

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

INSIDE

15 SOME CLEVELAND-AREA COMPANIES ARE OUT TO PROVE THAT IT'S POSSIBLE TO EAT RIGHT AT WORK.



JANET CENTURY PHOTOS

Diana Strongosky, a vice president of research and development in Sherwin-Williams' paint coatings division, said she exercises every day at lunch. With small children at home, Ms. Strongosky said exercising at that time is a good way for her to stay fit.

Programs' effectiveness now easier to measure

ROI tracking methods become more prevalent

By JAY MILLER
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It's taken the better part of 25 years, from the earliest employee fitness centers, but businesses and insurance companies have started to embrace wellness programs as investments with returns, says Shanna Dunbar, an occupational health nurse.

The reason, explained Diane Shields, vice president for human resources for Elyria-based Bendix Commercial Vehicle Systems LLC, is simple: "We're starting to get better results."

It doesn't require a degree in occupational health or medicine to understand that some lifestyle choices incur higher medical costs than others.

However, measuring the return on investment for programs that encourage better health decisions has not been easy to achieve.

Ms. Dunbar, who has a Strongsville-based private practice, Workplace Health Inc., said a reduction in a company's health care costs is "the be-all, end-all, but it can take five to 10 years to see it, so that's not a good thing to look at and measure year after year."

Over the last few years, however, better methods have been developed to gather data for employers in such a way that protects employee privacy while still satisfying the bean counter.

"Employers have been indicating they've been interested in these programs for five or six years," said Christopher Herbruck, area senior vice president for the Cleveland office of Gallagher Benefit Services.

"Six years ago you had some employers who said, 'Yeah, this makes sense, let's get started.' But some said, 'This is malarkey, you can't measure return on investment; we're not going to do anything.'"

"But now those metrics have been established; and that's changed attitudes. Now, they're saying, 'Hmm, this makes sense,'" he said.

At Bendix, which started its wellness program more than a decade ago, the results are dramatic. "Directionally, we've seen a 10%

HERE AND HEALTHY

Employers adopting exercise into culture in hopes of more productive workers

By DAN SHINGLER
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Football and pingpong tables might be popular among the high-tech development crowd, but some organizations around Northeast Ohio want to give their employees a better workout than that.

Their goal, though, is largely the same. They want to attract and keep the best and brightest employees and keep them healthy and productive once they're aboard.

Of course, the Northeast climate almost requires that companies here provide a few more ways to stretch and work muscles indoors than is needed in sunny Silicon Valley, but the results of giving employees a chance to move around is the same, they say.

"We believe that people who exercise and work out are more productive," said Renee Barrett, who for 12 years has served as the fitness director for the NASA Glenn Research Center in Brook Park.



Sherwin-Williams' fitness center members can work out on their own or sign up for classes in yoga, kickboxing, aerobics or other group activities.

You might expect an outfit that employs astronauts to see the value in having their employees stay in shape. And you would be correct. Not only does NASA maintain an indoor fitness center, ball fields and running track at its facility near Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, but every major NASA center has some sort of exercise facility, Ms. Barrett said.

Usually, between 175 and 200 people use the Cleveland-area fitness center each day, she said.

But companies with lawyers, product developers, accountants, marketing professionals and other more run-of-the-mill workers share NASA's belief that both an organization and its employees benefit when exercise is readily available at the workplace.

Let's get physical

Sherwin-Williams' downtown fitness center rivals what its employees could access if they joined a nice health club. More than 50 modern exercise machines dominate the center's 10,000 square feet of space — where members can either work out on their own or sign up for classes in yoga, kickboxing, aerobics or some other group activity.

Permanent lockers are available to gym members — who pay \$300 a year to use the facility — but they must keep coming regularly to keep their storage space, as there always is a waiting list, said Sherwin-Williams' senior fitness specialist, Vicki Barone.

Like NASA, Sherwin-Williams believes the center keeps its employees healthier and more productive than they would be otherwise.

Having employees pay something to use the facility — about \$15 per paycheck — results in employees

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Measure: Employees become more accepting

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(lowering) of cholesterol levels (among employees) since 2008," Ms. Shields said. "Now we're focusing on hypertension."

The Bendix employee wellness program, which started with a fitness center, now also includes weight management, tobacco cessation, stress management and a variety of early detection efforts, including annual physicals. Bendix employs 460 people in Flyria and 1,200 worldwide.

