

Organizations in the Rochester area are getting serious about promoting wellness, going beyond simply helping employees shed a few pounds or quit smoking.


From fully equipped on-site fitness facilities to financial seminars, employers are pushing for a well-rounded approach to healthy living.

Thirteen local employers will be honored for doing just that. They will receive the 2012 Wealth of Health Awards, presented by Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, Rochester Region, and the Rochester Business Journal. The awards now are in their seventh year.

Honorees were judged on employee involvement in health initiatives, the creativity of these activities to reach specific targets, sustainability of programs and measurable outcomes. They were grouped by size, determined by the number of full-time and part-time employees. A new Best in Show award also will be given this year.

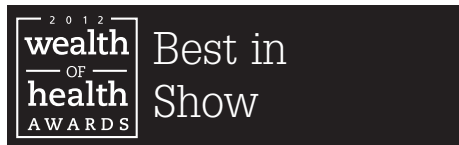
The Wealth of Health Awards luncheon is scheduled for noon to 1:30 p.m. June 14 at the Hyatt Regency Rochester. Rachel Carmen, senior health project coordinator for Well-U at the University of Rochester, will speak.

Inside is a closer look at each honoree's commitment to fostering health.



Healthy habits

Companies help staff develop healthy habits



ESL Federal Credit Union

Healthy employees are happy employees, and happy employees can deliver maximum customer service to clients and members. That is the philosophy behind the comprehensive wellness program at ESL Federal Credit Union, which has earned the distinction of Best in Show for the 2012 Wealth of Health Awards.

ESL employs 499 full-time and 133 part-time workers and serves more than 300,000 members worldwide. The full-service financial institution, with \$4 billion in assets, is based downtown and has 19 branch offices.

Be Well @ ESL has five key components: health screening and benefits, holistic healing alternatives, nutrition, physical activity and stress management.

In 2011, the wellness program offered more than 70 events for employees; more than three-quarters of the staff participated in at least one.

"Our program promotes physical and mental wellness through healthier habits," says Lisa McLaughlin, manager of total rewards for ESL's people and organizational development department, and chairwoman of the 12-member wellness program team. "ESL encourages healthy lifestyles and provides equal opportunities for all employees to develop healthy patterns in their daily lives."

One of the company's most popular of-



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

The star of wellness at ESL is the credit union's 1,800-square-foot fitness center. Sixty percent of employees took at least one fitness class in 2011.

ferings is the 1,800-square-foot fitness center at its Chestnut Street headquarters. Free for use by all employees and open every day from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., the facility includes four treadmills, three elliptical machines, four stationary bikes and various weight machines. An adjoining mirrored room has balance balls and free weights and is the site for fitness classes, offered over lunch and after work.

Sixty percent of ESL employees in 2011 took at least one fitness class, including TurboKick, PiYo, Bootcamp, Cardio Hoop, Power Pilates, Ring Ready and Zumba.

Another popular component of Be Well @ ESL is a daylong health fair in October. Several dozen local vendors are on hand, including benefit providers, chiropractors, holistic practitioners and nutritionists. At the most recent health fair, 135 employees received flu shots, and several more took advantage of biometric and prostate cancer screenings.

In addition, ESL takes part in Excellus' Step Up program and Wegmans' Eat Well, Live Well Challenge, with dual goals of encouraging employees to walk as many steps each day as possible and to consume plenty of fruits and vegetables. The challenge is team-based and lasts eight weeks. Top teams received gift cards, water bottles, towels, pedometers and more.

Smoking is banned on ESL property, McLaughlin says.

"The wellness program encourages employees to develop more awareness about healthy choices so that they can take action and live healthy lifestyles," she says. "As a company, we are trying to maintain our medical premiums, and wellness is one of the ways that we can meet this objective."

—Debbie Waltzer



Bond Financial Network Inc.

Thirteen employees of Bond Financial Network Inc. were quite a sight for their Pittsford village neighbors at lunchtime on Friday, April 20.

