

**Well Workplace Award  
Executive Summary**

**ARAG North America, Inc.  
Gold Recertification Award**

Information in this publication is carefully reviewed for accuracy. Questions, comments, or ideas are welcome. Please direct to Dr. David Hunnicutt, Executive Editor, at the address below.

Information may not be reproduced, copied, cited, or circulated in any printed or electronic form without written permission from the publisher. ©2004 Wellness Councils of America, 9802 Nicholas Street, Suite 315, Omaha, NE 68114; Phone: (402) 827-3590; Fax: (402)827-3594; visit our website at [www.welcoa.org](http://www.welcoa.org).

All rights reserved. Information contained in this document was accurate at the time the award was designated. Due to changing business environments information is subject to change without notification.



**WELLNESS COUNCILS  
OF AMERICA**

©2004

## General Information

### WELL WORKPLACE

Gold Application

---

#### Basic Information

Name of Organization ARAG North America, Inc.

Address of Organization

Council Affiliation Central Iowa

Contact Person Cindy Wubben

Title Human Resource Consultant

Work Telephone

Fax Number

E-Mail Address

Alternate Contact Kirk Trow : HR Manager

Parent Organization ARAG North America, Inc. : Germany

Number of Sites Covered by this Application One

Number of Employees Covered by this Application 110

Nature of Business or Industry Legal Insurance

Name of CEO Mike Retherford is responsible for site applying for award

Date of Application June 2004

## **“Preface”**

In 1973, Midwest Mutual Insurance Company created a department whose purpose was to create, market and administer group legal insurance plans. Seven years later, this department was established as a separate company known as Midwest Legal Services. In 1989, Midwest Legal Services was purchased by ARAG Insurance Company- an American subsidiary of ARAG Germany. Jim Brennan is the CEO and President of ARAG North America, Inc. which has just over 130 associates. With Jim’s direction and concern for his workforce, ARAG North America has been awarded the following Well Workplace designations, 1998: bronze, 1999: silver, and 2001: gold.

The Wellness Committee began in 1995 as an initiative of ARAG North America President, Jim Brennan who is a strong promoter of healthy lifestyles. Mr. Brennan believes that total wellness can only be achieved by focusing on the wellness of the mind, the body and the spirit. It was Mr. Brennan who recommended that ARAG North America seek membership in the Central Iowa Wellness Council. This led to the development of the Wellness Committee – a permanent company team whose purpose is to create and implement wellness initiatives. The purpose and/or function of the team is to enhance and develop the minds, bodies and spirits of ARAG North America’s associates by promoting healthy lifestyles and providing helpful tools.

The organization’s vision is “to be globally known for providing clear solutions in a complicated world.” The mission is “to protect people’s rights and assets.” The vision of the Wellness Committee is “to make wellness a top priority for the company as a

whole.” The mission is “to provide employees of the organization with the resources necessary to obtain the highest level of wellness they choose to achieve.”

The Wellness Committee is housed in the Human Resource department since that is the department responsible for the encouragement of growth and development of the associate. The Human Resource department reports to the Chief Operations Officer who reports directly to the President of the organization.

An important element in ARAG North America’s organizational structure is the use of teams. Teams provide the opportunity to create a synergistic environment where people can accomplish more together than they could acting as individuals. The Wellness Committee is made up of individuals of nearly every department in the company. We also have representatives at our remote locations that act on behalf of associates outside of the home office. This allows varying perspectives to be heard and gives all departments a good chance at being able to participate in all activities that are offered. The individuals on the team are committed to wellness both personally and professionally and this comes across strongly through their desire and passion to motivate others to achieve optimum wellness.

This group understands that without senior management leadership and direction the program would not succeed. We have not only the leadership of our president but our C.O.O., Mike Retherford, is actively involved in Wellness and is behind the Wellness Committee 100%! He not only supports the group but helps us to become more successful by allowing us to become innovative with our program ideas and backing up

the ideas with budget dollars. Verbal support is easy to come by but to have it backed up with money is quite another. Once the senior level support is there, the rest of management is quite supportive as well.