Ms. Shields said 60% of Bendix employees participate in the wellness program and that percentage continues to grow.

On the corporate side, the company is seeing the fruits of its efforts. "Our average (health care) cost per employee is 20% less (because of the program) on a cost-per-employee basis," Ms. Shields said.

By the numbers

A 2010 survey by Gallagher Benefit Services — it was then called Herbruck Alder — found that of 160 companies surveyed, 30% had comprehensive wellness programs, up from 23% a year earlier.

In addition, 25% were developing programs and another 49% said they intended to start a wellness program in the near future.

The programs are gaining acceptance because employees and employers are seeing the value and making concessions.

Employees are accepting the idea of allowing an outside third party to gather medical information and report that information in aggregate to their employers in exchange for incentives and even some savings.

In turn, business owners and their insurance companies are translating that medical information into a variety of savings for the companies and their employees.

Early on, management may see fewer days lost for sickness or health reasons. As the programs

build they see a reduction in the use of medical services that can translate into lower health care costs.

Varbros LLC, a metal stamper in Brook Park with 105 employees, uses five of the most common measurements to benchmark its employee wellness, said George Drapcho, a floor supervisor and the company's wellness leader.

Those five are smoking cessation, measurable reductions in blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol levels, and a reduction in body mass index, a relationship between height and weight.

The carrots

To lure employees into wellness programs companies offer workers incentives. Initially, at companies such as Varbros that have young programs, employees may only get gym bags or water bottles. Eventually, however, they are seeing their share of their medical costs reduced.

Mr. Drapcho said nearly 90% of Varbros employees participate in the wellness program. At Bendix, employees who make headway in the wellness program see their out-of-pocket cost for their health care benefits discounted.

In another example, United-Healthcare, a leading health insurance company, offers a program called Vital Measures that has the effect of pushing wellness.

If employees select a high-deductible medical plan, they can choose to take a wellness screening to see if they meet the specific targets for body mass index, cholesterol and blood pressure. It also takes note of whether the employee smokes.

Employees can get a \$500 credit off their deductibles for each target met, up to \$2,000.

Because the plans carry high deductibles, employers can save up to 20% on their current plans, lowering the out-of-pocket cost for employers and workers needing health insurance. ■

WORKOUT WARRIORS

BLONDIE HINTON

Administrative assistant
Sherwin-Williams/Remediation Services

Blondie Hinton has worked at Sherwin-Williams for 36 years, which is by far most of her life — and for most of that time she's been a member of the company's gym. More than a member, she's been a regular, she says.



In her first 12 years at the company, she was a couch potato by night and a sidewalk smoker by day.

Now she has kicked the habit

and is a runner of marathons and regular user of the company's exercise machines — especially the treadmills.

"Me, I use it twice a day," she says of the company's downtown fitness center, which she hits at about 5:30 a.m. and again at noon most days.

Ms. Hinton says she's a changed woman as a result of the center — thin, fit and confident.

She said she doesn't know if she would have done it, had her company not encouraged and enabled her to work out.

After all, she didn't before, she points out.

JOHN DI CHIRO
Master craftsman
GraffTech International



John Di Chiro has worked for Parma-based GraffTech for more than 36 years, but recently he's been breaking a sweat a little more often than in the past.

And that's a good thing, he says, because he's lost more than 30 pounds and has picked up the habit of exercising regularly.

"It's so convenient and of course, free," he said. "Working out is a

routine part of my workday. On the days that I don't exercise at GraffTech, I'll walk four miles outside near my house or at the mall."

He does cardio and strength training five to six days a week, usually at the end of his workday — taking advantage of the fitness center's showers before heading home.

He says he's happier, sleeps better and feels less stress because of the workouts. He does have at least one regret, though.

"I wish I had started 20 years ago," he said.

NICHOLAS GEORGIADIS
Aerospace engineer
NASA Glenn Research Center



You don't have to be a rocket scientist to figure out that watching what you eat and exercising will

drop your weight and improve your health. But if you were a rocket scientist, that's probably the conclusion you would reach — just like NASA's Nicholas Georgiadis.

