



Champions of **WELLNESS**

*Twelve organizations earn kudos
for cultivating healthy lifestyles*



ROCHESTER BUSINESS JOURNAL
RBJ
May 30, 2008

Firms mean business when it comes to health

Twelve area employers will be lauded next week for their efforts to foster a healthy workplace.

On June 5, these organizations will receive the Wealth of Health Award, presented by Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield, Rochester Region and Rochester Business Journal. The award recognizes steps taken to encourage healthy activity and improve employee wellness.

Many local companies and non-profit organizations are implementing programs to foster healthy habits among their staffers, improve morale and increase productivity.

The Wealth of Health nominees were judged on employee involvement in such health initiatives, the creativity of these activities to reach specific goals, ongoing promotion of healthy lifestyles and measurable results. The honorees were grouped by size, determined by the number of full-time and part-time employees.

The event is scheduled for June 5, from noon to 1:30 p.m., at the Hyatt Regency Rochester.

Following is a closer look at each honoree's commitment to healthy living:



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Staff received pedometers last year as part of the Walking Challenge at Harris Corp.'s RF Communications Division. Some 250 employees took part.

2008
wealth
OF
health
AWARDS

2,000+ employees

Harris Corp.'s RF Communications Division

Last year the American Heart Association named Harris Corp.'s RF Communications Division a Fit Friendly Company.

The title is directly related to health and wellness initiatives at Harris, a company that makes secure voice and data communications products. Half of its 2,200 employees take advantage of health-related offerings each year.

"We care about our employees and feel that it is important to invest in their well-being," says Elaine Spagnola, occupational health nurse at Harris.

The annual Harris Health Fair, involving roughly 500 employees, is one of the most popular events. The company offers

free cholesterol and vision screenings and assessments of fitness, strength, balance and flexibility. Blood pressure is screened two days a month, and flu shots are provided each year.

"This year we even had health-conscious raffle prizes, such as body fat monitors and blood pressure monitors," Spagnola says.

Another popular program is Harris' International Travelers' Wellness Program, used by nearly 500 employees.

"We have a large group of employees who frequently travel internationally, and we provide them with counseling, immunizations, medications and an overseas health contact," Spagnola says.

The manufacturer encourages employees to improve their health in many ways.

Last year 250 employees participated in its Walking Challenge program. Harris provided pedometers and walking maps of various routes around company buildings.

The company has a team in the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge. With nearly 250 registered runners and walkers, Harris last year had the second-largest team competing in the 3.5-mile run.

"The run is a great way for our employees to stay in shape and do it for a good cause," Spagnola says.

Discount fitness club memberships and pay-as-you-go plans are offered to all employees; some 300 employees take advantage of the gym membership discount.

Last year the company developed an ergonomic task force; volunteers maintain an ergonomically correct environment in both office and manufacturing workplaces.

Harris estimates that nearly 2,000 of its employees read health and wellness updates through a new online newsletter. Plus its quarterly Well Workplace publication provides tips to maintain a healthy home and work environment, among other things.

Many Harris employees take advantage of a condensed workweek through its summer hours schedule. And its winter break gives employees extended time off between Christmas and New Year's. Added this year is a personal paid holiday.

The company also has increased healthy food options offered by its cafeteria catering service, including yogurt, vegetable stir-fry selections and freshly prepared salads.

"We understand that health and wellness can impact productivity, attendance and job satisfaction," Spagnola says. "A satisfied employee will generally work harder to achieve personal and professional goals."

— Lynette Haaland

Monroe County

Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks attributes \$1.2 million in health insurance savings to the ef-

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- **Mary Cariola Children's Center**

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

More than half of Monroe County's 4,700 employees participated in wellness programs last year. Managers say morale and team spirit have risen as a result.

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forts of the county's wellness program, launched last year.

The employee wellness program is a multi-pronged initiative to improve the health and well-being of the county's 4,770 workers.

"More than half of our work force participated in our efforts to encourage employee wellness," Brooks says.

Key elements of the wellness program are raising awareness, providing opportunities for healthy living, screening for risks and reinforcing healthy choices. The goals are to promote good health, improve morale, reduce the impact of absenteeism and eventually reduce health insurance costs.

"The best way to control rising health insurance costs is with a healthier work force. Because employees spend more than a third of their lives at work, a robust workplace wellness program is critical in achieving a healthy lifestyle," Brooks says.

The program kicked off in March 2007 with the eight-week Eat Well Live Well challenge. Over 1,500 employees took part by incorporating recommended portions of fruits and vegetables and tracking their steps every day. Nearly 100 teams vied for the grand prize—lunch with the county executive.

In its Get Real Fit contest, employees exercise and use training and fitness resources at World Gym. Monroe County collaborates with local gyms to provide discounted rates and services to employees. County workers also participated in the American Heart Association's Heart Walk last year.

