



# *Worksite Program* Success Stories

Creating a Culture of Wellness  
in the Worksite Environment





## **Worksite Program Success Stories**

### **Creating a Culture of Wellness in the Worksite Environment**

These fourteen success stories demonstrate the impact of the California Department of Public Health's (CDPH) *Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch (NEOPB)—Worksite Program's* efforts to support employers in creating a culture of wellness in the worksite.

Often, there are unique challenges to implementing worksite wellness programs with a low-wage workforce. These include around-the-clock shifts, rotating shifts and breaks, employees spending long hours on their feet, seasonal work, limited budgets, and few wellness programs designed for a non-office setting. The stories of these motivated worksites demonstrate how it can be done. Willingness and commitment from management, energy and enthusiasm from employees, resources from the *NEOPB—Worksite Program's California Fit Business Kit*, expert support from the *Worksite Program*, and reinforcing community resources enable California's low-wage employees to be supported by healthy work environments.

Let these success stories inspire you to create a culture of wellness at your worksite. You can use the same tools and approaches that these successful businesses used—the *Worksite Program's California Fit Business Kit*. For more information call NEOPB at (916) 449-5400.

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## Introduction

The workplace has the potential to improve health in communities by building a culture that supports employee wellness. Worksite wellness programs have demonstrated increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, reduced injury, improved morale, and reduced costs for employers.<sup>1</sup>

This document describes successful program implementation in low-wage worksites and can be used to engage businesses interested in starting a worksite wellness program.

There are two main components of this document. The first section provides:

- Background on the *Worksite Program*
- A description of how the narratives describing the different worksites were compiled
- A summary of lessons learned from the various businesses
- Key concepts for building successful wellness programs in low-wage worksites

The second section highlights:

- Companies that implemented the *Worksite Program*
- Managers' and employees' attitudes and opinions about the program
- Benefits organizations perceived they experienced as a result of the program

## Program Background

The *Worksite Program* serves employees in low-wage worksites where they spend most of their day. Its aim is to empower employees and their families to eat more fruits and vegetables, choose healthy beverages, and be physically active with the goal of reducing the incidence of chronic disease. The program works to improve access to healthy foods, healthy beverages, and physical activity at low-wage worksites; foster supportive work environments that encourage healthy lifestyle choices; and establish policies that support sustainable health promotion efforts at these worksites.

In order to develop a program that matches the specific needs of both the worksites and their employees, the *Worksite Program* conducted formative research including an extensive literature review, key informant interviews and surveys with low-wage worksites, employers and employees. The *Worksite Program's* tools, design, and approach are based on this research.<sup>2,3</sup> The program was formally launched in 2007 through California's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) program. It primarily serves the retail, manufacturing, agriculture, and hospitality industries.

<sup>1</sup> Baicker K, Cutler D, Song Z. "Workplace Wellness Programs Can Generate Savings." *Health Affairs*. 2010 Feb; 29(2): 304-311.

<sup>2</sup> Public Health Institute. *Workplace Nutrition and Physical Activity: An overview of the facts, case studies and information resources*. Issue Brief. Vol. 1, Issue 1. Updated July, 2005. Prepared by the Public Health Institute for the California Department of Health Services. [www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-WP-FADWorksiteBrieffinal.pdf](http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-WP-FADWorksiteBrieffinal.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Backman DR, Carman JS, Aldana SG. *Fruits and Vegetable and Physical Activity at the Worksite: Business Leaders and Working Women Speak Out on Access and Environment*. Sacramento, CA: 2004 Report. Prepared by the Public Health Institute for the California Department of Health Services.

## Lessons Learned

The central theme of these case studies was that in order to be successful and sustainable, employees at all levels of the worksite must support worksite wellness. While the catalyst for change may have emerged from senior management who could influence organizational policies and procedures, equally important was the task of engaging middle management in the process and gaining the buy-in of employees. The support from front-line employees was critical to the success of a wellness program.

An important step in the Lessons Learned phase of the *Worksite Program Case Study Evaluation Project* was synthesizing the case study information so that decision makers, such as executives or Human Resources Managers, could interpret the information and transform the results into actions. This project reported on qualitative information related to best practices determined through site visits. These visits resulted in the formulation of themes that were common to many, if not all, of the organizations recruited for the project.

When planning a wellness program, build in as many of these factors for success as possible:

1. **Fun!** – Those participating in wellness activities are excited and motivated by what they are doing. There is positive energy flowing through the room, with opportunities to introduce humor and good-natured challenges to fellow team members. *“I feel more energy every day and we’re happy to come to work!” – Ruskin Air and Sound employee.*
2. **Champions** – One person or a group of key individuals will usually drive the process and champion an integrated vision at all levels of the organization. These champions “make things happen” with a sense of purpose and passion about worksite health, safety, and productivity. This is a key element to sustainability. *“[Maria] was open and really encouraging about the program. She preps the employees; they open up and want to talk about what goes on at home” – Days Inn employee.*
3. **Worksite wellness committee members who practice what they preach** – These individuals will empower fellow employees to make healthy choices by modeling healthy lifestyles themselves, integrating health into the business culture. *“Some people aren’t ‘mind ready’ to make changes, but repeating the message and leading by example is the way to make a difference” – Pomona Valley Workshop employee.*
4. **Corporate buy-in, which allows for wellness programs to be brought to multiple sites** – Businesses with high-level support may choose to pilot wellness programs at individual sites, then take their lessons learned to expand their program to other locations. Each site should then have their own wellness team to guide their efforts. *“We are becoming a wellness portal and it is our mission through our stores to be able to educate and guide employees and customers to make*

*healthier choices for themselves and their whole family.” – Northgate González Markets employee.*

5. **Emphasis on improving quality of life** – Repeatedly, management talked about “doing the right thing” for their employees. While it’s hard to put a value on employee happiness, sites can have an expectation that if an organization improves the quality of work life, then productivity can improve and cost containment will result naturally. *“I have noticed that there is more employee engagement across the board since wellness programming started. Employees are more engaged about their own health, and they speak up more in meetings. Increased productivity is important, but so is employee well-being” – Camfil U.S.A Inc. employee.*
6. **The potential to serve customers as well as employees** – Healthy retail food stores and healthy retail workers make good partners. This “whole site” approach makes it easier for workers to make healthier food choices, and to educate shoppers on how they can do the same. *“Yes, this program is helping very much, both employee and consumer alike...I think all businesses should make these changes” – Northgate González Markets employee.*
7. **Communication that is ongoing and readily available to employees** – On-site wellness advocates keep their activities at the forefront. Communication and visibility, along with keeping activities fresh, keeps employees engaged. Employee engagement helps management see the value of the wellness programming. *“There are many reminders that motivate the workers to work out and be healthy... there is a culture that is being created” –Northgate González Markets employee.*
8. **Employees bringing healthy habits home to their families** – Employees will be encouraged to bring the knowledge they learn and behaviors they practice at work home to share with their families. *“I take everything I learn from the health fairs home. I’ve started walking, and changed my eating. My blood pressure is down without medicine” – Arteaga’s Food Centers employee.*
9. **Connections to community resources** – In order to maintain a quality program, businesses will frequently reach out to organizations such as the American Heart Association or a local hospital, to provide education, screenings and/or support for on-site health fairs. *“[The Worksite Program] has been a great support system, and they’re bringing information that I’ve not been able to bring myself. They’ve been a great asset to the program that I started that probably would have died if it wasn’t for them helping me out and [creating] these fresh new ideas” – UltraPro Collectibles employee.*
10. **Cooperation and collaboration** – Worksite wellness committees will bring together employees from diverse areas such as human resources, senior management, and staff. While working cooperatively to achieve

common goals, worksite employees will be comfortable sharing their experiences and stories as a way to teach and coach each other. *"It was really cool to get everyone from different departments together; we wouldn't normally see each other at the same time. It really was team-building. It was something that everyone walked away from feeling better!"* – Embassy Suites employee.

Inevitably when discussing worksite wellness, the criterion for success is improved productivity. However, some businesses are changing their definition of productivity to incorporate culture, employee attitudes and understandable mission statements that enable worksite health and safety. They include goals and objectives that extend beyond traditional measures of output per worker. Productivity is now viewed as a broader term that includes: relationship building between top management and line staff; the ability to innovate new approaches for worksite wellness health support systems; knowledge increase; creativity; loyalty; and the ability to work within a team structure of the business. For the employers engaged in the *Worksite Program*, a high level of satisfaction with the program suggests that by this measure of success, the program is a champion for change.