Mr. Georgiadis, an aerospace engineer at Cleveland's NASA Glenn Research Center, says he's been a member of the fitness center for all of the 21 years he has worked at the facility, but stepped up his usage early this year when he entered a team weight-loss competition at NASA. He lost about 30 pounds and dramatically reduced

his body fat percentage, he said.

He usually exercises at lunch, he said, and uses one of the stationary bikes for his cardio. "But it's not just for the biking — it clears my head," he said.

Apparently, even if you are thinking about complex scientific stuff, a little exercise can help the thinking process.

He has belonged to other gyms, but with two kids and a very engaging job, it would be tough to find time to work out outside of office hours, he said.

"If you took this place away, certainly a lot of the people who come here would exercise less," he said.

And that would lead to a rocket scientist's worst fear — larger and larger payloads to get into space. ■

Healthy: Companies see lower care costs

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being more serious and sticking to their exercise plans, Ms. Barone said. The fee hasn't stopped 700 employees from joining the center, which is still seen as a company-provided benefit since it's less expensive than most health clubs would be.

"A lot of managers, in their interviews (of new hires) will bring people down — it's definitely a selling feature," Ms. Barone said.

Employees even ask for the benefit specifically, say some companies. Take GraffTech International in Parma, for example. In 2007, the producer of graphite electrodes and other carbon-based products started asking employees what they would appreciate most

in terms of "soft benefits" the company could provide.

"Probably 80% of the responses we got back were based around having some more health and wellness types of offerings," said Tracy Albers, the company's external interactions manager.

That included a fitness center — and today the company has one. It occupies about 3,000 feet of space that used to just house unused equipment and office furnishings, Ms. Albers said. Today, it houses more than 60 pieces of exercise equipment alongside space for yoga and aerobics classes.

No pain, no gain

The cost of these facilities is not

cheap, but companies say the return on investment makes it worth the money. A typical facility with 40 or more pieces of commercial-grade equipment easily can cost six figures, companies say.

"But some studies say the return on investment is about three to one," in terms of things like productivity gains and reduced health care costs, Ms. Albers said.

GraffTech, already has seen a decrease in its health care costs since it implemented both the fitness center and an overall wellness program that helps employees through programs such as smoking cessation and weight management.

"We've already seen some benefits. If you look at our health care costs for 2010 versus 2009, we had a decline of 20%," Ms. Albers said.

Sherwin-Williams also credits its fitness centers and wellness programs with helping it lower health care costs — and, like GraffTech, it says the two programs go hand in hand.

The company has been able to keep its health care costs below national averages since adopting a more proactive approach to employee health and fitness, said Sherwin-Williams spokesman Mike Conway.

That's one reason that, since it opened its first fitness center in Cleveland in 1987, Sherwin-Williams has opened 10 others at facilities around the world — including some with soccer fields in Mexico and badminton intramurals at a facility in China. ■

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HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Healthy workplace eating attainable, some firms prove

Health care systems lead way in showing options are available

By **CHRISSEY KADLECK**
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The workplace can be an edible minefield of temptation: A co-worker's birthday cake in the conference room, leftovers from a graduation party in the lunch room or a bowl of fun-size candy bars calling out from a nearby desk.

Without a doubt, it can be tough to navigate the amount of calorie-laden treats that are deposited and donated for community consumption at the office to celebrate just about any occasion.

And even though nutrition and work aren't the most likely companions, it's not impossible to make smart decisions during the daily grind, according to nutritionists and health-conscious employers around Northeast Ohio.

Take Donley's Inc., a design/build and construction management firm in Cleveland, which has been partnering with Blue Sky Green Fields since February to deliver fresh produce directly to its employees during the work week.

Katie McClain, wellness coordinator at Donley's, said she heard of Blue Sky Green Fields from the Wellness Council of Northeast Ohio and was interested in the company's farmers market produce available via online shopping and group delivery.

"Every single one of my employees that has gone through the service has said just how amazing the produce is," said Ms. McClain, adding that her company has a base of five to 10 employees who order every week in addition to other employees who order at various times throughout the month. "I'll also order a box of fruit just to keep in our kitchen for our employees to have as well."

Ms. McClain said employees are able to go online and create their own order and pay for everything with no risk to the company. The items are delivered every Wednesday afternoon.

