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Female Athletes Urged To 'Pay Yourself First'

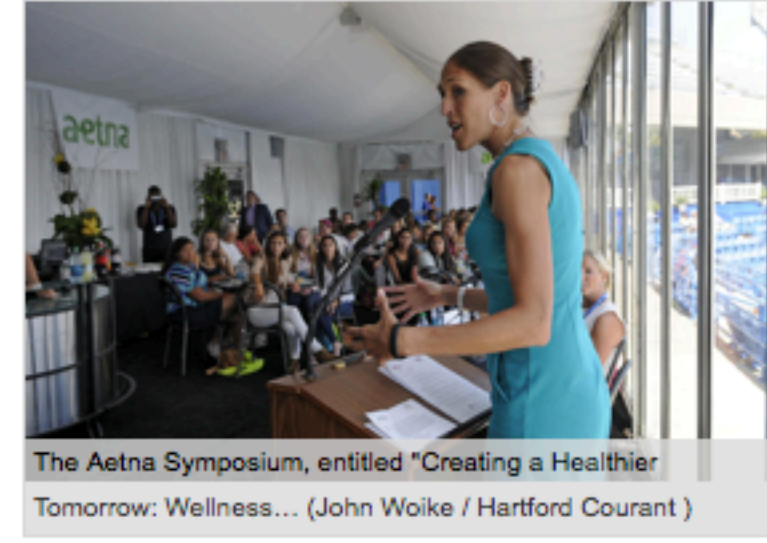
Aetna Forum Focuses On Health, Wellness

August 18, 2014 | By MATTHEW STURDEVANT, msturdevant@courant.com

NEW HAVEN — Women's Business Development Council President Fran Pastore offered a new twist on the personal-finance adage "pay yourself first."

Do the same with health and wellness, Pastore told a group of female athletes.

"The busier you are, when your career is on an incline and things are going well, you forget to pay yourself first," Pastore said. "And paying yourself first doesn't always mean with money. It means with time for yourself, and taking care of yourself with regard to your own personal wellness."



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She was one of five female speakers at the Aetna Symposium "Creating a Healthier Tomorrow: Wellness and the Workplace," moderated by University of Connecticut basketball legend Rebecca Lobo.

The panel discussion Monday afternoon on the grounds of the Connecticut Open tennis tournament was directed to about 120 female athletes from Connecticut schools, and their coaches, who were invited through the Connecticut Interscholastic Athletic Conference.

The conversation wove together the benefits of tenacity and discipline in sports that applies to adult work life. The speakers also gave personal accounts, told as cautionary tales, about how a daily routine can quickly become too busy for exercise and wellness.

Pastore had balanced her long work days by swimming 100 laps in an Olympic-sized swimming pool morning and night, at the start and end of the day. Pastore founded the Women's Business Development Council, which promotes entrepreneurship and economic stability. At one point about a year ago, long workdays squeezed out her swim routine. She was pushing herself so much that she passed out while on a business trip, not realizing she had pneumonia.

"What I learned was, I was not taking care of myself ... My stress level was so, so outrageous," Pastore said. "I was so stressed out emotionally about the business, about work, keeping things going, the pressure that we feel every day of being a mother, a wife, a parent, a sister, and keeping all of those things in check and never making time for [myself]."

Lobo, who moderated the event, was the 1995 women's college basketball national player of the year and won a gold medal in 1996 as the youngest member of the U.S. women's Olympic basketball team. She said exercise is her morning routine.

"Exercise is my coffee," Lobo said. "It's my caffeine. I don't drink coffee."

Another panelist, Dr. Karen Sutton is an attending physician at Yale-New Haven Hospital and assistant professor at Yale University's School of Medicine. She played lacrosse when she was an undergraduate at Duke University.

"The stronger your body, the stronger your mind will start to think," Sutton told the girls.

Growing up, Sutton said she achieved her "wellness goals," which led to her achieving other goals later in life. Playing college lacrosse well enough to make the Division I Final Four helped her to become an orthopedic surgeon.

With age, however, living a fit life is challenging because of work, family and other obligations.

"You have to develop your own strategy for wellness," Sutton said.

For example, Sutton works with the U.S. women's lacrosse team, and each of those athletes is different. Some people might have a gluten-free diet; others might skip dairy products, Sutton said. Each person's wellness techniques are unique.

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"You just can't look up into Shape magazine and figure out, 'Hey, how is Karen Sutton's wellness going to be? What should she do for her own wellness?'" Sutton said. "So, you have to figure it out yourself. And start taking notes in terms of what works for you."

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