*"We want to engage them. We're doing other things in addition to the Wellness Program so that they know they're not just workers. We're a company that cares about them"* – Goodwill, San Diego Manager.

## Ready to start a worksite wellness program where you work?

*Call (916) 449-5400 and ask for the Project Officer in your county.*



## Program Components

The *Worksite Program* implements a suite of tools and supporting resources to help employers bring about workplace cultures that encourage healthy eating and physical activity among workers. The *Worksite Program's California Fit Business Kit* includes ten (10) individual tools and resources designed to be easily implemented at any worksite in any configuration appropriate for the work environment. These tools can be used individually or as part of a comprehensive worksite wellness program.



The first tool in the program begins with a site-specific needs assessment:

- Check for Health

The rest of the tools are then used to address the needs of the site to improve its health environment:

- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Healthy Meeting Policies
- Vending Machine Food & Beverage Standards
- Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines
- Ordering Farm Fresh Produce for Worksites
- Establishing a Worksite Farmers' Market
- Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs
- Improving Worksite Stairwells
- *Take Action!*

Three new tools were being piloted by several worksites as these case studies were being developed:

- Go for H<sub>2</sub>O
- Physical Activity Integration
- Physical Activity Clubs

Each of these have been formally adopted and incorporated into the 2014 revision of the *California Fit Business Kit*.

## Program Implementation

During the period of these case studies the *Worksite Program* was administered through seven *Worksite Program Regional Managers* and five *Worksite Program Specialists* by seven *Regional Networks* throughout California (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**



Each *Regional Network* worked with participating businesses to implement the *California Fit Business Kit*, provide *Worksite Program* materials and nutrition education trainings, and access other NEOPB social marketing campaigns and programs. Businesses had to meet specific low-wage criteria and other qualifying requirements to participate in the *Worksite Program*.

Note: *Regional Network* infrastructure ended in September 2013. The *Worksite Program* became available to more counties in 2014.

## Case Study Methodology

In 2013, the *Worksite Program* drafted case studies of program implementation at 18 individual worksites, or about 10 percent of operational *Worksite Program* sites. The following research questions guided the project:

- What are the employer and employee attitudes and opinions about *Worksite Program* materials, activities, and customer service?
- What is the impact of the *Worksite Program's California Fit Business Kit* tools on creating healthier workplaces for low-wage employees?
- What benefits are participating worksites observing within their organizations and with employees?

### Research Design

The project design for these case studies was qualitative in nature. The evaluation team interviewed representatives of the participating 17 businesses and conducted informal group discussions with employers and employees who work in settings that have implemented the *Worksite Program*. Participating businesses were selected on the basis of three criteria:

- 1) Were active participants in the *Worksite Program* for at least two years
- 2) Represented a variety of industries and geographic areas
- 3) Nominated by a *Worksite Program* Regional Manager

### The Participating Businesses

Of the 17 business, five were in the food retail industry, four were manufacturers, two were non-food retailers, two were agricultural enterprises, two were from the hospitality industry, one was a healthcare services agency, and one was a social services organization. Food retail sites included one small 50-employee site. The other four food retail sites included the corporate headquarters and three individual stores that were part of a 39-store chain, employing a total workforce of 4,500 employees. Seven of the other worksites employed 50–200 workers; three employed 350–600 workers; and two employed 1,200 and 2,000 workers, respectively.

## Data Collection

Interview protocols for business representatives and employees were developed collaboratively by a consultant and the NEOPB staff. The protocol for recruitment and approaching the worksite contact, as well as the conversation-generating questions, can be found in the appendix.

To collect data for the project, a bilingual consultant team conducted interviews with regional *Worksite Program* staff and participating worksite management and employees. Interviews with regional staff covered:

- General descriptive information about the site (industry, location, type of work)
- History of participation in the *Worksite Program*, including: recruitment, wellness goals, and tools implemented
- Stories of successful implementation

Interviews with worksite management followed an approved protocol. Topics discussed were:

- General descriptive information about the site (industry, location, type of work)
- History of participation, including recruitment, wellness goals, and tools implemented
- Stories of successful implementation including the tools implemented and how they were chosen and put to use
- Perceived return on investment
- Advice for other businesses interested in starting a program

Discussions and interviews with worksite employees covered the following topics:

- Types of changes seen at the workplace
- Reaction to these changes
- Perceived usefulness of changes made by the business

Each site visit was conducted by a senior researcher and, as needed, a bilingual research assistant. *Worksite Program* Regional Managers accompanied the research team on some, but not all, site visits. Case studies were developed by consultant staff with collaboration and input from *Worksite Program* staff.

## Participating Businesses

INDUSTRY	WORKSITE	LOCATION	# EMPLOYEES	HIGHLIGHTED TOOLS
Agriculture	Pardee Tree Nursery (Page 22)	Oceanside, CA	50	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Physical Activity Integration
Agriculture	Sunrise Farm (Page 37)	Huron, CA	2000	Worksite Wellness Committee Healthy Meeting Policies Check for Health Physical Activity Integration Go for H <sub>2</sub> O
Healthcare Services	South Bay Respite Services (Page 35)	National City, CA	600	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Healthy Meeting Policies
Hospitality	Days Inn (Page 24)	Encinitas, CA	50	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Healthy Meeting Policies Ordering Farm Fresh Produce for Worksites Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs Physical Activity Integration
Hospitality	Embassy Suites (Page 16)	Sacramento, CA	160	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs Improving Worksite Stairwells Physical Activity Integration
Manufacturing	Camfil U.S.A., Inc. (Page 14)	Corcoran, CA	50	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Healthy Meeting Policies Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards Go for H <sub>2</sub> O
Manufacturing	International Seal (Page 19)	Santa Ana, CA	200	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards Physical Activity Integration Go for H <sub>2</sub> O
Manufacturing	Ruskin Manufacturing Company (Page 28)	Ontario, CA	140	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Improving Worksite Stairwells Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs Physical Activity Integration Physical Activity Clubs
Manufacturing	UltraPro Collectibles (Page 40)	Commerce, CA	80	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Healthy Meeting Policies Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs Take Action! Physical Activity Clubs
Retail	Arteaga's Food Centers (Page 12)	Gilroy, CA	50	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs Physical Activity Clubs
Retail	Goodwill Industries San Diego (Page 31)	San Diego, CA	1200	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Physical Activity Integration
Retail	Goodwill Industries San Jose (Page 33)	San Jose, CA	350	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Ordering Farm Fresh Produce for Worksites
Retail	Northgate González Markets, individual and corporate headquarters (Page 43)	Los Angeles, Orange & San Diego Counties in Southern California	5700	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs Physical Activity Integration Physical Activity Clubs
Social Service Agency	Pomona Valley Workshop (Page 26)	Montclair, CA	390	Worksite Wellness Committee Check for Health Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines Physical Activity Clubs

## Arteaga's Food Center—A Champion Worksite and Community Champion for Health

*“The benefits of having the program are bigger than the challenges.”*

Lupe, Owner

Sign displaying partnership between Arteagas and Champions for Change Retail Program



Freshly cut fruits

### Gilroy, CA; Retail; 50 employees

The five Arteaga's Food Center stores in Silicon Valley have a dual mission to support healthy eating: they are both a large, local employer and a place where local families buy their food. Lupe, the owner of the retail chain, is a personal and powerful champion for healthy food choices. Having struggled with her own weight, she realizes how difficult it can be to make a lifestyle change. For the last six years Lupe and her sons have implemented health-promoting changes in both how they sell food, and how they support their own staff in adopting healthy behaviors.

#### FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:

Check for Health  
Worksite Wellness Committee  
Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs  
Physical Activity Clubs

#### WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:

Health fairs  
Nutrition education & promotion  
Physical activity promotion

### Walking Clubs Take a Trip around the Block

The grocery store is a busy place with shipments of fresh food arriving any time of the day, customers shopping with young children, and a constant hum of excitement. The men and women who stock the shelves, help customers find the fruit, and serve the fresh salsa also take turns walking around the block with the help of their local *Worksite Program* representative, Suellen. One at a time, the twenty staff members at the flagship Arteaga's store in Gilroy walk with Suellen. They are also encouraged by management to hold walking meetings. This provides some exercise as well as a break from the demands of the store. The shift in environment promotes new, creative approaches to business opportunities and problem solving.

