant in the program, which earned Fulton County the No. 1 ranking in the Large Employer category in the 2014 Healthiest Employers Awards sponsored by Atlanta Business Chronicle.

"This wellness program has been the best thing to happen to me. I was on my way to the fat farm and did not realize it," she said. "When the program started, I became a part of it and when weighing in I realized how overweight I was."

Since then, she has placed first and then second in Fulton County's annual Healthiest Loser competition.

"I am now addicted to exercising and eating healthier," Atchison said. "We never know what might happen in life,



BYRON E. SMALL

Fitness offerings includes yoga classes.

but right now, I thank God for Fulton County for encouraging the employees to live a healthier life and exercise more."

Atchison now exercises six days a week and has reduced her blood pressure and cholesterol, she said.

"The challenge taught me to eat better, exercise more and be more conscious of

my health," she said. "When in the competition, I have desired to eat unhealthy, but I would stay focused because I knew the weigh-in day would be approaching and I did not want to gain but either maintained or lost weight. I am now a much healthier person."

Fulton County employs 5,000 people,

and the administrators try to make that number a strength of their plan by planning group activities, said Robin Parson, a program coordinator for the county's wellness committee.

"Many of the employees find that when they work out with a group or partner they are motivated, and it's easier to become healthier," Parson said.

Approximately 20 percent of Fulton County's employees annually participate in the wellness plan, and Fulton County administrators strive to increase that number, said Lisa Rushin, assistant to the county manager.

Program coordinators strive to make the options – such as nutrition programs, educational lunch-and-learns, biometric screenings and offer health fairs – as convenient as possible. Classes are offered at five Fulton County locations.

► FULTON COUNTY

5,000

- Number of Atlanta employees
- Popular wellness initiatives: Fitness classes, Spring Into Wellness fitness festival, Fulton Family 10K run and 5K walk