More than 500 employees attended its health fairs, where flu shots were administered and employees were offered free glucose and cholesterol testing, among other things.

Because stress management is part of maintaining good health, blood pressure screening and counseling were organized at the county's department of human services. More than 200 employees participated.

Monroe County's wellness initiative also tries to build health awareness and motivate employees to adopt healthy habits.

Health care experts lead monthly lunch-and-learn sessions that typically attract more than 100 employees. Health topics are tackled in bimonthly newsletters.

Smoking cessation is yet another focus area of Monroe County's wellness pro-

gram. The county participates in the Great American Smokeout Quit 4 A Day program. It also provides information sessions and literature on quitting smoking and coping with non-smoking.

A rise in employee morale has been a noticeable impact of the county's wellness initiatives, Brooks says. Managers also have noticed greater team spirit among employees.

"We anticipate that this increased team motivation will relate to positive business impacts such as lower absenteeism and higher productivity," she says.

—Lynette Haaland

University of Rochester

Thousands of employees at the University of Rochester are striving to live healthier lifestyles.

There are 19,767 employees at UR and more than 60 percent have participated in some effort to improve their health, says Shaquana Divers, senior health project coordinator for Well-U, which is run through UR's human resources benefits office.

The university is piloting a well-received weight management program that allows employees to choose between Weight Watchers at Work or Weigh-Well. The latter is an internal weight management program developed by the university's School of Nursing. As long as employees attend every class, they are reimbursed half of the up-front cost upon completion.

"The 50 percent reimbursement has been a great incentive in encouraging employees to sign up for this program and complete it," Divers says. "We have received many testimonials from employees who have lowered their blood pressure, reduced their body mass index and are happier."

The weight management program is part of Well-U, the university's wellness program that provides tools, resources and education to promote healthful living. Well-U also offers online programs in walking and nutrition, annual flu vaccines, free pedometers, yoga, fitness talks, stress management, the Eat Well Live Well program and several annual fitness challenges.

The online walking program is called America on the Move. At UR, 1,228 members averaged 7,787 steps a day. Every six weeks, approximately 100 employees start a new online walking program.

Another 1,391 employees completed the

Eat Well Live Well challenge, maintaining a daily average of more than 11,000 steps.

Work-Place Yoga, launched last July at multiple locations during the lunch hour, already has benefited 120 employees.

"Many of our employees have reported that the yoga classes are convenient, enjoyable and have improved their health by increasing flexibility and reducing tension," Divers says.

Last year, UR had the largest number of Rochester employees participate in the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge, a 3.5-mile walk/run.

Also last year, 359 UR employees completed the Spring Fitness Challenge, where they recorded 16,083 activities that occupied 576 days over the course of the eight-week challenge. Fifty of the participants were part of a weight loss sub-group who averaged a loss of more than six pounds each.

A relatively new initiative is the em-

ployee health assessment. Staff receive a personalized action plan combined with online healthy living programs that have been recommended based on their health needs. Employees who complete a health assessment receive a \$100 incentive and interactive tools—such as a fitness planner and diet manager—to help them accomplish their goals.

Employees and their spouses have access to free smoking cessation programs through Well-U. In 2006, a portion of the UR Medical Center became a smoke-free campus both inside and out. Employees also can receive one-on-one counseling to help them quit smoking through UR's Smoker's Health Project. At least 13 percent of the 74 employees who enrolled were smoke-free at the last evaluation, Divers says.

To date, nearly 200 employees have benefited from lunch-and-learn fitness talks.

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Congratulations to each of this year's participants for recognizing your employees as a vital asset to your company.

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Lunchtime yoga classes are offered in multiple locations at the University of Rochester.

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WEALTH OF HEALTH

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UR also has an employee assistance program, an on-site health clinic, vision services, free ergonomic assessments and nutrition counseling.

—Lynette Haaland



The Gleason Works

From breast cancer awareness campaigns to smoking cessation classes, Gleason Corp. on a daily basis shows employees that the company cares about their health and wellness.

"Gleason employees are encouraged to take charge of their health, question their physicians about treatment options and ask for generic medications, when appropriate, to assist us in keeping the costs of medical benefits affordable for all," says Mary Ann Rall, occupational health nurse. Gleason's local staff of roughly 700 has an average age of 47.

To address its population's specific health needs, the company offers numerous activities throughout the year.

For starters, employees are reimbursed—up to \$200 annually—for personal health initiatives, such as smoking cessation classes or medications, health club memberships, weight management classes and more. In addition, staff members are reimbursed up to \$100 per year for personal purchases of exercise equipment.

Staffers who want to lose weight receive tremendous support. The compa-



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

The Gleason Works runs wellness activities, such as blood pressure checks, tailored to its population's specific health needs. Workers' compensation costs fell \$300,000 last year.

ny sponsored a 16-week activity called "Lose-A-Ton," during which friendly yet competitive teams drank plenty of water, ate five servings of fruits and vegetables and walked an average of at least 10,000 steps per day with the goal of shedding pounds. The program worked: some 80 participants dropped an impressive total of 701 pounds, and prizes were awarded to the team that lost the greatest percentage of weight.