### Zumba® in the Backroom

But what if employees really want to move? The store's backroom is converted into a group exercise space for stretching, Zumba®, and yoga, but only until the next meat shipment comes, then all hands are back on deck!

### Encouraging Healthy Choices for Customers

Lupe and her family feel a responsibility to the hard-working families who shop for groceries at their markets. Located in working-class neighborhoods and serving low- and middle-income customers, Arteaga's stores provide fresh fruits and vegetables, and pantry items, as well as prepared food. In a deliberate effort to encourage the consumption of fruits and vegetables, the produce section is large, festive and well-lit. Health education materials in Spanish from

the *Worksite Program* are prominently displayed. Lupe also has plans to share recipes and serving suggestions as part of Harvest of the Month.

One checkout lane is dedicated to healthy options, displaying bottled water, fruits, vegetables and whole grain snacks. The prepared fruit bar in the produce section makes it easy to pick up a fruit salad while shopping, and the store sells fresh smoothies to weary shoppers at the exit door.

These efforts have resulted in the expansion of Arteaga's as a central community resource for health. The stores host at least five health fairs per year, providing health information including vaccines, Body Mass Index (BMI) tests and screenings for the employees and community free of charge. These fairs have been a huge success, and have now become a staple in the community, with more than 3,000 people attending an event.

### **Positive Results for the Investment**

Sales of fruits and vegetables not only help the health of the customer, but they also boost the bottom line. Lupe reports on-the-job injuries have dropped from 108 annually to 86, a 20% decrease. Morale appears to be up and employee turnover is low. Current employees recommend Arteaga's as a great place to work. Employees feel cared for because Arteaga's invests in their health. The wellness program is expanding, both for employees and for customers. Lupe recently won a gold level Fit Friendly Worksite Award from the American Heart Association for being such a strong advocate for a healthy lifestyle.

Without a doubt, Arteaga's grocery stores are on the path to better health, inspired and helped by the *Worksite Program*.

*"I take everything I learn from the health fairs home. I've started walking, and changed my eating. My blood pressure is down without medicine."*

Arteaga's employee

## Camfil U.S.A. Inc. Makes an Investment in Health and Their Employees

Corcoran, CA; Manufacturing; 50 employees



After their screenings, three employees tease each other about recent weight loss, and share tips on portion control and sugar reduction. They say that one of the guys used to be overweight, but “...now he takes what he’s learned here and goes running with his family every weekend.”

### Camfil U.S.A. Inc. employees are in the know about their own health.

At 6 a.m. sharp on a warm August morning, employees at Camfil U.S.A. Inc. are already waiting in line to have blood drawn for the company’s annual health screening. Camfil, an air filtration company based in Sweden, holds this free screening yearly, in partnership with Corcoran District Hospital, for employees to get cholesterol, blood sugar and blood pressure checked. “I’m so happy because my blood sugar is 79!” an employee tells Isabel, Human Resources Director. In fact, most of the 48 employees at this Central Valley site know their target blood sugar, blood pressure, cholesterol and weight. In addition to the yearly health screenings, employee awareness of health issues is also being increased through monthly health education sessions provided by local *Worksite Program* staff, Eddie. These programs support the environmental changes occurring on-site, and demonstrate a strong company commitment to health and wellness, which is helping to create a healthier workforce.

#### FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Healthy Meeting Policies
- Go for H<sub>2</sub>O
- Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards

#### WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:

- Health fairs
- Healthy meetings & events
- Nutrition education & promotion
- Physical activity promotion
- Healthy incentives

### “We have a right to clean air; we have a right to health.” – Isabel

Camfil U.S.A. produces air filters to improve environmental quality and individual health. The corporate support for wellness programs in its facilities has helped extend these values of health and wellness to the workers as well. Four years ago, Isabel and on-site Office Manager Linda launched, an effort to begin infusing employee health into the company culture. Tools from the *Worksite Program’s California Fit Business Kit* supported the changes they wanted to make. The first step was to initiate *Healthy Meeting Policies* during their frequent employee birthday celebrations. Instead of the usual cake and treats, Linda started to bring a balloon and trail mix or dried fruit to the honored employee. Next, they overhauled the vending machines by eliminating them altogether. Linda now walks the floor on Tuesdays and Thursdays delivering complementary fruit and granola bars to employees. They also installed water dispensers to replace the vending machines that were full of sugary drinks. One Camfil employee admitted that this was a bit difficult to get used to at first, but she now sees the positive benefits of the change. “Even if people still bring a soda for lunch, it’s limited to just one because you can’t keep going



Isabel, Human Resources Director and Linda, Office Manager

*back for more,"* she says. Linda noted that the vending machine elimination was intended as a six month trial to be revisited during the company quarterly Town Hall meetings. After nine months, employees agreed that they liked the changes. One key to the success of these changes has been the caring and personal touch of Linda, who goes the extra mile to make sure that employees are given opportunities to be healthy and lets them know that the company cares for them. Isabel says, *"Linda helps them in so many ways, she really cares about employees."*

Another change was to make the health education sessions offered by Eddie mandatory and paid. This ensures that every employee listens to his monthly talks about nutrition and physical activity during their paid work day. Pairing these education sessions with opportunities to make healthy choices has greatly empowered the Camfil workforce to care for themselves and make healthy decisions.

### **Getting Serious About Investing in Employee Health**

Camfil has also made substantial investments in physical changes at their site to accommodate health promotion. In spring 2012, Plant Manager, Fausto and Facility Manager, Gary decided to investigate creating opportunities for physical activity on-site. Because Camfil is in a rural and isolated geographic area with limited local resources, getting health resources at work has had a huge impact on employees. Camfil placed several cardio workout machines and a sign-up sheet in an existing break space. After observing the popularity of the machines, management moved forward with plans to construct an on-site gym. Gary justified the expense by explaining his opinion that the pay-off will be reduced insurance premiums in the long run, healthier employees and a better work environment. When asked if it was a hard sell to corporate, Gary replied, *"The gym was not a hard sell to corporate at all. They support efforts to improve the health of employees."* Camfil constructed the gym for about \$6,000 and completed it by February 2013. The 48 employees log about 5,000-6,000 gym hours monthly during their breaks, lunch, and before or after their shifts. Camfil gives out quarterly rewards and incentives to the three employees with the most time logged at the gym.

Fausto noted his impression that there has been a decline in work absenteeism, and an increase in staff investment since the wellness programming has commenced. *"I have noticed that there is more employee engagement across the board since wellness programming started. Employees are more engaged about their own health, and they speak up more in meetings."* Camfil's robust wellness activities and environmental changes have been an investment in the worksite and the employees' health, and have provided important resources that were lacking in the community. It's easy to understand why employees see Camfil as a great place to work!



Camfil U.S.A.'s on-site gym

*"I have noticed that there is more employee engagement across the board since wellness programming started. Employees are more engaged about their own health, and they speak up more in meetings. Increased productivity is important, but so is employee well-being."*

Fausto, Plant Manager

## Embassy Suites “Spring into Health” by Motivating Employees

**Sacramento, CA; Hospitality; 160 employees**

Embassy Suites, Sacramento, one of an international chain of hotels, has put special emphasis on the health and well-being of their employees. With help from the *Worksite Program*, they have created fun initiatives and motivating activities to inspire healthy eating and active living. As Derek, a front desk employee, says, “Embassy Suites is doing a good job at trying to help employees get healthy!”

### **FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

Check for Health  
Worksite Wellness Committee  
Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs  
Improving Worksite Stairwells  
Physical Activity Integration

### **WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

Health fairs  
Nutrition education & promotion  
Physical activity promotion



“Spring into Health”  
Promotion

*“A healthier workforce is a better workforce with better attendance, motivation and morale. It’s easy and it’s low cost, so it’s a good way to provide morale boosters and incentives at a very minimal cost to the company. It becomes a win-win.”*

Robert, Human Resources Manger

### “Spring into Health” Sets the Tone for Health All Year

Robert, Human Resources Manager for Embassy Suites, Sacramento, heads up a yearly “Spring into Health” event that features many health activities in March and April. During this event, Embassy Suites and the *Worksite Program* promote health and wellness through activities such as health education seminars, healthy cooking and exercise demonstrations, exercise activities, visits from personal trainers and new classes, like Zumba® or yoga. In addition, throughout “Spring into Health”, vendors and health professionals are invited to engage employees in nutrition discussions and health screenings. “Spring into Health” is a popular and fun way for the 165 person staff to get healthy. One staff member says, “It was really cool to get everyone from different departments together; we wouldn’t normally see each other at the same time. It really was team-building. It was something that everyone walked away from feeling better!”

