

# MAKE STRIDES!

Steps to a HealthierMN Newsletter



May / June 2008

## *In this issue*

What's New?

Small Steps

Steps Spotlight

In the News

Q&A

Announcements

Did You Know?



*Steps to a HealthierMN is part of a national program funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services focusing on the prevention of diabetes, obesity and asthma.*

For more information, visit [www.stepstohealthiermn.org](http://www.stepstohealthiermn.org).

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## What's New?

The Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) was developed in response to the 2007 MN State Legislature's request to develop a plan for statewide health promotion to address the rising cost of health and health care in our state. SHIP, which is essentially an expanded version of the Steps model, will help Minnesotans live longer, better, healthier lives by reducing the burden of chronic disease. After being presented to numerous legislative committees and the Governor's Health Care Transformation Task Force this past fall, SHIP was written into legislative bills calling for overall health care reform in Minnesota. The overall health care reform legislation focuses on improving the affordability, accessibility, and quality of health care as well as improving the health of Minnesotans.

At the end of the legislative session in mid-May, Governor Pawlenty and the 2008 Minnesota State Legislature came to an agreement on the health reform bill. Excitingly, their agreement includes initial funding for SHIP!

SHIP implementation will begin in July 2009, after a competitive process, when grants will be distributed to Community Health Boards and tribal governments across Minnesota. Grantees will be required to create community action plans, assemble community leadership teams, and establish partnerships. To improve the health of Minnesotans, grantees will utilize policy, systems, and environmental changes in four settings: schools, worksites, health care, and community. SHIP efforts will focus on obesity (through physical inactivity and unhealthy eating) and tobacco as the key risk factors to target interventions in fiscal years 2010-2011. With those risk factors, we will be addressing the top three preventable causes of illness and death in the United States.

The program will be evaluated at both the state and local level to ensure progress is made toward a set of measurable outcomes. Governor Pawlenty and the Minnesota State Legislature have allocated significant funding for the program. Over fiscal years 2010 and 2011, SHIP will provide up to 20 million and 27 million dollars respectively for health improvement throughout the state.

For more information about the State Health Improvement Plan, contact Cara McNulty at [cara.mcnulty@health.state.mn.us](mailto:cara.mcnulty@health.state.mn.us).

# Small Steps

1. Start a healthy lunch club with colleagues.
2. Conduct walking meetings at work.
3. If your building allows, take the stairs at work instead of the elevator.
4. Take a stretch break at your desk; it will get your body moving and refresh your mind.

For more information and a complete list of small steps you can take for a healthier lifestyle, visit [www.smallstep.gov](http://www.smallstep.gov).

## Steps Spotlight

Most adults spend the majority of their time in a work setting. In addition, the worksite environment can be somewhat controlled through communication and support channels that are already in place. This makes the worksite a key setting to address behavioral risk factors for many chronic diseases, including physical inactivity, poor nutrition, and tobacco use.

Our four Steps communities are working toward improving health in the workplace in their respective communities. Below are highlights of these activities.

### ***Minneapolis***

Steps to a Healthier Minneapolis and Steps to a Healthier St. Paul wrapped up Get Fit Twin Cities in April. The 100-day physical activity challenge was popular with worksites; 70% of total registrants were affiliated with a worksite and over 80 worksites in Minneapolis and St. Paul participated. Whether implemented within an existing wellness program or not, Get Fit proved to be attractive to worksites of all sizes and types including, governmental agencies and community and private organizations. Worksite participants accounted for the majority of those who completed the challenge.

In addition, a member of the Steps staff sits on the City of Minneapolis' Wellness Committee, which has defined its mission and values and is beginning to undertake initiatives for City employees. This includes a number of healthy eating related initiatives such as encouraging employees to use the Farmers Markets, developing and implementing an internal food policy and offering healthier foods through the café located within City Hall.