Another activity focused on specific support of Gleason's female employees. During Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the company's wellness committee sent packets to

each female staffer with a planner and stickers to note each month's breast self-exam, yearly clinical breast exam and mammogram. Other goodies included pink mints and a prize drawing for items such as picture frames, water bottles and gym bags.

Employees also are treated to free flu vaccinations, a walking program, an annual health fair, diabetes and blood pressure screenings, and health information newsletters.

These initiatives work, Rall notes. Last year, workers' compensation costs fell \$300,000. Nearly 140 employees took advantage of the wellness reimbursement program, while 350 folks rolled up their sleeves for flu shots.

Moreover, as a result of the Lose-A-Ton program, one employee was able to stop taking blood pressure medication.

"It's exciting to see these results," Rall says. "Our employees have become real champions of their health and wellness."

"Naturally, the corporation benefits as well," she adds. "As a company, we're self-funded for our medical plan and workers' comp, so if we can keep our medical costs down, that helps our bottom line."

—Debbie Waltzer

Mary Cariola Children's Center Inc.

Staffers at Mary Cariola Children's Center start every day with a stretch. On the dot of 8:30 a.m.—before the children arrive—employees gather in the hallways. Divided into small groups and led by a manager or supervisor, the tunes start cranking and the bodies start moving.

"It's a great way to start the day," says Jason Dullea, human resources coordinator at the non-profit organization that provides services to children with special needs.

"Whether we're exercising to classical music or rock, this daily activity provides lots of health benefits, such as improved heart rates and better blood flow," he adds. "Morning stretch is like a shot of espresso. It energizes all of us and helps us get on the right road to a successful day."

Morning stretch, which also includes time for announcements about upcoming special events or birthday and anniversary news, is just one health initiative held at Mary Cariola, an organization of nearly 600 employees.

The center launched its wellness program in September 2005. In addition to morning stretch, employees can participate in a Weight Watchers at Work program. Other activities include before- and after-work yoga and exercise classes, a smoking cessation program, low-fat cooking demonstrations, a support group for staff with elderly parents or an ill spouse or child, and a recreational golf league.

In the spring of 2007, the center sponsored a Wellness Fair for all staff members, with the goal of "introducing our employees to alternative products, in addition to traditional hearing, vision, BMI, glucose and cholesterol screenings," Dullea notes.

Numerous vendors—such as Lori's Natural Food Store, Abundance Cooperative Market and Shaklee—were on-hand to display their wares and share information about alternative health-oriented products. The center's second Wellness Fair was held last month, with even more suppliers in attendance to provide services and information to staff members.

"We're doing everything we can to encourage a healthy culture here," Dullea explains.

Initiatives seem to be working. With 64 participants in the Weight Watchers at Work

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

A morning stretch starts the day for employees of Mary Cariola Children's Center Inc.

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program, 240 in the walking program, 14 in the smoking cessation sessions and 131 in the weight loss challenge, the center can point to specific results of these activities.

Workers' compensation injuries in 2007 declined by 23 percent from 2006. Also, during the same time period, short-term disability claims dropped by 28 percent. A newly formed wellness committee is busy surveying co-workers to find out what other health and wellness programs should be offered, and a wellness library and relaxation room is on the drawing board.

"Our goal is to get people up and moving in all areas of their lives," Dullea says. "Good health habits carry over throughout the workplace and into employees' homes as well. If everybody is eating better and exercising, then the entire organization reaps the benefits."

—Debbie Waltzer

Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics Inc.

As a provider of diagnostic products and services for the global health care community, Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics Inc.—a Johnson & Johnson company—also is keenly concerned about the health of its employees.

As such, the firm employs multiple strategies for enhancing staff member wellness and vitality.

The cornerstone of the company's program is a health risk assessment and intervention program. All of Ortho-Clinical's 950 employees have completed a health profile detailing their HDL cholesterol, LDL cholesterol, triglycerides, blood sugar, blood pressure and height, weight, hip and waist measurements. After completing the survey, employees received a confidential and personalized health assessment with recommendations and tips for improving their health.

By participating in this program, each employee nets a \$500 annual health benefit savings. Moreover, a recent J&J survey indicated that participants have posted lower medical expenses. In addition, they have been able to reduce their cholesterol levels, incidents of hypertension and cigarette smoking.

"The vision of our company is to have the healthiest employees in the world," says Lorraine Cleary, occupational health nurse and a member of the company's five-person health and wellness team.



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

The cafeteria at Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics Inc. has increased nutritious food choices.

"We want to create a culture of complete health, ranging from our nutritious food offerings in the company cafeteria to our outdoor walking trails," adds Melissa Kraemer, program manager of health and wellness.