### Robert’s Tips for Success

Embassy Suites, in partnership with the *Worksite Program*, has found a recipe for wellness that works for them. Robert, HR Manager, is a long time advocate for health in the workplace and has managed all of the wellness activities of the last eight years. His reflections on their success are:

**Utilize employee talents and interests:** Many of the wellness initiatives have come from employees’ passions and interests. Embassy Suites supports employees by allowing them to gain their own momentum throughout the program.

**Start small:** Starting with just a walking club, Embassy Suites has grown their wellness activities according to interest from staff. By allowing the programs to grow naturally, the program remains manageable and relevant to the needs of staff.

**Form partnerships:** Embassy Suites started working with the *Worksite Program* two years ago, and the knowledge and resources that they have provided have been a valuable addition to the program. *“What’s nice in working with [the Worksite Program] is that they have the resources, so it’s easy, it’s convenient, and it has no cost. So again it becomes a great resource.”*

## Wellness Activities can be Tailored to Specific Departments

In the hospitality industry, staff members have diverse jobs to fit the many needs of the hotel. Additionally, varying schedules make it difficult to find activities and times that work for everyone. Despite these challenges, Embassy Suites has found activities that appeal to the whole staff.

In the fall, the hotel holds a Biggest Loser Contest to see who can lose the most weight. It is a voluntary program and most participants are Guest Services staff. The *Worksite Program* complements this initiative by encouraging employees to eat healthy and participate in physical activities, providing resources and education on losing weight in a healthy way. This Biggest Loser Contest awards \$100 and a three night stay in any Embassy Suite hotel to the employee who loses the most weight during the three month long challenge. Second place weight loss winner Derek lost 27 pounds during the contest! He says, *“It gave me the push I needed to continue. I had already started to eat better and work out well, and so it gave me a little extra push to continue that.”*

For the housekeeping staff, Embassy Suites provides space, opportunity, and instruction for stretching before the morning shift. Although the Stretching Club at Embassy Suites is voluntary, 90% of housekeepers participate. Rosie, a housekeeper, says that all the bending and work that housekeeping requires can be hard on her body and that the stretching helps and is good for her back.

## Health Education, Healthy Cafeteria Options, Walking Club and Stair Climbing are Enjoyed by All

One way that local *Worksite Program* representative, Brandi, has accommodated the challenges of hospitality work is by being flexible about when she comes to do health seminars. She tries to accommodate the employees’ schedules by coming at 7:30 a.m. before shifts start, at the lunch hour during employee breaks, and around 3:30 p.m. when there is another shift turnover. She does food demonstrations, provides information about the sugar content of sugar-sweetened beverages and conducts other educational sessions about healthy eating and active living. By scheduling health workshops during the morning, noon, and late afternoon, all employees have the opportunity to participate.

Embassy Suites provides a staff cafeteria with a daily salad bar that has fresh fruits, vegetables, and soup to give employees a variety of healthy foods during their lunch breaks. These healthy choices have become popular with the staff. *“For our meals, we have a salad bar with tons of different fruits and vegetable choices. There are always healthy options,”* says one employee.



Educational session promoting active living

Embassy Suites started their wellness activities eight years ago with just a walking club. The Walking Club still walks daily, with 15 minute walks during the day and 30 minute walks in late afternoon. They also use the hotel's staircases to do weekly climbs, led by a staff champion who is passionate about hiking and exercise. They climb the eight flights of stairs together, walk across the hotel, and walk back down again. Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs and Improving Worksite Stairwells are two important tools provided in the *California Fit Business Kit* to show the way for businesses to create a healthy work environment.

Overall, Robert sees wellness activities as a winning idea for businesses. *“A healthier workforce is a better workforce with better attendance, motivation and morale. From my perspective, that’s always been one of the key elements [of wellness activities]. It’s easy and it’s low cost, so it’s a good way to provide morale boosters and incentives at a very minimal cost to the company. It becomes a win-win.”*

# International Seal and the *Worksite Program* Enable Champion Employees to Lead the Way

**Santa Ana, CA; Manufacturing; 200 employees**

International Seal, a manufacturer of various sealing products, has teamed up with the *Worksite Program* to help improve the health of their employees and keep health care costs down for their company and their workers. They have built a strong partnership with the *Worksite Program* and have successfully implemented many healthy changes to their manufacturing company. Human Resources Manager Linette has noticed healthier eating, a more active lifestyle, and lowered absenteeism of their nearly 200 person workforce.

**FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Go for H<sub>2</sub>O
- Physical Activity Integration
- Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards

**WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

- Health fairs
- Nutrition education & promotion
- Physical activity promotion
- Healthy incentives

*“I think it is a great program, I would promote it to anybody. It’s free of cost and it helps our community.”*

Linette, Human Resources Manager

## Champion Employees are Role Models and Leaders in Wellness Activities

One highlight of International Seal’s wellness program is their annual employee recognition awards. The company asks all employees to nominate up to three of their co-workers who embody health through active living, healthy eating and setting an example for others. One man and one woman win each year and receive gift cards, company-wide recognition and a certificate. These Champion Employees are honored with a celebratory event.

With resources and local support provided by *Worksite Program* representative, Henry, Champion Employees lead a daily stretching activity for their fellow coworkers. Employees are given 10-15 minutes of paid time each morning to stretch. International Seal sees the stretching as an important part of worker safety, because the jobs are often physically demanding and involve repetitive motion that can cause injury. Employees believe that stretching helps prevent injury and prepares them physically for a day at their work stations.

International Seal hosts an annual health fair that is extremely popular with the employees. During this event, community partners, such as dentists and health organizations, come in to perform screenings, conduct food demonstrations, provide education and resources about health, and host activities such as yoga and Zumba®. Last year, an employee who had just started working there told her temporary employment agency, *“I’ve never had an employer who cares so much about their employees. They had a food demo, Zumba®, yoga, and they educated us about how to eat better.”*



**Employees eat healthy lunches they brought to work**



An employee gets water from the break room water dispenser — a healthy alternative to soda

## Employee Break Rooms are Well-Equipped and Promote Healthy Eating

Wellness Committee members noted that employee meals are usually brought from home and are often very healthy. International Seal supports these healthy choices by providing break rooms with adequate refrigeration, plenty of microwaves, shelving and table seating. Employees enjoy these accommodations and appreciate that it allows them to easily bring their own food from home. *“I never gave up how we ate on my ranch in Mexico. We always have vegetables and I wake up early to eat breakfast. I still do the same with my family here in the United States,”* says one employee. Additionally, frequent nutrition and health education sessions are hosted by the *Worksite Program* or other partnering agencies during lunch breaks. These sessions provide resources on cooking nutritious meals, reading food labels, diabetes care and other healthy living topics. This healthy environment, combined with the resources that are provided, allows employees to make educated decisions for the well-being of both themselves and their families.



The International Seal Wellness Committee, including local *Worksite Program* representative Henry

## Healthy Vending Machines and Water Dispensers Help Employees Make Healthy Decisions

To help their employees make healthy choices, International Seal uses tools from the *California Fit Business Kit*, including the *Vending Machine Food and Beverage Standards* tool. They took a strong stand with their vending company to increase healthy options in the vending machine, even after their vendor initially refused to change the offerings. International Seal continued to advocate for healthy options, and the machines now include items such as granola bars, trail mix, juices and water. These items are popular with employees and sell well, despite the vendor’s initial skepticism. They have also placed water dispensers throughout the building and sell a discounted company water bottle to employees when they are hired. Taking these steps to make water readily available in convenient locations gives employees the opportunity to choose water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.