"12 Days of Wellness" gifts to one another, including items such as travel-size hand sanitizers and three-pound dumbbells. The company has acquired kitchen equipment to promote healthy eating, such as a hot-air popcorn machine and a George Foreman grill for low-fat food preparation.

In a recent three-month Get Fit Challenge, the winner lost 13 percent of body weight and the second-place finisher dropped 5 percent of body fat. The third-prize winner increased lean body mass by 3.9 percent. All three top winners earned eight hours of paid time off for their hard work and impressive results.

Bond's wellness program is designed to address the following objectives: improve nutrition, weight management and stress management; increase physical activity and employee morale; and serve as a role model to clients wanting to incorporate wellness initiatives into their employee benefits plans.

Bond offers incentives and provides additional contributions to staff members' health savings accounts for participants in a smoking cessation program and those who have healthy levels of glucose, cholesterol, blood pressure and body mass index. Reimbursements are given for certain wellness activities, gym memberships and fitness equipment.

Other fun activities include Olympic-style games at picnics, salsa lessons during the annual holiday party, curling or bowling at the annual meeting, lunchtime walks and healthy breakfast, lunch and snack choices in the kitchen during the busy open-enrollment season.

"All of these activities give everyone the sense that we're part of a team, and they provide a non-intimidating way for staff members to have fun while exercising," says Furer, who has a background in personal training. "Moreover, many of our activities ultimately benefit local charities. Wellness is spoken every day at Bond."

—Debbie Waltzer

Mirror Show Management Inc.

Clever incentives are at the heart of the wellness program at Mirror Show Management, a Webster company that designs

Continued on next page



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Bond Financial Network offers unusual ways for employees to stay active and to make wellness a priority.



Congratulations

to our employees for making strides to Live Well, Work Well!

The Arc is committed to continue to offer health programs for employee wellness!





Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Managers wholeheartedly support the wellness program at Mirror Show Management, which promotes physical activity and incentives for building healthy habits.

Continued from previous page

exhibits and manages trade shows.

Last November, before the company went smoke-free, employees who quit cold turkey for the Great American Smokeout received frozen turkeys for Thanksgiving, along with Nicorette gum and lozenges. Today, only two or three of 49 staff members continue to smoke, says Tammy Wilkes, vice president of human resources.

Tokens redeemable for healthy goodies—gift cards to Dick's Sporting Goods, water bottles, pedometers—go to employees who take part in wellness sessions. Topics during lunch-and-learn sessions include heart health, beat-

ing the sugar blues, homeopathic medicine and healthy eating. At a recent health fair, employees heard about the benefits of ionic detox foot baths, acupuncture, massage therapy and colon hydrotherapy.

Playing off a stress management theme before the holidays last year, Mirror Show brought in two Lancome cosmetics representatives from the Lord & Taylor store in Eastview Mall. They offered facial massages and gift bags of free cosmetics for participants. Turnout was "phenomenal," Wilkes says.

The on-site fitness center helps staffers keep moving. It has elliptical machines, stationery bicycles, treadmills, hand weights, exercise bands, balls and yoga mats. The company offers flexible lunch hours so staffers can get time in the gym. And from November to March, employees can stop work a half-hour early to attend a weekly on-site exercise class led by a personal trainer.

MSM offers flu shots and health screenings. One employee discovered through an at-work health check that he had high blood pressure; he went on medication and started an exercise program to improve his health.

Participation rates in MSM's wellness activities range from 14 percent to 92 percent. Organizers get feedback through regular surveys.

"We try to provide easy access to the wellness program for all our employees," Wilkes says. "The program receives abundant support from top management, and it's a fun, team-building activity that keeps people engaged."

MSM includes a focus on helping others in its wellness offerings. Staff members participate in the Chase Corporate Challenge and hold fundraising and collection drives for the Bivona Child Advocacy Center and the YWCA.

"By giving of your personal financial and time resources, you feel better. And increased happiness on the inside leads to happier and more productive performance on the job," Wilkes says.

—Debbie Waltzer

Partners + Napier

At Partners + Napier, a marketing communications and branding firm, emotional and nutritional wellness are routinely encouraged by long-time employee Ann Gilzow.