Employees are surrounded by on-site opportunities to improve their personal health.

The company maintains three fitness centers that offer 12 weekly group exercise classes. Other activities include a worksite Weight Watchers group, smoking cessation classes, health awareness programs and screenings, and connections with community-based health runs and walks.

A stroll through the cafeteria further underscores a commitment to employee health.

"Roughly 80 percent of our cafeteria food choices are nutritionally dense, with minimal processing," Kraemer explains. "Items include a terrific salad bar, whole-wheat pizza made with low-fat cheese, and veggie burgers on whole-wheat buns topped with lots of vegetables."

As part of the company's Eat Complete campaign, one vending machine is dedicated to providing healthy choices, such as yogurt, trail mix, almonds, pita chips and 100 percent fruit juice.

In addition, Ortho-Clinical uses plen-

ty of marketing tools to spread the word about healthy lifestyles.

Initiatives include Web-based health resources and programs, the Healthy People Newsletter, daily e-mail tips on healthy living and cafeteria table tents with information on topics ranging from injury and illness prevention to work-life programs.

Outside the building, employees are treated to a relaxing setting, which includes an extensive walking trail, gazebos and two serene ponds.

"We fully embrace Johnson & Johnson's credo, which is to take care of our employees and their families," Cleary says.

—Debbie Waltzer



LeChase Construction Services LLC

Employees at LeChase Construction Services LLC can earn days off or gift cards by participating in its new

Health and Wellness Days Off Program.

"We've already noticed an increase in participation for our Health and Wellness program, which we attribute to this new incentive," says Rita French, health and wellness coordinator.

The builder's nearly 300 employees earn points toward days off or a \$100 gift card by participating in any Health and Wellness event. Launched last year, the initiative already has logged 30 percent employee participation.

The company last year also hosted two pedometer challenges. In one, 12 teams of employees competed to walk as many miles as it would take to get to Athens, Greece. Together they completed more than 148 million steps, or 61,000 miles. Movie tickets, car washes and gift cards were awarded along the way.

In the other pedometer challenge, employees supplemented walking with added servings of fruits and vegetables.

A Weight Watchers program last year helped 30 employees collectively lose more than 200 pounds in the first eight weeks. One participant called it a life-changing experience.

LeChase's ongoing lunchtime education series features speakers on health-related topics such as self-defense, acupuncture, nutrition, exercise, heart health, cancer and hypnotherapy. They draw about 20 percent of local staff each month.

LeChase last year also offered a health fair, CPR and defibrillator training and free flu shots. When the flu made its way through the company, most employees who had had flu shots experienced milder symptoms or were not affected, says Karen Havert, director of human resources and Health and Wellness co-chairwoman.

LeChase supports participation in local charity walks. Last year more than 100 employees walked to raise over \$6,000 for six charities. The company also participated in the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge.

The idea is to encourage employees "to build good health one step at a time while also giving back to the community," says Rick Allen, vice president and Health and Wellness chairman.

"We have created a healthy work environment focused on wellness, personal growth and commitment, while encouraging a balanced lifestyle that includes family and free time," says William Goodrich, president and CEO.

—Lynette Haaland

Manning & Napier Advisors Inc.

The Step-Up Challenge is the most popular health initiative at Manning & Napier Advisors Inc.

Many of the money manager's 275 employees walk 10,000 steps a day and eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables. The challenge lasts for eight weeks.

"A little more than 40 percent of our employees have participated in the program for two years now," says Cheryl Perry, human resources manager. The company has picnics, a scavenger hunt and other activities to encourage participation.

The Eat Well Live Well program similarly encourages good eating habits and exercise.

That is why the firm offers health club reimbursements of 50 percent of a gym membership up to \$300 a year. Approximately 85 employees participate in the offering.

"We feel strongly that it's in the firm's best interest to support health and wellness initiatives in order to mitigate the rising costs of health care," Perry says.



Photo courtesy of LeChase Construction Services

Family recreation is part of a focus on wellness at LeChase Construction Services LLC.

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WEALTH OF HEALTH

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The company offers several health insurance plans. One is a high-deductible health plan that gives employees the option to fund a health savings plan for future health insurance costs. If an employee has a "healthy" year, the money rolls over into the next year and could potentially be used as an investment option.

The human resources department solicits employee feedback on the firm's wellness programs. A yearly wellness survey requests suggestions for events and initiatives for employees to participate in, Perry says. Eight employees have taken advantage of company-paid CPR/AED training.

Manning & Napier sponsors teams of employees for the American Heart Association's Heart Walk and the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge. Thirty to 40 employees have participated in the Corporate Challenge in each of the last 10 years.

The firm has changed its vending machine options and offers healthier foods. And on employee anniversaries, Manning & Napier sends a fruit arrangement to employees and their families—rather than cookies as in years past.