## A Strong Partnership with the *Worksite Program* Leads the Way to Health

The International Seal Wellness Committee emphasizes the importance of their strong partnership with the *Worksite Program* and their close relationship with local *Worksite* representative, Henry, from Orange County Health Care Agency. *“What I really love about this program is that Henry is so hands on... honestly, I don’t think I’ve ever met a person as motivated or enthusiastic as Henry,”* says Linette. Henry explains that his goals are to keep everything positive, and emphasize giving employees something rather than taking something away or giving them more work. *“I want to provide the employees something they can take back with them that they can use as a tool and that will resonate with them. I’m not here to shake fingers; there is a different approach to this. I appreciate the partnership that we have and how we*



International Seal Wellness Team accepts the Fit Friendly Award from the American Heart Association in July 2013

*work together.” In July 2013, International Seal was proud to be awarded the American Heart Association’s Fit Friendly Worksite Award for their efforts in providing a healthy workplace. International Seal strives to care for their employees while maintaining good business practices. Their efforts to provide a healthy environment, resources and education reflect these values. Linette notes, “I think [these efforts are] something that we are known for. We really do care about our employees and we care about their futures. We tell them, you have to be the role model for your family. We educate you so you can educate them. That’s been the biggest success – this company really does care about employees.”*

## Pardee Tree Nursery Focuses on Health and Safety for the Employees

Oceanside, CA; Agriculture; 50 employees

Pardee Tree Nursery in San Diego County is a tree nursery that grows and supplies ornamental trees and shrubs to consumers. José, the Safety Coordinator for Pardee, is always looking for outside resources to provide training and education about health and safety topics to the 50 employees working on-site. Pardee Tree Nursery has been working with the *Worksite Program* for two years to educate employees about nutrition and exercise. These trainings support Pardee's efforts to maintain a safe work environment.

### *FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:*

Check for Health  
Worksite Wellness Committee  
Physical Activity Integration

### *WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:*

Health fairs  
Health partnerships  
Nutrition education & promotion  
Physical activity promotion



José, Safety Coordinator and head of the Wellness Committee

Pardee Tree Nursery has been working with the *Worksite Program* for two years to educate employees about nutrition and exercise.

### Morning Stretching Helps Workers Prepare for the Day and Can Reduce Injuries

Every morning before work starts, employees meet to do a stretching and exercise regimen for about 10 minutes. This gets everyone warmed up and ready for the physical labor that most employees perform during their work day. One major benefit of this warm-up is that it can alert someone to possible problems if they feel any pain or tightness during the stretching. They can then use extra caution throughout the day to avoid injury, which benefits employees and potentially reduces workers' compensation claims. The *Worksite Program's California Fit Business Kit Physical Activity* tools support exercise and physical activity to prepare for the workday and reduce work related injuries.

### Partnering with the *Worksite Program* and Other Agencies Educates Pardee Employees about Health

Pardee Tree Nursery began seeking partners and resources for health education in the last few years. Their location is in a rural and isolated area of San Diego County and many workers don't have access to health resources or education. The workers are primarily Latino, which is a population that is struggling with health concerns such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. These issues motivated Pardee to seek partners and outside resources to help them improve their workers' health and well-being. The *California Fit Business Kit* helped Pardee form a wellness committee from their existing Safety Team, assess their work environment with the *Check for Health* tool, and develop ideas about how to educate and provide opportunities for healthy eating and active living.

Daisy, a local representative from the *Worksite Program*, comes to Pardee Tree Nursery every three months to talk to employees during their weekly “tailgate” meetings. Topics discussed include healthy eating, exercise, the risks of drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, and the links between lifestyle and chronic diseases like type 2 diabetes. She also provides the workers with resources for cooking healthy foods at home and health screening information. Pardee has also worked with North County Health Services to give flu shots and other health screenings and education. José believes that the combination of working with the *Worksite Program* and North County Health Services has greatly improved the health of the workers. The employees are interested and actively engaged in the new services. “*They might not do all of these changes,*” says José, “*but at least they know about them.*”



**José, Safety Coordinator  
and Daisy, *Worksite  
Program* local  
representative**

## California Fit Business Kit Gives Days Inn the Tools Needed to Bring Home Healthy Habits

**Encinitas, CA; Hospitality; 50 employees**

In their four year partnership with the *Worksite Program*, The Pinnacle Hotel II Days Inn (Days Inn) in Encinitas has used many tools from the *California Fit Business Kit* to make changes for a healthier workplace, and their employees can feel the difference. Days Inn employees are mostly female housekeepers who work physically demanding jobs, but both Human Resources management and the *Worksite Program* strive to find ways to fit healthy eating and physical activity into their work schedule.

### **FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Healthy Meeting Policies
- Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs
- Ordering Farm Fresh Produce for Worksites
- Physical Activity Integration

### **WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

- Health fairs
- Healthy meetings & events
- Nutrition education & promotion
- Physical activity promotion
- Healthy incentives



**Maria, Human Resources Manager, with Days Inn Maintenance Technician**

### **Employees Love Fruity Fridays for an End-of-Week Treat**

Since their partnership with the *Worksite Program*, Days Inn has improved their healthy food options at meetings and has encouraged employees to bring healthy foods to their potluck gatherings. The *California Fit Business Kit's Check for Health* assessment helped them determine what changes were needed at Days Inn to improve wellness in ways that would work for them. One popular initiative that the *Worksite Program* brought to the Days Inn was Fruity Fridays. *Worksite Program* staff brought a basket of fruit, donated by the local food bank, every Friday for snacks for Days Inn employees. This was extremely popular and introduced new fruits to employees.

In addition to bringing healthy foods, local *Worksite Program* representative, Daisy, talks to employees at monthly meetings to offer nutrition education, recipes, cookbooks, resources to post at work, and other tips for eating healthy and staying active. *"Since the classes, I'm more aware of eating more vegetables steamed or in a salad,"* said a Days Inn employee. Human Resources Manager, Maria also noted, *"The second week that we had the program, I'd see [employees] come back to break and I'd see them snacking on bananas, mangos, oranges or yogurt. Before, I hardly saw them do that. I'd see them snack on pan dulce/sweet bread with their coffee. I started seeing a variety of fruits instead. Also for our pot lucks, we started bringing cactus salad, which is something we never did before."*

## Employees Connect the Dots by Bringing Healthy Eating Home

Many of the women have family or friends who have been impacted by obesity or diet-related chronic diseases. These classes help them learn how to prevent or cope with these issues and how to bring important health information to their loved ones. *"I have family members who have diabetes. I have spoken to them about how [the Worksite Program has] taught us about nutrition,"* says Flor, a housekeeper.

Healthy eating hasn't been the only change. Days Inn employees say that they are drinking more water than they used to, and feeling better because of it. *"I really liked the nutritional classes. I didn't have any idea how much sugar soda had. I used to drink a lot,"* says one employee.

## Stretching and Walking Clubs Give Employees a Chance to Warm Up for Their Shift

The Days Inn encourages their employees to stretch before shifts every day. The Inn provides exercise bands to use and a space for employees to stretch and warm up prior to work. Using Physical Activity tools from the *California Fit Business Kit*, the *Worksite Program* staff encourages employees to use the stairs instead of the elevator, and provides exercise cards and other information about walking during breaks. Participation is voluntary, but many participate. Those who don't participate still appreciate the resources and often exercise or walk after they get home. Maria notes that because it is such a physically demanding job, adding more exercise can be a challenge, but employees like having access to the information and understand the importance of getting regular exercise.

## Worksite Champion

The *Worksite Program* and The Days Inn have built a strong working relationship that has resulted in a winning wellness program. Maria has appreciated the support and resources that the *Worksite Program* has brought to Days Inn. Daisy believes Maria's approach has been the key to generating enthusiasm. *"[Maria] was open and really encouraging about the program. She preps the employees, they open up and do want to talk about what goes on at home,"* says Daisy. Most importantly, the employees have benefited from this relationship. When asked if she would recommend the program, one employee says, *"Yes, I really like the program. I would recommend it to anyone. I've tried many of the salad recipes in the cookbook given to us."* Maria agrees: *"Definitely yes. I've been told by other hotels that we really care about our staff because we take care of them."*

Since their partnership with the *Worksite Program*, Days Inn has improved their healthy food options at meetings and encouraged employees to bring healthy foods to their potluck gatherings.



Cafeteria display promoting fruits and vegetables

## Pomona Valley Workshop Takes Care of Disabled Adults and the Health of their Employees

**Montclair, CA; Manufacturing; 390 employees**

Pomona Valley Workshop, a nonprofit organization in San Bernardino County, provides a wide variety of services for mentally and physically disabled adults. Whether they are providing vocational skills on the production line, offering adult day care services, senior activities or job training, they are dedicated to helping their client-employees thrive and providing a healthy environment for everyone at their sites.