Colleagues call Gilzow, the company's front-desk receptionist, the Fun Fairy. That's because the 26-year vet-



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Teamwork and morale play a role in Partners + Napier's wellness program, which is driven entirely by employees.

eran routinely shops for and organizes themed luncheons for 131 local employees. (An additional 21 people work out of an Atlanta office.)

"There's no one like our Fun Fairy," says Zachary Boyce, human resources specialist. "For example, she provided a St. Patrick's Day luncheon complete with sandwiches, wraps, fresh fruit and green cupcakes. Ann is the face of our agency. She's our office mom. She looks out for everybody."

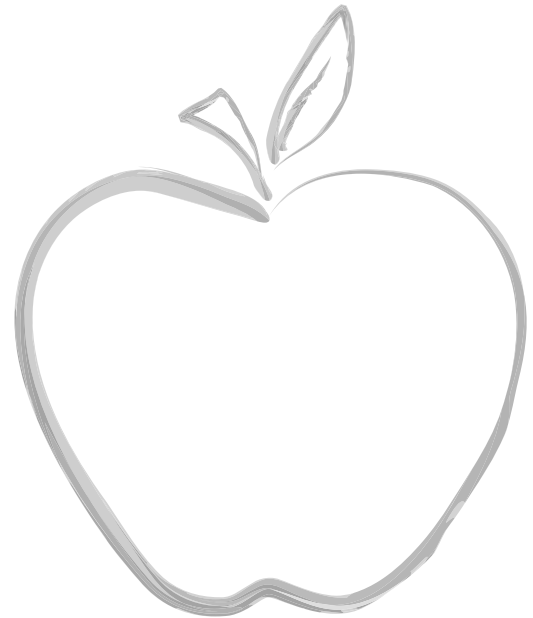
Nurturing body and soul is the philosophy behind the company's comprehensive wellness program, conceived with employee input and feedback by a six-member Well Raisers Committee. Boyce says the group is responsible

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

At Lawley Insurance, ideas to encourage employees to take care of their health range from the stress-busting Laugh Academy to healthy snacks on Tasty Tuesdays.

WEALTH OF HEALTH

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for “identifying healthy lifestyle choices that cut health risk factors and developing programs and opportunities for employees that focus on these healthy lifestyle choices, leading our agency to a happier, healthier and more active workforce.”

Each month the program features a different focus, such as eye care, heart health, stress awareness, healthy aging and fitness. A full 94 percent of employees participated in the company’s biometric health screening this year.

Once a week, the owner of Nomad Yoga teaches an hourlong yoga and meditation class in a lounge at the company’s High Falls office; nearly a dozen staffers routinely take the class. And 10 people took a recent two-day self-defense class taught by a representative from United Martial Arts Center.

In addition, Partners + Napier sets out fresh fruit for employees every day. Lunch-and-learn educational sessions cover myriad topics including weight management, the effects of stress, ergonomic seating and standing accommodations, flu-season awareness and walker/runner training. Wellness challenges are delivered to staff via Chatter, the company’s internal social network.

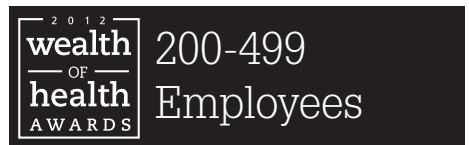
Recently, 11 employees took courses to become certified in CPR, automatic defibrillator use and first aid.

Employees also participate in community events that foster physical wellness while raising funds for important causes. In 2011, 42 individuals took part in the Chase Corporate Challenge and 18 staff members cycled in Bike MS. Still others raised money and health awareness by cycling in the Tour de Cure.

Ideas for future healthy initiatives are in the hands of the people who work at the company, Boyce says.

“The program is entirely employee-driven and -sustainable,” he says. “Wellness activities lead to increased productivity and morale. A work population that is engaged in wellness leads to a happier work environment.”

—Debbie Waltzer



Lawley Insurance

Learning to laugh and handle pressure during stressful situations is important on the job and off, say wellness coordinators at Lawley Insurance.