The Committee is aware that programs that are of interest and need to the associates are the ones that will be successful. At least three times a year input is received from associates as

to the types of programs that they would like to have offered to them that would aid in their overall wellness. Once data is collected, decisions are made as to what programs will be offered for the upcoming year. This is also in correlation with our health screening that is done for associates at the beginning of the year. If we see a need that is a trend among a number of associates, based on results from the health screening, we will implement that program into our curriculum for the year.

Based on the data collected an operating plan is crafted for the upcoming year. The Committee comes together and looks first at our vision and mission statement. We then look at our objectives and timelines for implementation. We assign duties based on interest of the Wellness Committee members and then decide the best method to communicate the program and resources available. Evaluation is done at the end of each program to ensure satisfaction and to see if our goal was met.

We receive an enormous amount of senior level support in regards to our Wellness Program. One of our key supporters is our C.O.O., Mike Retherford. He makes his support known verbally as well as financially. He also tries to live a well balanced life so that he is leading by example. The following are quotes he has made regarding wellness in the past year:

*“Wellness is a critical component to achieving success in our personal and professional lives. It stimulates one’s outlook on life and attitude, in a positive way.”*

*“Living a fulfilled life begins with taking care of one’s physical, spiritual, and mental health, and wellness is the key.”*

*“From a business perspective, workplace wellness is the answer for employee’s well-being, increased productivity, and controlling healthcare costs.”*

The wellness initiative offers a number of unique strengths for associates however three of them stick out above the rest. The first is a pre-assessment. Associates are asked at the beginning of the year to rate how they are at making healthy decisions on a daily basis. This is done through a series of questions as well as by a local hospital coming on-site to do a health assessment. They check, height, weight, blood pressure, blood profile, and body composition. This is all free of charge to the associate. This gives the employee an idea of where they are at in regards to their health. It is cognizant awareness that we are after. The next unique strength is behavior modification with resources. One of the programs offered within the initiative is the chance to visit with a nutritionist to discuss a food plan that will aid associates in their health goals. The nutritionist gives them food ideas that will help them meet the goal that they have set for themselves for the year. She is easily accessible throughout the year by e-mail or by phone and offers continual help and ideas for success to each employee willing to participate. This is ongoing and free of charge for the employee. This is a step by step guide to help aid them in their nutrition choices on a day to day basis. If they make a poor choice one day then they are able to seek help and start back down the right path right away. If the associate wants the help, it is always available.

The third unique strength that is offered to associates through our wellness initiative is organizational as well as personal evaluation. After numerous programs of behavior modification have been offered to the associate there is the opportunity for individuals to have the health screening and assessment done again at the end of the year or the beginning of the following year. This measures an individual's success in quantitative measures. An associate is able to compare the stats of the previous screening against that of the most recent and see where improvement needs to take place and where success has occurred. This is also a great tool for the Wellness Committee to use when evaluating the overall success of the program. We base our definition of success on whether or not a certain percentage of the company has participated and succeeded in the initiative. Success is measured by whether or not individual improvement was made over the year in regards to an individual's health and well being.

One of our more popular programs in the wellness initiative is the Activities Program. Employees are grouped together by area of interest (i.e. runner's group, walker's group, Etc.) They are then allowed to meet during the workday, without taking vacation time, and participate in their activity as a group. This gives the associate some accountability and motivation to participate as well. The groups also meet to discuss tips and ways to stay motivated away from work. An e-mail account is given to the groups as well so that they can stay in constant contact with one another to help ensure success. Participants really enjoy the groups and they have been very successful at achieving individual results for each participant.

Another popular program is the nutrition counseling. Participants are given the opportunity to meet with a nutritionist and discuss their food goals for the year. Many

associates comment that they have not only improved their own health and nutrition but that of their families as well.

ARAG North America truly cares about the health and well being of its associates. It is not only shown by the tremendous opportunities that are given to associates through our wellness initiative but through our total benefit's package and work/life balance initiative as well. The company makes sure that employees know that they are valued and that their individual lives are important. The company takes a holistic approach to wellness and makes sure that associates are given the opportunity to be healthy in at least three major facets; body, mind and spirit. The company loves to hear new ideas for improvement and loves to hear success stories for continuation of programs that are touching our associate's lives in a positive way.