



Owner-Operator's Business
Association of Canada

Association professionnelle des
routiers autonomes du Canada

*...from the
director's chair*

For the health of it

I had to go to Dallas to do it, but I finally got to run with Jazzy...well, alright, not actually with Jazzy, but we were in the same 5-km race...and, okay, so I didn't really run, I walked, but at least I finished – dead last – and got the T-shirt.

The Too Hot to Trot run, which took place during the Great American Trucking Show in August, was sponsored by Truckers News' Fit for the Road program and the Healthy Trucking Association of America, along with John Christner Trucking, with the goal of generating greater awareness of the health-related issues that many truck drivers face.

There was a definite buzz about driver wellness at the show, with a number of exhibits and activities brought together in a separate Health and Wellness Pavilion. At every truck show you'll find a variety of suppliers and vendors of health care products and services, but the difference at Dallas was that much of the activity in the wellness corner of the show floor was, well, driver-driven.

I see a solid core of truck drivers out there – small – but definitely growing, who are bent on making their own health and well-being a priority. They're educating themselves and others, learning, sharing, doing whatever it takes to raise awareness and focus attention on the importance of driver health and wellness.

Like Truckers for a Cause, a grassroots online support group where drivers help and encourage each other in their shared desire to change the way they eat, lose weight, and develop habits that will help them achieve better health and enjoy life more.

Or the truckers who are part of the American Sleep Apnea Association A.W.A.K.E. Network and hold informative monthly "meetings" via dial-in conference calls.

Then there's Kitchener-based owner/operator (and OBAC life member) Alfy Meyer, a remarkable example of how it's possible to stay fit on the road. This guy uses his bunk in ways one

wouldn't have thought possible, for calisthenics and back exercises. He's got a Stepmaster tucked away, and other gear on-board for stretching and weight lifting. Alfy's genuinely concerned about the physical and psychological health of drivers industry-wide, and uses blogs, YouTube videos, and the pages of trucking magazines to share his experiences and promote wellness among his peers.

And who ever imagined that radio could play such an important role in promoting wellness? Thanks to a couple of caring and supportive hosts on the Road Dog Trucking channel of Sirius XM satellite radio, thousands of drivers across Canada and the US have access to health professionals who bring them relevant and practical support and advice.

Dave Nemo, the friendly voice who's been riding with drivers over the airwaves for more than 30 years, packs his daily morning show with trucker-friendly guests such as John McElligott, MD, who dispenses his unique brand of no-nonsense medical advice during a weekly Coffee With The Doc session. On the afternoon shift, you can tune in to the Lockridge Report and catch Evan's popular Roadcookin' regulars, Don Jacobson and Pam Whitfield. Their practical approach to food and nutrition demonstrates that it's possible to steer away a long-haul lifestyle of poor food, weight gain and deteriorating health.

But one of the most unique examples of getting your butt in gear when it comes to supporting drivers has got to be the MeRV (Medical Resource Vehicle), a 40-ft. diesel vehicle that's part motor home, part truck – complete with chicken lights – and loaded with medical resource material and testing equipment.

The MeRV took to the road last May, thanks to Safety First Sleep Solutions, a leader in sleep apnea testing and treatment, working in partnership with the St. Christopher Fund, and with the support of a number of generous sponsors and yup, you guessed it, Dave Nemo.

The MeRV, with US Navy veteran Jon Osburn



**Joanne
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at the wheel, is part of a new mobile campaign providing education to over-the-road truckers about medical conditions they suffer from at an alarming rate. Osburn, who was also chief paramedic for the city of San Francisco and a multi-million mile long-haul trucker to boot, plans to log 1,500 to 2,500 miles per week next year, visiting truck stops, shows, and trucking events across the US.

That means thousands of truckers, including Canadians, will visit the MeRV, share coffee and conversation with Osburn, and have access to a host of services, including blood pressure and blood sugar readings, A1C testing, sleep apnea testing and screening, and a wealth of medical information and counsel on such things as diabetes, stroke prevention, smoking cessation, as well as diet and exercise.

We'll be working hard to get the MeRV "north of the border" in the not too distant future. When it comes to diabetes, sleep apnea, obesity, or a driver trying to quit smoking, they're facing the same struggle whether they're in Madison, Wisconsin or Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Oh yes, Jazzy. In case I lost you back in the first paragraph, Jasmine (Jazzy) Jordan is the extraordinary Dalton, Minn. 17-year-old who recently finished an astonishing run from Los Angeles to New York, a total of 3,161 miles. Growing up in a trucking family, she was aware of the difficulties drivers face in staying healthy, and she wanted to make a difference.

So get out there and thank her – and do yourself a favour – walk a couple of laps around the truck next time you stop.