### ***Rochester***

Steps to a Healthier Rochester has convened a Worksite Wellness Coalition for Rochester area worksites. *Wellness Works* is for businesses - large and small - that may or may not have a wellness program in place. The Coalition's vision is to integrate the latest topics, trends and research in worksite health promotion, network with other worksite health professionals, and exchange ideas for maximizing program participation and outcomes. Membership is free. The first meeting of the Coalition was held in April. For more information, please visit the Steps Web site at [www.stepstohealthiermn.org](http://www.stepstohealthiermn.org). Click on Rochester's Web page and then on Worksites.

Steps also provided technical assistance in the development of a worksite wellness initiative for Olmsted County employees this past fall. An employee interest survey was developed and piloted in four different County departments. Two presentations on the impact of chronic disease, importance of worksite wellness and return on investment were given to the administrative group. As a result, a job description for a full-time Wellness Coordinator was developed and the position was posted in April 2008. Steps will continue to provide technical assistance for this new wellness program as needed.

## **Saint Paul**

Steps to a Healthier St. Paul is developing a wellness resource for businesses and organizations in St. Paul. The intent is to promote worksite wellness by making it easy for employers to start a program. A Web site should be available in July 2008; the site will include the tangible benefits of a worksite wellness program; information on why employee wellness is important; getting started with the Minnesota Department of Health toolkit; ideas for incentives; program development checklists; and links to additional resources. In addition to the Web site, employers may call St. Paul – Ramsey County Department of Public Health for consultation meetings with a health educator and a resource book. For questions or additional information, contact Berit Peterson at 651-266-2469 or by email at [Berit.Peterson@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:Berit.Peterson@co.ramsey.mn.us).

Among the many activities of Saint Paul Public Schools' Worksite Wellness Program this past school year was the Balance Program, a program designed to educate, encourage, promote and support healthy behaviors that truly manage daily stress. Employees were encouraged to utilize tips and techniques they received through weekly emails and activity events to reduce their stress levels. Examples of resources included in the weekly emails were tips on organizing your office space; reasons to get up, stretch, and take a walk during your work day; important facts on why you should get enough sleep; and reasons to quit smoking. Each time an employee participated in an activity event, they logged on to the wellness website to register their participation and became eligible for the weekly drawing of a \$25 gift certificate. Twenty five worksites participated in the program. Comments from program participants included "I like knowing little facts that are important. I feel like I learned a lot about wellness and stress because of the weekly emails. They were short and sweet;" and "When I agreed to do something I actually followed through because I had the support from my coworkers that were also taking action to become stress free."

## **Willmar**

Steps to a Healthier Willmar has assisted a variety of worksites with wellness programming – ranging from worksites with less than 15 employees to over 100 and those with no wellness budgets to those that have regular wellness programming funds.

Currently, Steps is offering small grants to local businesses for employee wellness programming. These grants will be awarded to Willmar employers that are interested in improving the health of their employees and encouraging healthy behaviors. The small grants are intended to improve healthy behaviors among staff at Willmar worksites. The funds can be used to assist with the organization of a wellness committee, enhance existing wellness program plans, implement a health program or challenge and develop wellness policies. The funds can be used for programs or programming in the areas of physical activity, healthy eating, weight management, tobacco cessation or improving self care of chronic conditions such as asthma or diabetes. The application deadline is June 30. To download an application, visit the Steps Web site at [www.stepstohealthiermn.org](http://www.stepstohealthiermn.org) and click on Willmar's Web page.