### *FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:*

Check for Health  
Worksite Wellness Committee Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines  
Physical Activity Clubs

### *WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:*

Health fairs  
Nutrition education & promotion  
Physical activity promotion

### **A Wellness Committee Leading the Way for Health**

The Pomona Valley Workshop began working with the *Worksite Program* in 2011 to improve the health of their employees and reduce health insurance costs. Supported by the *Worksite Program*, they assembled their Wellness Committee using the *California Fit Business Kit*. Their committee is led by Executive Director Karen, with volunteer committee members representing each of the five programs of the organization. Working closely with the *Worksite Program*, they have provided opportunities for nutrition education, healthy menus in the on-site cafeteria and weight loss challenges. Having strong Wellness Committee leadership with representatives from many departments has been one of Pomona Valley Workshop's strongest assets for making healthy changes in the workplace.

### **A Healthy Menu in the Cafeteria is Popular with Everyone**

Pomona Valley Workshop has an average of 70 employees and clients eating in the cafeteria daily. Since 2011, with the help of the *Worksite Program*, they have been learning how to integrate healthier choices into their menu. Using the *Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines* tool from the *California Fit Business Kit*, they have started implementing many small, but significant changes. For example, they have begun serving two healthy meals a week, which are designated by an apple symbol on their monthly menu. Their new cook, Sheila, is well versed in healthy cooking and shopping on a budget. She has increased healthy options every day and even "sneaks" some veggies into the traditional lunch recipes! Sheila has also focused on creating attractive and prominent displays for healthy foods, which has helped increase the sales of items like fruit, salads and granola bars.

Pomona Valley Workshop also utilizes materials from NEOPB's Harvest of the Month, offering menu choices and recipes featuring seasonal vegetables. Valerie, local representative from the *Worksite Program*, writes their monthly wellness newsletter and visits quarterly to offer nutrition or health education seminars that employees can attend during their paid workday.

### **The Biggest Loser Contest Promotes a Healthy Lifestyle — and Pays Off**

Elaine from the Wellness Committee has lost 7 lbs. so far in the Biggest Loser Contest, and she plans to keep going well after the contest is over. Pomona Valley Workshop has now successfully hosted this contest for two years in a row. The *Worksite Program* helps participants by providing education and resources about staying active and increasing fruit and vegetable consumption. *"The whole company can get together – we have our own personal cheerleaders. It helps!"* says Elaine. This year, the top three "losers" were awarded prizes including a paid day off, a bike donated by their health insurance provider, Kaiser Permanente, and \$25 and \$50 gift certificates for local businesses. Employees have found that the encouragement they give each other is a big incentive to get healthier.

The weight loss challenge, plus the nutrition education and healthier options at the cafeteria, are making a difference outside of work too. Elaine's husband noticed that she wasn't using her favorite creamy salad dressing at home. She said, *"Now I use tomatoes for flavor on my salad, so he got me a tomato plant."*

### **Overcoming Challenges and Planning for the Future**

As a service-providing nonprofit, Pomona Valley Workshop has faced many challenges in adopting wellness programs. They operate on a tight budget and many of the employees already wear many different hats in order to support the diverse goals and activities of the organization. To meet these challenges, Pomona Valley Workshop is taking wellness seriously, and with a strong leadership structure in place, has taken incremental steps towards improving the health of their employees and clients. Their partnership with the *Worksite Program* has been a great, no cost source of tools and support to help them. Their hope is to continue improving participation in the existing programs, while also adding some more structured physical activity programs. *"Some people aren't 'mind ready' to make changes,"* says Wellness Committee member Isabel, *"but repeating the message and leading by example is the way to make a difference."*

*"Some people aren't mind ready to make changes, but repeating the message and leading by example is the way to make a difference."*

Isabel, Wellness Committee Member

## Ruskin Manufacturing Company Gets Moving!

**Ontario, CA; Manufacturing; 140 employees**

For the last three years, Ruskin Manufacturing Company, an air conditioning manufacturing plant, has been working with the *Worksite Program* to improve the health of their 140 employees. They have used the *California Fit Business Kit* to form a wellness committee, assess their site with the *Check for Health* tool, and create wellness changes for their company. Using these tools, their enthusiastic Wellness Committee has been focused on getting healthy and getting moving!

### *FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:*

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs
- Improving Worksite Stairwells
- Physical Activity Integration
- Physical Activity Clubs

### *WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:*

- Health fairs
- Healthy meetings & events
- Nutrition education & promotion
- Physical activity promotion



### Stretching Warms Workers Up and Prepares Them for the Day

In 2010, Ruskin instituted a 15-minute paid, mandatory stretching or exercising period every morning. In the winter, this warms them up before getting started at their work station. In the summer, it beats the heat to stretch or exercise early in the morning. They mix it up to keep it interesting. It started with stretches and has moved on to kickboxing, yoga and Zumba®. Wellness Committee members have been trained in leading these exercises and take turns leading the rest of the employees. There is a wide range of ages and abilities – but no one is complaining about the morning exercise regimen. Guadelupe, a 65 year old employee, says “*Before [the exercises], my knee hurt a lot. Then we started stretching and now I can walk better.*”

### Volleyball, Basketball, Zumba® or Walking – There Really is Something for Everyone

At Ruskin, the Wellness Committee, working with the *Worksite Program* has created different types of activities to maximize participation. Employees regularly have informal volleyball or basketball tournaments during lunch breaks in an outdoor space behind the building. It has been outfitted with a basketball hoop and a volleyball net. These tournaments are very popular and those who don't participate often watch as they eat lunch.

Other types of physical activities recommended in the *California Fit Business Kit* are popular for employees who would rather stay inside or do something noncompetitive. Some employees sweat to indoor videos every day during lunch – including Zumba®, dance or aerobics. Other employees participate in a walking club. Pre-measured, 1-mile walking routes create a low stress, low impact workout for groups to enjoy during breaks or lunch. Ruskin employees have so much to choose from to stay active and healthy!

Popsicle sticks are at the bottom of the stairs to allow employees to count their trips for the *Improving Healthy Stairwells* tool



## Ruskin Employees Have Fun and Stay Healthy All Year Long

Recognizing the popularity of the daily basketball and volleyball lunch tournaments, the Wellness Committee organized a company-wide slam dunk contest. Everyone was given an extra 30 minutes for lunch and the company hosted a barbeque during the competition. Competitors dunked as many balls as they could in 30 seconds and the top three winners got a trophy or ribbons. Those who didn't compete were able to enjoy watching the event, eating lunch and fetching the ball. Just this year, with the help of the *Worksite Program*, Ruskin's Wellness Committee has organized:

- a managers vs. employees soccer tournament
- a club that organizes group hiking and cycling
- a health fair in the parking lot that featured a salsa making contest, hypertension/diabetes screening, massage, and a bike-blender smoothie maker. Employees were able to leave in groups of ten to visit the health fair during their regularly paid time
- a Biggest Loser Contest to see who could lose the most weight. They gave prizes and a paid day off to the winner, who lost about 20 lbs. in three months

The Wellness Committee at Ruskin models healthy living and is a dynamic force at the company. With the help of the *Worksite Program*, they are constantly coming up with new events and opportunities for Ruskin employees to embrace healthy lifestyles. For example, one Wellness Committee member who has lost over 100 lbs. in the last couple of years organized a group to participate in a 5K walk fundraiser for cancer.

## Environmental Changes Set a Tone for Health All Over the Site

Ruskin has put physical activity stations throughout their site to help employees fit exercise into their daily work routine. They used the *California Fit Business Kit's Improving Worksite Stairwells* tool to encourage people to walk the stairs and enable employees to track how many times they have done so. A can full of colored popsicle sticks was placed at the bottom of the staircase. Employees choose a colored stick and deposit it in another can at the top of the staircase. This allows them to easily keep track of how many trips they have made in a day and tally up the number of steps they've climbed. Other physical activity stations include a hula hoop station, a stretching station, and informative stations throughout the site which offer encouraging words, such as, "You could burn up to 544 calories per hour playing basketball", or "Twenty-four times around equals one mile!" These low-cost environmental changes are highly motivating for employees and set the tone for health all over the worksite.