During Laugh Academy, staff members of the Buffalo-based insurance and benefits firm learn how to lighten up in the face of stress.

“We try to create a healthy work environment for all our employees,” says Cheryl Byrne, human resources manager. “The Laugh Academy helps everyone find a healthy balance of physical, social and emotional well-being.”

Lawley employs 311 people at multiple sites. The Rochester office, known as Lawley Andolina Verdi LLC, has 44 staff members.

Every month, the 20 members of Lawley’s wellness program committee meet via videoconference to brainstorm, she says. One of the ideas they came up with is Tasty Tuesdays; staff can try healthy snacks representing different food groups. Another is Walking Works; the challenge encourages everyone to log at least 10,000 daily steps, measured by a pedometer.

Anecdotal feedback suggests that popular on-site chair massages help reduce stress. Another stress buster: the company’s Target Zero program. Employees were challenged to watch the calories and remain active during the holidays, a stressful time of year for many, with a goal of gaining zero pounds. Nearly 120 staffers participated.

“Everyone weighed in privately, and the program went very well,” Byrne says.

Lawley offers programs on high blood pressure and cholesterol levels, the importance of completing medical screening tests, ways to lower body mass index and strategies for handling tobacco and alcohol addictions. Discounts are offered at a range of fitness centers near employees’ homes.

Overall engagement increased from 165 participants in 2010 to 259 in 2011. In 2011, 57 percent of staff members took part in a health screening program, while 55 percent took the walking challenge and 51 percent took part in a nutrition awareness program.

“LawleyStrong aims to increase engagement to beyond 80 percent in 2012,”

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WEALTH OF HEALTH

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Byrne says. "We will continue to react annually to assessments and customize our programs accordingly. We hope to engage more spouses."

—Debbie Waltzer

Rochester Midland Corp.

Competition is not usually Wendi Thompson-Bellave's thing. Her natural tendency is to duck from any balls thrown her way and shy away from participating on sports teams.

Still, Thompson-Bellave—corporate manager of benefits and wellness for Rochester Midland Corp.—set aside her fears and found her competitive streak as a team captain for the company's two-week Office Olympics last year.

"It was a ball," says Thompson-Bellave, a five-year veteran of the Ogden-based firm, which has been a specialty chemical manufacturer since 1888. The company has 335 employees, 145 of whom are in the Ogden office.

"We called our team the Victorious Angels, and we competed against eight other teams in wellness activities, including doing lunges from one end of the hallway to the other, doing squats at our desks and improving arm muscles by twirling string tied around a doorknob," she explains.

"No, our team didn't win, but we all had a great time and got some good exercise in the process."

The Office Olympics is just one offering from the company's wellness program, which was established a few years ago after Thompson-Bellave and her boss attended a two-day wellness seminar delivered by Relph Benefit Advisors. Ten employees from around the country are members of the wellness committee, and they represent work areas such as sales, customer service and senior management.

The committee is assigned to educate employees and their families about the importance of better health, organize annual biometric screenings and health risk assessments, analyze aggregate data and plan wellness initiatives to address lifestyle risks.

"From the start, we understood that our employees' health is the basis for a positive and successful company," Thompson-Bellave says. "Our goals include reducing medical premiums while increasing our corporate family's well-being and productivity. Wellness programs can help improve employees' lives, both personally and professionally."

In addition to the Office Olympics, Rochester Midland offers a "Gold Star" program that rewards employees for participating in activities such as a physical exam or a biometric screening, regular exercise and smoking cessation. Five stars earn an employee one day off or an extra day's pay.

The company offers classes on stress management, nutrition, weight loss and financial management. When the firm moved its headquarters last year to Ogden, staffers made certain to include an equipped exercise room in the new building.

The wellness program is working. In 2011, more than 80 percent of all employees participated in at least one



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Nearly 30 employees of Sentry Group ran in this year's Chase Corporate Challenge.

aspect of the initiative.