## In the News

For more information on creating or enhancing wellness programs in your worksite, visit the following Web sites:

[CDC's Healthier Worksite Initiative \(http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/\)](http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/hwi/)

[The Healthy Minnesota Workplace Program \(www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/NGAtoolkit/toc.html\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/NGAtoolkit/toc.html)

[Hennepin County Health @ Work \(www.co.hennepin.mn.us\)](http://www.co.hennepin.mn.us)

[Park Nicollet HealthSource \(www.parknicollet.com/healthsource\)](http://www.parknicollet.com/healthsource)

[Cater to Health \(www.catertohealth.org\)](http://www.catertohealth.org)

[do. campaign \(http://www.do-groove.com/doatwork.aspx\)](http://www.do-groove.com/doatwork.aspx)

[Wellness Councils of America \(WELCOA\) \(www.welcoa.org\)](http://www.welcoa.org)

[American Heart Association's Start! Walking Program \(www.americanheart.org\)](http://www.americanheart.org)

## Q&A

**Q:** Does a worksite wellness program need management support from the beginning?

**A:** Worksite wellness programs can start as a grassroots movement. For example, a group of employees can get together and take afternoon walks or stretch breaks. Or employees can gather for a healthy lunch club. Eventually, however, management support may be needed when it becomes time to establish healthy workplace policies, to secure funding, and to ensure the sustainability of the program. For more information on how to approach management in your organization with the idea of a wellness program, visit [www.stepstohealthiermn.org](http://www.stepstohealthiermn.org) and click on Worksite.

**Q:** My worksite does offer a wellness program – but what's in it for me?

**A:** Getting regular physical activity, whether at work or home has myriad benefits to your work productivity. Some of the benefits include increased productivity and morale, reduced injury rates, better employee relations, improved job satisfaction and team spirit, and improved employee health and fitness.

(source: [http://www.toronto.ca/health/wc\\_index.htm](http://www.toronto.ca/health/wc_index.htm))

**Q:** What is a Health Risk Assessment and why should I take it?

**A:** Health Risk Assessments (HRA) are questionnaires that evaluate your risk for various diseases or illnesses based on the answers you provide. The confidential, personalized results you get upon completing your HRA will help you focus on changing the health behaviors you are able and willing to change. Usually, when you complete an HRA and if you are at risk for a disease, you can decide to participate in a program that helps you prevent or manage that disease.

The HRA can also be a valuable tool for an employer. The employee will receive a summary of the aggregate data, a snapshot of their entire employee population. This information can help prioritize what programs and services to offer to contribute to the better health of its employees. Year-to-year, the employee and the employer can see if what they are doing makes a difference.

Because they can be such a valuable tool for an employee and an employer, some employers offer incentives for participating in your annual HRA.

## Announcements

Due to the late distribution date of this issue of *MAKE STRIDES!*, a summary of national health observances that occurred in May and June is listed below with the corresponding Web sites for more information.

### May

National Physical Fitness and Sports Month  
<http://www.fitness.gov/>

Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month  
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America  
<http://www.aafa.org/>

National Bike Month  
<http://www.bikeleague.org/programs/bikemonth/>

National Women's Health Week, May 11 - 17  
<http://www.womenshealth.gov>

National Employee Health and Fitness Day, May 21  
<http://www.physicalfitness.org>

World No Tobacco Day, May 31  
World Health Organization  
<http://www.who.int/tobacco/wntd/2008/en/>

### June

National Men's Health Week, May 9-15  
<http://www.menshealthmonth.org/week/>

### Steps Events:

Please see the Steps to a HealthierMN Web site for a listing of other various community activities and events.

For questions, comments or suggestions about *MAKE STRIDES!* or to be added to or removed from the distribution list, please contact Rachel Cohen at [Rachel.Cohen@health.state.mn.us](mailto:Rachel.Cohen@health.state.mn.us) or 651-201-5442. You may also sign up to receive the newsletter on the Steps to a HealthierMN Web site: [www.stepstohealthiermn.org](http://www.stepstohealthiermn.org).

## Did You Know?

1. The first Automatic Pop-up toaster was marketed in June 1926 by McGraw Electric Co. in Minneapolis under the name Toastmaster. The retail price was \$13.50.
2. The nation's first Better Business Bureau was founded in Minneapolis in 1912.
3. Hormel Company of Austin marketed the first canned ham in 1926. Hormel introduced Spam in 1937.
4. In 1919 a Minneapolis factory turned out the nation's first armored cars.

Source: [www.50states.com](http://www.50states.com)