Employees exercising during lunch break



Employees playing volleyball during lunch break



Employees doing the paid, mandatory stretching routine



A physical activity station for hula hooping

## Ruskin Cares About Employees and Improves Worker Safety

Three years ago, Ruskin's parent corporation asked management to find ways to reduce health costs and insurance rates, which led to the partnership between Ruskin and the *Worksite Program*. As a result of the new partnership and wellness changes, Human Resources Director, Julie, reports that workers' compensation requests are down and they see fewer injuries as a result of the mandatory morning stretches and the other health education and wellness activities that they are implementing. Beyond the bottom line, by making employee health a priority and allowing the site to be creative and dynamic in their events and activities, Ruskin is showing that it cares about the well-being of its employees. The employees get this message too, *"I lost 100 pounds before working here, but the work cultures has helped support my lifestyle change."* Plus, they are having fun and are enjoying the new programs and events that encourage them to lead a healthy lifestyle. Leticia, a Wellness Committee member says, *"I feel more energy every day and we're happy to come to work!"*

# Goodwill Industries, San Diego Partners to Develop Employee Well-being

**San Diego, CA; Manufacturing; 1,200 employees**

Goodwill Industries in San Diego is committed to the well-being of their 1,200 employees throughout their many enterprises, including retail and workforce training and development. They have created a strong Wellness Committee, working in partnership the *Worksite Program* on new initiatives to improve wellness for their employees.

**FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**  
Check for Health  
Worksite Wellness Committee  
Physical Activity Integration

**WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**  
Health fairs  
Nutrition education & promotion  
Physical activity promotion

## Employee Huddles Offer a Perfect Time for Stretching

Goodwill managers and employees regularly hold “huddles” to discuss issues. These huddles have also become a perfect time for group exercises and stretching. During exercise huddles, everyone stops what they are doing and exercises or stretches with guidance from a manager. One Wellness Committee member describes why these exercises are great for everyone: “[Exercise huddles] always seems to work great. Not only for the team-building aspect, but also for the quick minute break of physical activity. It’s like going to the doctor; you don’t know how much difference it makes in your life.” Another employee who participates in daily stretch breaks said, “It does a lot for your stress level and thought process.”

## Resources and Health Education Get the Wellness Committee on the Right Track

Daisy, local representative from the *Worksite Program* has met with the Goodwill Wellness Committee to determine their wellness needs by using the Check for Health tool from the *California Fit Business Kit*. This assessment allows the Wellness Committee to tailor their program to meet the wellness need of Goodwill’s employees. The *Worksite Program* provides recipes for healthy eating, Harvest of the Month fruit and vegetable information, and other nutrition and physical activity resources and tools for improving the health environment at Goodwill. The Wellness Committee sees the *Worksite Program* as a great resource for putting together their health programs and making their workplace as healthy as it can be.

*“We want to engage them. We’re doing other things in addition to the Wellness Program so that they know they’re not just workers. We’re a company that cares about them.”*

Brenda, Wellness  
Committee Head

## **A Health Fair to Kick Off the Program**

The Wellness Committee's new head, Brenda, is ready to start running with new ideas. The committee is looking forward to kicking off new initiatives with a health fair. They plan to offer food made from fresh fruits and vegetables, health screenings, an organized walk and other fun, healthy events. It is Brenda's hope that this health fair will increase employee awareness and engagement in the many new health and wellness initiatives that Goodwill is undertaking.

## **Goodwill is Committed to Developing Workers' Skills and Improving Employee Health**

Employees report that Goodwill is a caring company to work for. Goodwill's Learning and Development Department focuses on long term job placement for trainees and also welcomes people with disabilities or other barriers. The CEO of Goodwill personally gets to know all the employees and the company has a strong reputation in the community for lending a helping hand. Initiating wellness programs is all part of Goodwill's larger goal of taking care of its employees. Brenda says, *“We want to engage them. We’re doing other things in addition to the Wellness Program so that they know they’re not just workers. We’re a company that cares about them.”*

# Goodwill Industries, San Jose Partners with the *Worksite Program* to Grow Healthy Choices

**San Jose, CA; Manufacturing; 350 employees**

Goodwill Industries is a household name in many areas. It's where California recycles millions of pounds of merchandise every year. At Goodwill, that old sofa finds a new home, those too-small clothes find use, and bargain hunters find just the right vintage item at more than 800 store locations. Behind the scenes is a strong company mission

to build individual capacity for those entering or re-entering the workforce. In Goodwill San Jose, individuals find an employer committed to their personal health and well-being. Goodwill San Jose boasts a thriving community garden and hosts an annual employee party that promotes wellness. Soleil is an active member of the Human Resources Department and leads the Worksite Wellness Committee. In partnership with the *Worksite Program*, Soleil has implemented some simple steps to promote health and safety at the Goodwill warehouses and stores in the Silicon Valley.

**FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Ordering Farm Fresh Produce for Worksites

**WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

- Health fairs
- Nutrition education & promotion

## “Goodfest” Grows to Include Stanford Medical School Students

“Goodfest” is an annual employee-appreciation event that has received a makeover by the Wellness Committee. In 2013, for the first time, employees had access to a health screening where their Body Mass Index (BMI) and blood pressure were measured and where students from the Stanford Medical School conducted brief health screenings for stroke, diabetes and other chronic health problems. Many health screenings were completed, including some for people who had never before been to a doctor.

## Can't Get More Local Than This

The employee garden at this Goodwill site is another health success. Each year, employees come up with a list of items they would like to see grown in the garden. The on-site garden has tomatoes, squash, onions, cilantro, strawberries, and chickens! Employees tend that garden to assure a successful crop. Goodwill is so committed to the success of the garden that they have a part-time staff person responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the space, including weeding, planting, staking, and harvesting. The food grown in the garden is used in the employee cafeteria where all employees can get a good on-site cooked meal for less than five dollars.

Goodwill Industries, San Jose isn't just changing lives by providing jobs, they are improving health – one party and one garden at a time!



Employee garden grows fresh fruits and vegetables for the employee cafeteria.

### What's Next?

The strong Worksite Wellness Committee at Goodwill Industries has plans for expanding their involvement with the *Worksite Program* to include a re-vamp of the vending machines, policies on food served at meetings, and partnering with local health providers to ensure access to preventive health care. *"We are often someone's first employer."* says Soleil. *"This is a chance to show them how healthy a workplace can be."*

# South Bay Respite Services Inspire Far Ranging Home Care Employees to Get Healthy

**National City, CA; Social Services; 600 employees**

South Bay Respite Services, an in-home care provider for adults and children with physical or mental disabilities, doesn't gather with their entire 600-person workforce often. But, when they do, great things happen! Starting with their quarterly staff meetings, the office staff sets the tone for wellness by inspiring the whole workforce to make healthy choices and educating them on why it is important.

**FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Healthy Meeting Policies

**WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

- Health fairs
- Healthy meetings & events
- Nutrition education
- Physical activity promotion

## Staff Meetings Spread the Word about Health

South Bay Respite Services only convenes their workforce four times a year, but they make the most of that time to inform and inspire employees to make healthy choices. Human Resources Manager, Luis and Office Administrator, Alma, make up the Wellness Committee that was formed with the help of the *Worksite Program*. In their quarterly meetings with staff, they provide health education about exercise, sugar reduction and the importance of regularly consuming fruits and vegetables. The *Worksite Program* also provides monthly healthy tips and recipes using recipe cards, cookbooks and other materials that are posted in the office. Employees have responded enthusiastically and the Wellness Committee keeps an open dialogue with employees about future health topics of interest.

## Modeling Healthy Behavior and Using Tools from the *California Fit Business Kit* to Inspire Employees to Get Active and Lose Weight

Luis and Alma model healthy choices in the office and are always looking for new ways to spread the message to other employees. Luis is a runner who participated in a local 5K walk/run in 2012. Inspired by his commitment to health, a few office workers joined him and created an office running team. This year they are planning to increase participation. Luis says, *"It was a good test, and now we are more prepared."*

After seeing struggles with diabetes in the community, Alma has become a champion for healthy eating. South Bay Respite Services has adopted the *Healthy Meeting Policies* tool from the *California Fit Business Kit* for their office celebration gatherings. They eliminated cakes, have reduced other sugary treats, and added more healthy choices.