"We have always believed that a healthy employee is a happy and productive employee," Perry says.

—Lynette Haaland

Sentry Group

Sentry Group has seen \$28,000 in prescription drug cost savings in the last two years.

The lower costs can be tied to the manufacturer's Healthy Combination program.

"(The program) is a strategy to control the



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

In the Step-Up Challenge at Manning & Napier Advisors Inc., employees walk 10,000 steps and eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

rising cost of prescription drugs and promote healthy behaviors among employees," says Debbie Edwards, wellness manager.

Healthy Combination addresses the top five diseases among the company's 450 employees: high blood cholesterol, depression/anxiety/mental disorder, asthma/allergies, high blood pressure and diabetes.

Participation rates increased in 2007 by 20 percent over 2006; now nearly half of employees participate in Healthy Combination.

"The program rewarded employees for

simply taking care of themselves and taking preventive measures," Edwards says. Quarterly rewards are given as well as an extra year-end incentive reward of \$100 to some that goes toward health care dollars for the upcoming year.

Using the on-site fitness center has been one part of the program, and half of the employees are members. Employees also participate by taking part in free wellness screenings, including blood pressure three times a year and glucose, cholesterol and body mass index once a year. Such screenings averaged 250 to 300 employees each time last year.

"Through clinical statistics, survey results and a limited amount of health insurance claims data, we know that we are moving in the right direction," Edwards says.

Sentry, which makes safes and other security products, has several other health initiatives.

The company offers nutrition counseling and has teamed up with its food vendor to offer healthier alternatives in the vending machine and cafeteria.

Throughout the month of August employees play food poker. For every healthy food choice they purchase either in the cafe or

vending machine, they receive a poker card. Individuals with poker hands win prizes.

An on-site weight management program consists of counting calories, food journaling, changing views on food and exercising. Each week a winner is determined by percentage of body weight lost. The winner receives recognition within the program and a monetary reward. Participants receive motivational and nutritional coaching every week.

Sentry sponsors community events such as the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge and the Cape Ability Outrigger Ohana challenge, a team rowing competition, for employee participation. To be eligible to participate, employees must train prior to the event. In twice-yearly walking programs, individuals receive a pedometer, journals and weekly motivation.

Sentry employees are eligible for free annual flu shots and free medical consultation with the company's paid physician who specializes in internal medicine.

"As a multigenerational, family-owned business, Sentry Safe has for decades recognized that good health is integral to a safe and productive work force," Edwards

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Half of Sentry Group's employees belong to the on-site fitness center. The firm's Healthy Combination program has saved the firm \$28,000 in prescription drug costs in the last two years, organizers say.



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The Wealth of Health Awards honor innovative organizations that promote workplace wellness, improving both their bottom line and the overall health of our community.

1-99 employees

- Lu Engineers
- Mirror Show Management
- Roberts Communications Inc.

100-499 employees

- Manning & Napier Advisors, Inc.
- LeChase Construction Services, LLC
- Sentry Group

500-1,999 employees

- Mary Cariola Children's Center
- The Gleason Works
- Ortho-Clinical Diagnostics, a Johnson & Johnson Company

2,000+ employees

- Harris Corporation RF Communications Division
- Monroe County
- University of Rochester

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WEALTH OF HEALTH

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says. "We have committed to continuous improvement in this area and constantly seek out the best practices to renew that commitment."

—Lynette Haaland



Lu Engineers

Getting healthy can be fun. That's the philosophy among the 44 engineers and administrative staff at Lu Engineers, a civil and environmental engineering firm in Penfield.

"A healthy employee is a happy employee," says Robert Hutteman, company president and an avid runner. "We like to encourage our employees to live a healthy lifestyle."

Enter "The Biggest LuSer," a fun and effective companywide weight loss challenge launched in 2007.

The program starts after the Super Bowl and runs through July. Ten two-person teams are vying for a sum of cash kicked in by each participant. The team that loses the highest percentage of weight during the five-month period will collect half the money; the other half will be awarded at the end of the summer to the individual who is able to keep all the weight off.

"Folks make it fun by trying to sabotage one another—for instance, bringing in doughnuts," Hutteman says. At the end of the challenge, the company donates to a local charity one dollar for each pound lost.



Getting fit should be fun, Lu Engineers officials believe. The firm sponsors an employee softball team, which took first place in the engineering league last year. Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

The company also sponsors a softball team, which captured first place in the engineering league in 2007. Some Lu employees hit the links in a golf league, while others work out at a discount rate at local health clubs.

Staffers participate in community-based wellness programs too. Nearly everyone in the company is taking part in Wegmans' Eat Well Live Well Challenge, monitoring their daily walking steps with pedometers and keeping track of their daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

A large contingent participates in the

community's annual JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge, simultaneously strengthening their bodies and team spirit.

