



Best Practices

THE MOST CREATIVE CORPORATE WELLNESS PROGRAMS OF OUR TIMES

THE WELLNESS COUNCILS

have been evaluating and commending great wellness programs for many years through our Well Workplace awards. In this monthly series, exclusive to Wellness Council members, we'll tell you about some of the best, most innovative wellness programs around. We hope to inspire you to create a healthier work environment for your company—and perhaps apply for an award yourselves.

In this issue, we take a look at Sherman Health Systems.



Is your company a healthy workplace? If your company would like to see how it measures up to the standards established by the Wellness Councils of America, contact our organization for information on how to apply for a Well Workplace Award.

Best Practices is a monthly benefit of membership to the Wellness Councils of America, Wellness Councils of Canada, and our locally affiliated councils.

COMPANY PROFILE:

Sherman Health Systems

In an average year at Sherman Health Systems (SHS), more than 600 open-heart surgeries will be performed, nearly 40,000 patients will be treated within their emergency department, 11,000 surgical procedures will occur, and some 2,000 babies will enter the world.

One would think that this alone is sufficient for one organization's promotion of health and wellness. Sherman however feels differently. In fact, they have devoted substantial resources to the development of a wellness initiative that reaches people. And these people are not exclusively hospital personnel. Rather, their wellness reach extends to the whole community—a community for which they've taken responsibility.

SHS... FOR THE PEOPLE

SHS serves a large regional area. They have been recognized for their centers of excellence in the specialty areas of cardiology, cancer, diabetes, women's services, and orthopedics. The anchor of the health system, Sherman Hospital is one of the largest medical facilities in the Chicago northwest suburbs.

In 1997, primary and secondary service areas included a total population of 842,589 individuals. The system has 2,200 employed associates, including physicians, professional and technical health care personnel, and administrative, service, and support staff. The dedication of SHS in meeting community health and wellness needs is demonstrated through the partnerships they have built with local and national

organizations. These partnerships allow Sherman to provide cutting edge services and programs to the employees and the community they have adopted.

100 YEARS OF HISTORY

The hospital was founded more than 100 years ago by the Elgin Woman's Club as a healthcare provider for the growing town of Elgin. Then, and now, Sherman's mission was to provide needed services to the community.

Today, Sherman Health Systems' outreach into the community extends to area facilities such as park districts and nursing homes, where wellness clinics are offered to provide community residents with a variety of preventive and educational programs. Seniors participate in exercise programs, nutrition screenings, informational seminars and

clinics designed to teach them how to better care for their health.

In the early 1990's, Sherman began to support prevention and wellness for its employees. SHS employee benefit costs had been rising at unprecedented rates, putting the organization at a significant, competitive disadvantage in the market place. It was at this point that the decision was made to establish a personal commitment and partnership with employees in a fully integrated, risk management model. This risk management model would link employee health and wellness, recognize whole person well-being, and promote interdependency.

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"We are excited about our progress to date. Excited about the financial strides our program has made, and excited about our program's impact on the health and well-being of our employees and community."

—Jim Novak, VP of Human Resources
Sherman Health Systems

A BETTER ORGANIZATION

Efforts such as these are examples of the ingenuity and determination present at Sherman Health Systems. Their diverse list of employee programs and services proves their attention and dedication to their employees and the community. These efforts have not gone unnoticed. Not only has the organization received awards for their excellence in wellness programming, but they have also reduced their benefits costs substantially. When taken together, it's clear that Sherman Health Systems has demonstrated the value of aligning employee and organizational needs. They are truly one of America's Healthiest Companies.

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WELLNESS AT SHERMAN

Improving the health of the community starts with improving the health of SHS employees. SHS believes that the physical, mental, and financial health of employees impacts productivity and effectiveness at work. That is why Sherman's proactive benefits program for its employees was recently awarded the 1999 National Best Practice Award given by the American Society for Healthcare Human Resources Administrators, and the Gold Well Workplace Award given by Wellness Councils of America in 1999.

EMPLOYEE SERVICES

Sherman's employee benefits program is based on the philosophy "healthy people make healthy organizations." Investments in health prevention programs are a direct effort to ensure the first half of this philosophy—health people. The following list of employee services demonstrates some examples of this dedication to the people.

Baby benefits. Baby Benefits is a free pre-natal program for expectant mothers. Participants receive educational materials, ongoing support through regular contact with a Baby Benefits nurse, and a personalized polar fleece baby blanket.

Career pathways. The Career Development Center at the Sherman Health Resource Center can help with professional growth enhancement. This aspect of the SHS program is truly unique and is featured in greater detail later in this article.

Employee assistance program. Sherman's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provides counselors who offer personal and private assessment and referral services for a wide range of concerns. These include family, marital, emotional, work related, legal, financial, substance abuse, and home health care issues.

Employee health fair. Twice a year, the Human Resources Department sponsors an "Employee Fun & Fitness Fair" for employees and their families. The event features a variety of free health screenings and immunizations as well as computerized wellness profiles, demonstrations, information, and prizes.

Fitness center subsidy. Sherman employees are eligible for discounted corporate rates at several local fitness facilities. Participants are encouraged to join the club that's most convenient and "right" for them.

Home based child care. Sherman employees in need of daycare for their children may call the Home Based Care Corporation (HBCC). HBCC is a not-for-profit corporation created by Sherman Health Systems, designated as an Illinois

Department of Children and Family Services licensing agency.

Monthly seminars. Free classes on topics such as CPR, cholesterol, stress, and blood pressure are offered on a monthly basis.

Self care guide. This free guide helps employees make informed choices about their health by providing information about health insurance, choosing a doctor, medical testing, first aid, and common health problems.

Smoking cessation. Sherman Health Systems' free smoking cessation program can help you determine if you are ready to quit and then help you do it.

KEYING IN ON CAREER PATHWAYS

If you want to examine a truly unique aspect of the SHS program, this is it. Sherman has long believed that a personal career self-management plan is essential for their employee base. Such a plan provides for personal development and delivers performance strategies critical for maintaining personal and professional relevance in today's marketplace.

Employees have access to computers with current software and internet access, management training information, books, audiotapes, and videos. The place to be for professional growth and career enhancement is, without question, the Career Development Center at Sherman.

Organizations must rely on their human capital to keep current with fast changing market dynamics. Conversely, today's workforce requires opportunities for growth and development through both education and meaningful job assignments.

Career Pathways consists of a 5-hour workshop followed by one or more sessions with a career counselor where each participant develops his/her own personal career action plan. The counselor works with each person individually to determine what, if any, assessments will be helpful in preparing their career action plan. Many of those attending are eligible for significant tuition reimbursement.

To date, over 300 people have completed the Career Pathways program. As a result of focus groups designed to improve the program, new additions to Career Pathways have been made. Some of these features include more internal assessments, an external mentoring program, and a manager's only program that highlights not only the benefits to the manager, but also how to include his/her employees in the program. New additions are common at Sherman and will remain common as their program continues to grow.

For more information contact the Wellness Councils of America or your locally affiliated Wellness Council.