"Our message to employees is straightforward," Thompson-Bellave says. "If you're at the top level of health, then we encourage you to maintain it. And if you're at a low level of health, there is always hope for getting better. First and foremost, put an emphasis on your own life and health. That's most important of all."

—Debbie Waltzer

Sentry Group

Imagine starting the workday with a steaming hot bowl of delicious oatmeal, compliments of your employer.

Of Sentry Group's 435 local employees, roughly 75 participate in the "Oatmeal Challenge" every October with the goal of reducing their cholesterol levels, says Maureen Dempsey-Frazer, benefits manager.

Cholesterol levels are checked at the start and finish of the monthlong program. Employees have been delighted with the results: Several have reported decreased cholesterol levels, while others have maintained their levels. A lucky winner walks away with an oatmeal-themed prize basket.

The program is one of dozens planned by a three-member wellness committee, Dempsey-Frazer says.

"Our main driver, an important part of our corporate culture, is to focus on employees and enable them to be the happiest and healthiest individuals that they can be," she says. "We provide the tools to help them achieve positive results."

The company reaps benefits too; healthy and happy employees are present and productive, "a fact that resonates favorably with our corporate medical costs," she notes.

The company's fitness center includes a cardio room, weight room, aerobics room, racquetball court, full-size swimming pool, spa and sauna. On-site classes are led by certified instructors in Zumba, yoga, spinning and water aerobics.

Use of the center is free to employees and family members. Thirty percent of employees work out in the gym or pool at least three times a week. On Saturdays, employees' children can have birthday parties in the pool.

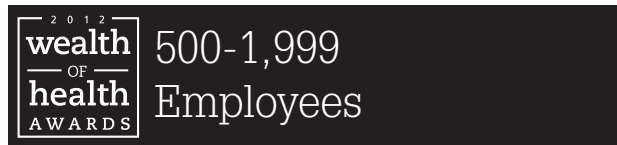
Within six months of the start of the in-house Weight Watchers program, participants shed a collective 600 pounds.

Participation in Sentry Group's Healthy Combinations Wellness Program can yield a \$200 flex credit toward medical premiums.

Enthusiasm for the company's wellness offerings is strong and growing, Dempsey-Frazer says. In 2011, 180 employees participated in at least one wellness program, up from 150 participants in 2006.

"We are trying to make it as easy as possible for employees to live healthy lives," she says. "The mission of our wellness program is to establish a work environment that promotes healthy lifestyles, decreases the risk of disease and enhances the quality of life."

—Debbie Waltzer



Arc of Monroe County

The Arc of Monroe County has found a clever and affordable way to deliver many of its wellness programs to staff members.

Many members of the organization's wellness committee, led by registered dietitian Elissa Strassman, have special talents that they volunteer to share with colleagues. For example, Emily Brown, instructor of an in-house dance troupe, volunteers to lead a stretching and movement class for employees. Tracy Marchese, an employee of the Arc's Job Path program, teaches kickboxing. Liz Sheen, a registered nurse, helped Strassman develop and deliver a four-part stress management workshop. Horticultural specialist Ashley Klaus led a class on container gardening, which enables her students to grow nutritious vegetables and herbs in any location. And Tiffany Bloom, the Arc's director of DeliWorks, guides Strassman on healthy food options for new-hire orientation and training sessions.

The wellness sessions do not incur any expenses for the organization, Strassman says.

"It's hard to provide wellness programs when you're on a limited budget. By volunteering their time and talents, everyone benefits."

The committee has 15 members who explore ways to promote healthy habits among more than 700 employees. Those employees work with 3,500 individuals with developmental disabilities.

With an eye toward promoting healthy eating during the holidays, the wellness committee organized an Eat Well, Live Well Challenge last November. A cooking competition gave participants \$25 gift cards from Wegmans and the assignment to conceive and create a healthy meal for four.

The results were incredible, Strassman notes. Food selections included acorn squash soup, a grilled sandwich with vegetables and chickpeas, baked apple chips with no added sugar or salt, orange-scented green beans, and cupcakes that contained butternut squash puree and applesauce instead of unhealthy oils. Three wellness committee members and one employee's son served as judges.