In addition, employees are encouraged during the workday to take walking breaks instead of coffee breaks, Hutteman says. "This way they are getting outside and enjoying the fresh air as well as getting some exercise, instead of adding calories with yet another cup of coffee," he notes.

And on Friday mornings, roughly 30 staffers enjoy eating healthfully together. Members of the Friday Breakfast Club take turns bringing in nutritious goodies

for the whole group—such as fruits and vegetables or muffins—as a way of communally celebrating health and wellness.

All of these initiatives help staffers feel good about themselves and about their colleagues, Hutteman says.

"We've got a real family atmosphere here, and we care a lot about one another," he notes. "Challenges such as The Biggest LuSer and Eat Well Live Well are great because they offer yet another conversation piece among our employees. These events are effective and fun too."

Continued on next page

Sentry Safe has always protected valuable assets. Especially its people.

Congratulations to Sentry Safe for winning the Rochester Business Journal's Wealth of Health Award. Together, First Niagara Benefits Consulting and Sentry Safe have worked hard to keep their employees healthy and happy.



First Niagara

Continued from previous page

“Exercising and making healthy food choices help each of us to be more productive and have fewer sick days. Moreover, anyone who exercises finds out they can breathe easier. The bottom line for our company is that everyone benefits,” he says.

—Debbie Waltzer

Mirror Show Management Inc.

In and of itself, a brisk walk through Mirror Show Management Inc.’s massive new 160,000-square-foot facility in Webster will get the heart pumping. If that isn’t enough, then the exhibit company’s 62 employees have numerous other ways to get in shape and stay that way.

When the company moved into its new digs in December, one of CEO and president Donna Shultz’s priorities was to offer an on-site exercise facility for all to use.

In a 1,400-square-foot space, the fitness center includes two treadmills, two elliptical machines and two Air-Dyne bikes as well as free weights, exercise balls and bands, says Tammy Wilkes, human resource and business manager.

Adjacent to the fitness center are men’s and women’s locker rooms and showers, and an exercise class is offered free of charge to all employees every Thursday afternoon. Numerous staff members use the center before and after work and during their lunch hours, Wilkes notes.

“Health and wellness are extremely important to us as a company because the better we feel, the more productive we are on the job,” she adds.

Workplace activities have included health fairs and informational seminars.

In addition, with help from company-provided pedometers (and the promise of an extra day off to the winning team), MSM recently sponsored a walking competition; 45 employees signed up. The goal: Each member of the two teams was to clock at least 10,000 steps per day. Results were “amazing,” Wilkes says.

The men’s team reached 132 percent of its goal, and the women’s team hit 114 percent.

In addition, 15 employees got involved with the company’s Weight Watchers program. During the 10-week program, staffers lost a combined 107.5 pounds. In fact, one employee was so enthused about his personal results with the program that he decided to continue on his own, ultimately shedding 25 pounds.

MSM employees also routinely participate in community-based health and wellness programs such as the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge and the Heart Association Walk.

“These programs are great because they promote wellness and team building, while enabling us to give back to the community,” Wilkes notes.

Managers use positive feedback and incentives to spur health-related activities. Over the years, freebies have included water bottles, pedometers, portion control plates and resource books with tips on nutrition and healthy cooking.

In the near future, MSM plans to purchase exercise software for the fitness center, which will help employees develop specific fitness plans and track their progress against their goals.

Moreover, employees are always encouraged to contribute their ideas about improving the whole team’s health and wellness.

Recently, a new hire took it upon himself to organize a beach volleyball team, with the goal of playing in a league at Hot



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

An on-site fitness facility was a priority in Mirror Show Management Inc.’s new building in Webster.

Shots Indoor Beach Volleyball Center, Wilkes reports.

“These kinds of activities are great because they help with team building and they offer a great way for all of us to get to know our colleagues,” she adds. “By participating, we all benefit.”

—Debbie Waltzer

Roberts Communications Inc.

During wintertime, everyone at Roberts Communications Inc. can sense something different when it’s a Wednesday. That’s because there is a buzz in the air about the evening’s Ski Club

get-together at Bristol Mountain Winter Resort, a part of Roberts’ health and wellness program.

Employees receive discounted ski passes, lessons and equipment rentals.

“Several staffers carpool together after work, meet at the ski lodge, then hit the slopes and have dinner together afterwards,” says Carrie Lewandowski, human resources supervisor.

“And the build-up during the day on Wednesdays is terrific,” she continues. “There’s a different energy on the floors. Ski night gets people really excited—they’re chatting about the night’s weather forecast, making plans. The event definitely lightens the mood.”

Ski club is just one element of the mar-

keting communications firm’s broad health and wellness program offered to its 61 employees, says Lewandowski, who has been with the company for four years.

Five years ago, the firm introduced a program to help its employees stop smoking. The program has worked; while 20 percent of staffers previously smoked, that figure has dropped to just 3 percent.