"I have definitely seen an increase in the number of fruits and vegetables that are in our community fridge," she said. "You see just really colorful breakfasts and people walking through the halls with their produce. And Blue Sky's prices are very comparable to organic and even conventional items at Giant Eagle."

Indeed, more corporations are looking toward promoting better eating because nutrition plays such a huge role in the health of their workers, said Vicki LaGanke, an outpatient dietician at MetroHealth Medical Center.

"You're talking about sick time,



RUGGERO FATICA

Katie McClain, wellness coordinator at Cleveland design/build and construction company Donley's Inc., organizes weekly produce deliveries from Blue Sky Green Fields.

down time and productivity, and nutrition plays a huge role in all of that," Ms. LaGanke said.

Walking the walk

Not surprisingly, the area's health care systems have been among the employers leading the charge in providing healthy food in the workplace.

The Cleveland Clinic, well-known for such initiatives, has made it very inconvenient to eat unhealthy foods, said Amy Jamieson-Petonic, director of wellness coaching for the health system.

Cleveland Clinic dietitians and wellness experts even developed GO! Foods, which are designated by a special green label. The foods meet nutritional criteria and contain minimal saturated fats, added sugars and sodium, no trans fats and are 100% whole grain, when applicable.

"The GO! Foods are available in our cafeterias, catering and vending machines," Ms. Jamieson-Petonic said. "We also trying to create a 'culture of wellness' for our employees, patients and visitors, and GO! Foods are also available at Heinen's and Buehler's grocery stores, so that folks can identify healthy foods quickly."

MetroHealth also has made significant changes to offerings in its cafeteria, which serves an average of 2,000 people a day.

"In the last year we started a program called 'A Good Choice for a Healthier You,' which features a complete meal every day that is low fat, low sodium and lower calories," said Tony Sfiligoj, director of food and nutrition services at MetroHealth, which in 2003 was ahead of the curve in going trans-

fat free.

"It's gone over very well," he said. "We have incorporated a lot more whole grains in our offerings such as barley pilaf, wild rice, brown rice, and we offer vegetarian and vegan options every day."

MetroHealth no longer sells candy bars, fountain drinks or regular chips. (It does offer the baked variety.) The health system also has reconfigured coolers so people are encouraged to make better selections.

"We used a strategy like how supermarkets market their items. We greatly reduced the percentage of sugared drinks and put those at the bottom of the coolers, and what you see at eye level is all the healthier options ... the SoBe Lifewaters, Diet Pepsi, healthier juices and water," he said.

"We are not trying to take peoples' choices away, but we're trying to educate them about healthier choices," Mr. Sfiligoj said. "It's kind of like smoking. It took years for that to change, and I think it's going to take years for people to make healthier choices but we see it happening already."

Not impossible

Kim Horvath, a registered dietitian with EMH Regional Healthcare System, said many workplaces also are offering healthier snacks in vending machines, such as peanuts, yogurt, fruit cups and low-fat granola bars.

"It can be hard to eat healthy at work because often people bring foods they are trying to get rid of from home," Ms. Horvath said. "If you're trying to watch your diet, allow yourself a couple of days a month to eat something that

someone brings in to the office in small portions."

Other strategies include tucking healthy snacks in your desk or locker so you're less tempted. And make sure you eat a well-balanced breakfast and lunch, Ms. Horvath said.

FOOD INSPIRATION

Here are some ideas for quick, easy and healthy packed lunches:

- 100% whole grain pita and hummus with a piece of fruit and low-fat milk or soy milk.
- Spinach and romaine salad with grilled chicken breast with lots of veggies drizzled with extra virgin olive oil dressing and balsamic vinegar, whole grain crackers and natural peanut butter and yogurt with fresh fruit pieces.
- Whole grain pasta salad with low-calorie Italian dressing with frozen mango chunks for something different.
- Low-fat/low-salt lunch meat on whole wheat bread or whole wheat wrap.
- If you cook healthy at home, you always can cook extra at meal times and pack leftovers for lunches throughout the week.

SOURCES: AMY JAMIESON-PETONIC, VICKI LAGANKE

"Probably the most important thing is if you are a person who is trying to eat healthy, you have to plan ahead. It's not going to happen on its own," Ms. LaGanke said. "If there is a lot of food around (the office) you want to make sure to pack your own food. It's always 10 times harder to say no to something if you're hungry." ■



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