"Our employees' culinary skills came out of the woodwork," Strassman says. "It was an awesome event—fun, healthy and creative."

The Arc also brings in experts on wellness. A chiropractor spoke on spinal health; heart specialists addressed hypertension and cholesterol concerns; and banking professionals presented tips for healthy money management.

Employee participation rates are high: 70 percent of staff members took part in at least one wellness activity in 2011. Incentives include reduced health care premiums for completion of the health and wellness program, fitness center reimbursements for frequent use and Weight Watchers

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

A new exercise room was a must when Rochester Midland moved into new Ogden headquarters last year.



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Staff members of Arc of Monroe County lead classes in kickboxing, stress management and other healthy pursuits for each other.

Continued from previous page

membership reimbursements for those who stick with it.

The Arc's overarching wellness goal is simple, Strassman says. "We want to reach out and touch everyone's needs within the organization. Our goal is to help employees achieve a healthy mind, body and spirit and attain a good balance of life and work."

—Debbie Waltzer

G.W. Lisk Co. Inc.

Given free memberships at the nearby YMCA, employees of G.W. Lisk Co. Inc. in Clifton Springs walk to the gym during lunch to work out. Others use their memberships at gyms close to home.

"Wellness is important," says safety coordinator David Halton, who was assigned to create the firm's health and wellness program in 2008. "Our company is not getting any smaller. By hiring people who want to be healthier—and helping our current employees become healthier—we can have longer terms here. Healthier people work longer, stronger and smarter."

G.W. Lisk makes industrial solenoids, electromechanical devices used in aerospace and industrial markets. A wellness committee of six coordinates health initiatives for the firm's 550 employees.

Some of the most popular programs focus on losing weight. The most recent challenge involved more than 100 people in an eight-week "The Biggest Loser"-style competition. But even popular programs can need a tweak: Though immediate results were impressive, many people regained lost pounds fairly quickly, Halton says.

The wellness committee took action, launching an eight-week lunch-and-learn class led by a registered dietitian from Clifton Springs Hospital's diabetes care center. She coached participants on how to pick healthy snacks and provided recipes for nutritious, easy meals. Participants are reimbursed for the \$35 class fee if they sustain a portion of their weight loss for six months.

Employees are walking for fitness too. Company challenges recommend walking at least 10,000 steps a day, and roughly 60 people routinely walk outside during work breaks.

"We have plenty of hills and stairs around the plant, so everyone gets a good workout," Halton says.

If the weather drives them indoors, walkers can travel a mile with 11 laps



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

For its employee wellness programs, Ontario County keeps things light with, among other things, popular lunch-and-learns and a weight-loss competition.

around an inside track.

More Lisk wellness offerings: a 10 percent discount on services at Clifton Springs Spa; an intranet site full of tips on nutrition, smoking cessation, family fitness, wellness success stories, area fitness classes and an activities schedule; and annual health fairs featuring screenings for body mass index, blood pressure and cholesterol levels, as well as tables with information on smoking cessation, weight maintenance and the company's employee assistance program.

"Employees encourage one another," Halton says. "They notice a co-worker's weight loss, then ask for tips. Personally, that brings me a lot of joy."

—Debbie Waltzer

Ontario County

From office specialists and corrections officers to nursing assistants and highway engineers, Ontario County works to promote wellness among all 820 full-time and 226 part-time employees.

"Wellness should be in every area of an employee's life—not just personal medical health of the individual and family mem-

bers, but also occupational health and safety," says Mary Krause, director of human resources and chairwoman of the 15-member wellness committee.

The county offers educational programs and activities under the moniker "Choose Health, Ontario!" Lunch-and-learn sessions are particularly popular; many are taught by county staff members with specialized knowledge. For example, public health nurses conduct flu vaccine clinics and breast-screening information sessions. The deputy county clerk led a demonstration seminar on tai chi martial arts. And a deputy sheriff organized and presented a talk on preventing identity theft.