“Our company is always trying to help our folks become healthier, and we got great feedback about the smoking cessation program,” Lewandowski notes. “Quitting is stressful, but all of the smokers knew that the company and their co-workers were behind them 100 percent.”

Other on-site health and wellness initiatives include annual health screenings to test cholesterol, blood pressure and glucose as well as free annual flu shot clinics. Moreover, eight of Roberts’ employees comprise an in-house team of first responders, who are fully trained to administer first aid and CPR and operate the on-site defibrillator.

The company gets involved with community wellness activities as well. These include participation in Wegmans’ Eat Well Live Well Challenge, the JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge and Junior Achievement’s Bowl-a-Thon.

Also, Roberts pays for more than half of employees’ and spouses/partners’ memberships to a local health club, and staffers are treated to monthly employee lunches featuring healthy food choices served by company executives.

The company infuses plenty of fun into these health-related activities with contests and prizes. Participation in the Eat Well Live Well Challenge is particularly high, with two teams engaged in competition, Lewandowski notes.

“In an effort to keep employees interested in staying healthy, we have continued to participate in the EWLW Challenge each time it has been offered,” she says. “The more often people get to do this challenge, the more sustainable the habits of the program become.”

“Our company’s philosophy centers on the belief that our people are our greatest asset, so we always want to make sure that our folks are healthy and happy.”

—Debbie Waltzer



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Roberts Communications Inc. has a broad range of wellness programs to appeal to different health concerns. Gym memberships and weekly ski outings are especially popular.

ETHANOL

Continued from page 1

Cilion is backed financially by investors who include Sir Richard Branson, head of the Virgin Group of companies, and Vinod Khosia, one of the founders of Sun Microsystems Inc.

The company has been working the past two years with Empire Bio-Fuels LLC, a group of Central New York corn growers and investors, on the Seneca County site. Plans call for a \$115 million ethanol plant at the former Seneca Army Depot that would create 50 full-time jobs upon completion.

Edward Primrose, one of the original investors and a board member of Empire Bio-Fuels, said last week that the board is evaluating its options, but no plans have been finalized.

Cilion was also an investor in an \$80 million plant in Caledonia, Livingston County, expected to employ 35. Leading that effort is Caledonia-based Commodity Resources Corp.

Matthew Cole, director of business development for Commodity Resource Corp. in Caledonia, said Cilion informed the company earlier this year it would no longer pursue an ethanol plant at CRC's site, and there are now no plans to build such a plant on the property.

The two projects were among four targeted for the region, totaling \$288 million and slated to create roughly 150 jobs.

Out of those projects, one has come to fruition. A \$90 million facility in Shelby, Orleans County, started operations in December. The site is to employ 50 workers—with 38 now—and produce 50 million gallons of ethanol annually. The 145-acre site, developed by Western New York Energy LLC, is the first new ethanol plant



File photo courtesy of Western New York Energy LLC
A \$90 million facility in Shelby, Orleans County, started operations in December. The site is to employ 50 workers—with 38 now—and produce 50 million gallons of ethanol annually.

in the Northeast.

The other project does not use corn-based ethanol and still is viewed as a viable project.

Norman Snyder, president and CEO of High Falls Brewing Co LLC, said a \$3 million project to create a research and ethanol production plant from waste at the brewing company is still alive. High Falls and Monroe County are working with Eastman Kodak Co. and Rochester Institute of Technology on technical aspects related to the proposed facility. County officials proposed such a site two years ago, which would produce 300,000 gallons of ethanol annually to help fuel brewery and county vehicles.

Snyder said the type of ethanol conversion plant planned at his company may be a better alternative to corn-based ethanol because it does not affect things such as food prices. The waste used, primarily waste waters containing malt and fermented sugars, has no other use.

Also on the ethanol front, Genencor In-

ternational Inc., a division of Danisco A/S, said earlier this month it had entered a joint venture agreement with E.I. du Pont de Nemours and Co. to form DuPont Danisco Cellulosic Ethanol LLC. Cellulosic ethanol is a blend of normal ethanol that does not use feedstock. Instead, it uses grasses and agricultural waste. Genencor employs some 150 workers in Rochester.

The 50-50 global joint venture, the companies said, plans to develop and commercialize a low-cost technology for the production of cellulosic ethanol, addressing a \$75 billion global market opportunity.

Each partner initially will invest \$70 million for a combined \$140 million in the company over a period of three years, officials said. The investment will fund research and development and pilot plants and set up regional ethanol affiliates.

The first pilot plant is expected to be operational in the United States in 2009 and a commercial scale demonstration facility to be in production by 2012. The impact on Genencor's local site has yet to be determined, company officials said.

James Senall, managing director of business development at Greater Rochester Enterprise Inc., is hopeful GRE can work with Genencor for a local cellulosic ethanol site. He noted the declining interest in corn-to-ethanol production plants is a nationwide problem.

