

Leadership Involved in Center's Healthy Initiatives

Initiative in Brief

Many worksites find it difficult to get management representation on their wellness committee, but that was not the case for the Juvenile Assessment Center. Its management fully supported the wellness initiative, and five of its six wellness committee members are managers. They even unveiled the wellness program at an all staff meeting!

The first activity planned by the wellness committee was participation in the local American Cancer Society's *Relay for Life*. The Center's employees raised \$1,000 for the cause, and 35 staff, family, and friends participated on Team JAC. In October 2007, the Center will take part in the *Making Strides Against Breast Cancer* walk. The wellness committee also invited staff from a local fitness facility to do a presentation to all of the employees, and ten joined the facility. One of the employees lost 30 pounds since she joined the gym and increased her physical activity level.

Another activity that saw good participation was an employee movie night. The wellness committee served healthy snacks and showed the movie *Super-Size Me*. To compliment the employees' heightened awareness of proper nutrition, the Center changed some of the items in their vending machines to provide healthier options. They switched from fried potato chips to baked chips and candy to nut mix. They also added vitamin water and green tea. At staff meetings they now have healthy choices; instead of pizza they offer pita wrap sandwiches and a veggie tray.

Future plans for the wellness program includes creating a place for employees to exercise onsite. They have already identified a space within the building, and some equipment has already been donated.

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Benefits

Noted benefits of the program are:

- Employees went above and beyond what had been asked of them because they believed in what they were doing, even with their busy work schedules.
- Co-workers encouraged one another and celebrated each other's successes.
- Employees came up with good ideas for wellness activities.

"We have one person who lost 30 pounds already, and we have a person who . . . [is] losing weight (40 pounds) by biking after work. He's getting a lot of encouragement from us. "

Sallie Smith-Brown
Chief Operating Officer
Juvenile Assessment Center

Lessons Learned

- Get all levels of staff involved; do not think that it has to be done only by management.
- Recognize those who come forward with suggestions.
- Share wellness information with everyone, even those that aren't currently participating. Do not give up on them!

Cost: Lunch for kick-off for all staff, *Relay for Life* \$500
Risk Factor: Physical inactivity, overweight, poor nutrition
Impact/Reach: 85
Business/Sector: Human Service/Non-profit