Healthy weight is a significant priority, Krause says. The wellness program has offered help with this goal by running a "Biggest Loser" competition. In 2011, 58 employees lost a total of 1,774 pounds. Prizes served as incentives to those who lost the most weight.

A health milestone was reached last year when the Board of Supervisors passed a law to make all county property tobacco-free. This includes buildings and grounds; in county parks, smoking is banned within 100 feet of playgrounds. Also, a walking path was established at the county's Hopewell campus.

An annual health fair features biometric screenings as well as presentations on topics such as cancer services, martial arts, safety glasses and employee assistance programs.

Data from various programs show positive results for these wellness initiatives. For example, organizers hoped that 25

percent of employees would participate in the flu clinic; turnout was 40 percent. Fifteen individuals participated in a smoking cessation program, and roughly 200 employees took part in the county's health fair. In addition, 49 percent of employees have earned cash back in insurer Excellus' Healthy Rewards program.

The county's wellness program also works to connect employees with community fitness and fundraising activities, such as the Turkey Trot, Chase Corporate Challenge, Rose Walk at Sonnenberg Gardens and an Appalachian Trail event.

"Wellness is at the top of the list for our public-sector workforce," Krause says. "Our goal is to foster physical, mental and emotional health for our employees while realizing the added benefit of controlling health care costs."

—Debbie Waltzer

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Monroe County

Monroe County wants its employees to be physically, emotionally and fiscally fit.

That's a big reason why it co-sponsors Rochester Wellfest, an annual wellness fair at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. Employees of the county, city and Rochester City School District get paid time off and a shuttle ride to check out the daylong gathering of wellness vendors, including nutritionists, massage therapists, chiropractors, and yoga and fitness class teachers.

"The event is always a huge success, thanks to everyone's participation," says Janice Toland, wellness coordinator in the county's human resources department.

Since 2006, Monroe County has of-

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Some 60 employees of G.W. Lisk routinely walk outdoors during their breaks. They can use an indoor track if the weather is uncooperative.

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wealth OF health AWARDS

WEALTH OF HEALTH

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ferred a data-driven wellness program for its 4,600 employees as well as for retirees.

The county launched a key component of its wellness efforts last year when it retained the Greater Rochester Independent Practice Association for the clinical integration program. This connects physicians, hospitals, labs, pharmacies and imaging facilities via electronic access to patient information. As a result of the connectivity, health care providers can help county employees better manage serious or chronic health conditions.

The county offers its workers educational programs on seasonal affective disorder, smoking cessation, gastroesophageal reflux disease awareness, outdoor cooking, coping with holiday stress and other topics.

Employees also participate in the Eat Well, Live Well Challenge; 467 individuals took part during 2011, a 31 percent rise from 357 in 2010.

Concerned with employees' fiscal well-being, the county developed a retirement preparation program that featured presentations by experts on defined-benefit pensions, defined-contribution funds and Social Security. The county also links cash incentives to healthy lifestyles through the HealthyBlue program, which pays a family up to \$1,000 per year for maintaining healthy habits.

Overall, more than 1,500 county employees participated in at least one wellness program during 2011. Toland, who works with colleagues in the human resources department to organize and deliver these programs, also is establishing a wellness committee. She believes that wellness initiatives are critical to the health and safety of any work population.

"We're trying to educate our community members and their families about important issues, such as obesity prevention," Toland says. "An environment that supports wellness yields employees who are happier, healthier and more productive."

—Debbie Waltzer

Unity Health System

Health care workers spend their days and nights trying to make others feel better. Unity Health System works to ensure that its employees are well and healthy themselves.

"Our long-range goal is to have one of the healthiest workforces in the Rochester area," says Maryalice Keller, senior vice president of brand and talent management for Unity. "As a health care provider, we want to model healthy lifestyles for our staff."

Unity's wellness initiative is administered by Renee Elwood, employee wellness coordinator. Unity partners with Fleet Feet Sports and its No Boundaries program, an introduction to walking and running for health. Both novices and experienced athletes take part.