Senall works with leaders of many of the region's alternative-energy projects,

including Cilion, whose staffers used office space at GRE's downtown location.

"Overall the ethanol industry is in quite a state of uncertainty," Senall said.

Touted a few years ago as the answer for a gasoline-dependent nation, ethanol has taken hits recently from opponents who claim the fuel is not as environmentally friendly as originally stated and may be more of a pollutant. The biofuel also has dropped in price as demand grew and the market has become saturated.

Ethanol is an alcohol-derived fuel made from corn, sugar cane and other feedstock. The high-octane fuel features low greenhouse emissions, but it is difficult to transport in pipelines and requires large crop volumes, experts said.

Organizations have released reports claiming the corn-based ethanol process could strain water supplies and the fuel could add to air pollution when mixed with gasoline. Proponents tout biofuel as a way to reduce U.S. dependence on foreign oil and to boost regional economies and spur development. One attraction to the plants, from a financial perspective, is the breaks their builders receive. Ethanol plants in New York receive federal and state assistance.

Senall said the number of corn-to-ethanol plants nearly built across the country and abandoned by investors may be more attractive to companies such as Cilion because the design work and a chunk of the construction have been completed and paid for.

With corn selling at \$6 a bushel, which is twice the price it was when Cilion first showed interest in the local site, the profit has declined sharply.

"Now people are wondering if these projects are feasible," Senall said.

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EAST END

Continued from page 1

to roughly 8,000 square feet. The development, Nolan said, should be occupant-ready by the end of this year.

Nolan's principal job is in industrial supplies at his brother's firm, Spex Precision Machine Technologies LLC. Throughout his career, Nolan has maintained a sideline in real estate, but this project, he said, is by far the most interesting.

"It gives me a chance to do something with impact," he said. "Just about all of the buildings in that area have been bought up and are undergoing some sort of transformation, whether it be cosmetic or a complete change of use. So it's very exciting."

Local firm Grater Architects P.C. developed the design for the project. Nolan said the most significant aesthetic change to the building will be the windows planned for

the facade and central entryway.

The building was too dark, he said, and as commercial space, too large.

"I think there had been a couple of non-profits that occupied it; I think there was a payroll company there in the past," he said. "It turned over a couple of times. Again, I think the size of the building and its use didn't quite match what the market was looking for."

But the market is looking for East End residential space to own, said Gar Lowenguth, local real estate broker and Sagamore on East resident.

"If there's nothing to offer, then there's always demand," he said. "Sagamore is probably the best benchmark. Who would have thought there would be demand for a price point like that?"

Christa Development Corp. developed the 23 luxury condos at a price range of \$400,000 to \$700,000. They sold out in



Rendering courtesy of Grater Architects P.C.
Plans for 250-254 East Ave. include two condominiums, a downstairs artist studio and rooftop terraces.

2006. Since then, two have resold at appreciation rates of 5 percent and 8 percent.

"One sold for \$469,000, and then sold for \$540,000; another one sold for \$482,000 and (then) sold for \$550,000. That would indicate an absorption rate," Lowenguth said.

"It's at the higher end, but there is a good high-end market out there. It is trendy to be downtown, especially (for) the eastern suburban people: Brighton, Pittsford, Penfield, Perinton—downsizers," he said. "The other group that matches them are the 25- to 35-year-olds that are making good incomes and looking to do something different."

The problem is availability, which combined with the limited existing space for potential development, means condo prices likely will remain high, Lowenguth said.

"People want variety of product, and there's just not a lot of it—to say nothing of variety," he said.

To find space in the East End, for now, you have to make your own, and that, Lowenguth said, is going to be done in small pockets. Nolan's project is one example.

"Living downtown was something we wanted to do. We started looking for a house. (This property) looked interesting: We could change the way the area looks," Nolan said. "As it is today, the building isn't the most attractive. The facade is sort of plain. So we had an opportunity to change the neighborhood and have a place that would be great to live."

A few doors down from Nolan's space, another local businessman recently bought property.

In April, Giovanni LiDestri, president and CEO of LiDestri Foods Inc. closed on 230-232 East Avenue for \$375,000. LiDestri did not immediately return calls for comment on his plans for the 5,600-square-foot corner building next to the Little Theatre.

Under its previous ownership, the building was slated to undergo a conversion as a means of adding value. To better market the former recording studio, plans were drawn up for an art deco-inspired design that would add two stories to the building and four upscale condominiums.

Built in the 1920s, the building used to serve as a tire-changing station.

City documents show the property is assessed at \$263,900. Charter Real Estate Brokerage last year was marketing the building for \$495,000, or for lease at \$5,000 a month. Calls to Charter about the fate of the project were not returned.

The biggest challenge to a project, Nolan said, is developing a design that meshes with the neighborhood.

"We're through most of that now. We really feel we have a design that really represents the area and hopefully opens up people's ideas to the fact that even small projects can have an important impact on a neighborhood," he said.

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