"It's so exciting to see people push themselves," Keller says. "First, they're walking in a 5K event. Then they're



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

More than 1,500 Monroe County employees participated in at least one wellness program last year.

running in a 5K. Next they're moving up to a 10K, then a half-marathon, then a full marathon. Their dedication is inspiring."

Unity also challenges employees to watch what they eat. More than 1,000 employees participated in the Eat Well, Live Well Challenge in 2011, with nearly 50 teams of co-workers and friends across the health system. Unity issued punch cards to track fruit and vegetable purchases in the cafeteria. Ten servings earned a free meal. Unity also reimbursed registration for a vegan cooking class offered to employees.

In-house experts also spread health messages. For example, staff pulmonologists and respiratory therapists delivered an eight-session program called Freedom from Smoking. In small groups, participants learned about medications that can help them quit as well as stress management tips and ideas for avoiding weight gain while quitting. Registration was covered for participants who attended all eight sessions.

Employees who want to squeeze a workout into the day requested an on-site gym, but with 70 locations, Unity came up with a different solution: Rochester Athletic Club instructors travel to Unity sites and deliver yoga classes, stress reduction programs, Zumba classes and Weight Watchers programs.

"We've got classes going on during the lunch hour and at the end of the work day, which makes it easy for our staff to participate," Keller says.

Involvement in employee wellness programs is high. Sixty-three percent of Unity's 5,435 staff members participated in at least one program during 2011. To spread the word, Unity's Thrive Ambassador program relies on 50 employees to serve as liaisons from the wellness program to their colleagues in all areas of the organization.

"Everyone inspires everyone else," Keller says. "If our wellness program can help our staff move the needle on their personal goals, then we're thrilled."

—Debbie Waltzer

Verizon Wireless

Everything is abloom at the Calkins Road location of Verizon Wireless Inc., thanks to the company's gardening club.

The club is a wellness offering at the telecommunications provider. Thirteen of the 1,100 local employees—some with greener thumbs than others—have created a flower garden on the Henrietta campus, says Sarah Morgan, health and wellness coordinator.

"They got a little plot of land at the front of the building, maybe 20 feet by 20 feet, started digging and planting, and now we have a beautiful garden," Morgan says.

The display is eye-pleasing, and the activity of watering and weeding promotes physical and emotional health and team-building, she adds.

Wellness permeates Verizon Wireless. Employees flock to the on-site fitness center, a 2,500-square-foot facility loaded with exercise equipment. Staff members pay only \$15 a year for an unlimited membership. Features include personal training sessions, nutrition counseling

and fitness classes, such as Pilates, yoga, boot camp, abs training and judo. It is open and staffed weekdays from 6 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Lunch-and-learn sessions also are a big hit with staffers. Recent topics have included goal setting, combating heart disease, ergonomics, restful sleep and family fitness.

When the crew gets hungry, an on-site cafe delivers tasty and healthy items such as quinoa and bean salad, cottage cheese and yogurt. Every week, the cafe's chef manager dishes up healthy entrees and provides tasting samples. Staff members celebrated NFL Football Fridays over lunch by viewing football movies while sampling healthy tailgate recipes provided by the health and wellness center staff.

Verizon on the Go is a popular walking and running club meant to promote fitness during the workday and after hours. Participants clock their running and walking distances, and prizes are awarded for reaching goals.

These initiatives—and many more—are working, Morgan reports. Productive units of blood gleaned from a quarterly drive climbed from 52 during 2009 to 247 in 2011. Participation in health and wellness center activities rose from 30 percent of all employees in 2009 to 36 percent in 2011.

Striving for a healthy lifestyle permeates the culture at Verizon. "It's not all about weight loss. It's about getting up and moving throughout the day," Morgan says. "Our goal is to keep wellness activities fun and creative."

—Debbie Waltzer



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Unity Health System's long-range goal is to have one of the healthiest workforces in the Rochester area.



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Flowers now bloom at Verizon Wireless in a garden planted by members of the gardening club. Fresh air, teamwork and physical activity are bonuses.



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Senior Health Project Coordinator, Well-U, University of Rochester

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