Office Staff of South Bay Respite Services

*“We try to set an example of the good programming. We try to eat healthy... and it is catching on.”*

Luis, Human Resources Manager

During the summer of 2013, everyone in the office was involved in a weight loss challenge. During this challenge, the employees became empowered by the knowledge and resources they gained from the *Worksite Program* to lose weight in a healthy way and to improve their personal health. Having these educational resources, plus the enthusiastic support and leadership from the Wellness Committee, has set a healthy tone in the office that has inspired others to change their behaviors and get involved. Luis says, *“We try to set an example of the good programming. We try to eat healthy... and it is catching on.”*

### **Educating Employees on Wellness Helps Clients Too**

Health education sessions and resources from the *Worksite Program* are very important to the staff at South Bay Respite Services because they see this education as a double benefit, delivering important information to both their employees and their clients. Luis notes, *“We want to engage our workers to eat healthy because they see a lot of people. If we can present this information to them, they are sources of communication — they can bring the message to everybody else. It’s not just a group of five; it’s a group of 500.”* This dual role of employees as recipients of health education and as health educators reflects South Bay Respite Services’ desire to respect their employees and provide high quality care to their clients.

### **Wellness Practices Reflect the Values of the Company**

South Bay Respite Services, as a caretaking company, takes a nurturing and respectful approach to their clients and employees. *“We try to make something different than the other service providers,”* Luis explains. Providing one-on-one service, and keeping an attractive and clean office make clients and employees feel good. Instituting wellness practices and policies takes this value one step further by demonstrating a true interest in the individual health needs of employees and clients. This approach sets South Bay Respite Services apart from other companies in their industry.

The Wellness Committee, in partnership with the *Worksite Program*, has many hopes and plans to expand their wellness activities in the future. Ideas include installing healthy vending machines, creating a website that includes health resources and increasing the amount of physical activity programming for their employees. Luis and Alma emphasize, *“We need to think outside of the box. We want to see what else we can bring in, and who we can reach out to.”* They are excited about new ideas and avenues to improve wellness for their employees and clients.

## Sunrise Farm Labor Shows Health and Safety go Hand-in-Hand

**Huron, CA; Agriculture; 2,000 employees**

Sunrise Farm Labor has been operating for 25 years providing contract labor to farms across the Central Valley of California. Owner Chuck has seen many changes in the industry during that time. One shift for Sunrise Farm Labor is that they are increasingly emphasizing worker safety and health. *“For the last 10-15 years safety has been our right arm,”* says Chuck. Today, with support from the *Worksite Program*, Sunrise Farm Labor

recognizes that educating and providing tools and resources for employees about health is a key part of keeping the workforce safe.

### **FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

Check for Health  
Worksite Wellness Committee  
Go for H<sub>2</sub>O  
Healthy Meeting Policies  
Physical Activity Integration

### **WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

Healthy meetings & events  
Healthy partnerships  
Nutrition education  
Physical activity promotion



**Sunrise Farm Labor employees**

## Stretching Every Day Prepares Aging Workforce for the Day

At Sunrise Farm Labor, workers are required and paid to participate in daily stretching to prepare for work. The *Worksite Program* has provided resources and education about stretching and other physical activity through staff support and the *California Fit Business Kit* to Sunrise Farm Labor. When workers arrive at their worksite, they are led through a stretching regimen by the site supervisor. Chuck emphasizes that the stretching is a way to help workers stay healthy and injury free. He also believes it has reduced workers' compensation claims, which benefits the employees and the company.

## Sunrise Farm Labor Emphasizes Safety and Health at All Levels of Employment

The health of the workers at Sunrise Labor Farms is an important topic for Chuck. He was the first business owner in the Central Valley region to approach the *Worksite Program* about improving workers' health through wellness practices. Nutrition is a particular area of interest, Chuck says. *“We need to educate the people about better eating habits and make them aware of the cause and effect of unhealthy habits.”*

Heat-related illness is one of the biggest threats to their workforce. In the summers during peak harvest months, temperatures soar past 100 degrees. Sunrise Farm Labor has frequent management meetings emphasizing company safety measures to keep workers safe in the heat. The supervisors have weekly “tailgate” meetings with their work crews to provide information, trainings and other resources on staying safe in the field. Safety measures that the company takes include providing water (at least 1 quart per worker per hour); shade

*“We are giving workers tools for life, not just making them attend meetings or jump through bureaucratic hoops.”*

Alvaro, 15 Year Employee

structures every quarter mile; pulling workers out of the field when temperatures reach 95 degrees; and training on what to wear, how to look out for others, and how to recognize signs of heat illness.

One important consideration that has become increasingly relevant is that the workforce is aging (50% of the workforce is 50 years old or older) and vulnerable to lifestyle related conditions, such as obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure. All of these factors can increase a person’s risk of heat-related illness and exhaustion. That is one reason that Sunrise Farm Labor is pairing worker safety with health. Chuck emphasizes this point, *“The healthier people are and the more training that they have, the better our workforce will be.”*

On-site supervisor Ruben is concerned about the risk of dehydration and exhaustion when workers drink sugary drinks like energy drinks and sodas at work. He points out that these drinks can dehydrate and deplete workers. Sunrise Farm Labor educates workers about drinking water instead of sugary drinks. The company is partnering with the *Worksite Program* to develop strategies to educate about healthy foods and beverages.

### **Integrity of Sunrise Farm Labor is Demonstrated by its Treatment of Workers**

Chuck is proud to have operated Sunrise Farm Labor for 25 years under the same license and the same name, which is rare in the farm labor contract industry. Employees note that one of the unique aspects of Sunrise Farm Labor is their efforts to train workers on safety and health, and their strict adherence to protocols and safety measures. Chuck notes that offering education and following protocols is extremely important. *“We are giving workers tools for life, not just making them attend meetings or jump through bureaucratic hoops. Following safety and health protocols protect both the company and the workers.”* Ruben agrees, *“It is a good company. We are supposed to treat workers how you want to be treated. It’s like a family here.”* Alvaro, a 15 year employee, reported that many people want to work for Sunrise Farm Labor. *“Other places don’t treat you the same. Sometimes you get dropped off in the middle of the field and no one comes and checks on you. Sometimes they don’t even leave you equipment.”*

### **The Worksite Program Adapts to Agricultural Workers’ Needs by Offering New Tools in the California Fit Business Kit**

The *Worksite Program* recognizes and understands the issues around hydration and stretching that Chuck and other supervisors at Sunrise Farm Labor have described. They have responded by creating new tools geared just for outdoor workers who are doing physical work – like farm laborers. In 2014, the *Worksite Program* unveiled a new hydration tool, *Go for H<sub>2</sub>O*, to help ensure that workers get enough water in the field and reduce their consumption of sugary drinks like sodas and energy drinks. Additionally, the *Worksite Program* has developed the new *Physical Activity Integration* tool to help employers reduce injuries of

workers who are not properly warmed up prior to performing physical labor. As with any physical activity, failure to properly stretch and warm-up beforehand may increase the likelihood of injury. The experience of working with Sunrise Farm Labor and other agricultural worksites is helping the *Worksite Program* develop the additional tools to spread these important health and safety practices to other agricultural worksites.

## UltraPro Collectibles Loses Weight and Gets Active – the Right Way

**Commerce, CA; Manufacturing; 80 employees**

UltraPro Collectibles, a manufacturer and supplier of gaming and collectible accessories, has spent a year working to improve the health of their 80 employees – and what a difference they have made! With the leadership of Human Resources Manager, Maria, partnering with the *Worksite Program*, UltraPro has come a long way towards equipping their workforce with the knowledge and tools they need to eat healthier and live more active lives.

### **FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs
- Healthy Meeting Policies
- Physical Activity Clubs
- Take Action!

### **WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

- Health fairs
- Healthy meetings & events
- Healthy partnerships
- Nutrition education
- Physical activity promotion
- Healthy incentives



**Bilingual bulletin board promoting good health**

### **UltraPro Gets Healthy the Right Way with Help from the *Worksite Program***

In July 2012, the management of UltraPro decided they wanted to work on employee wellness and tasked Maria with implementing initiatives to improve health. She became a true champion for health, initiating a weight loss challenge and finding resources online and in the community to help educate employees about health issues like cholesterol and diabetes. She launched the program and built enthusiasm among the employees, but after six months she realized that she could not do it alone. She found the right partner in the *Worksite Program*, who provided education, tools and support. Together they have created a strong wellness program that has had a positive impact on the employees. “[The *Worksite Program*] has been a great support system, and they’re bringing information that I’ve not been able to bring myself. They’ve been a great asset to the program that I started that probably would have died if it wasn’t for them helping me out and [creating] these fresh new ideas.”

### **The *Take Action!* Challenge Inspires Employees to Eat More Fruits and Vegetables and to Lose Weight**

When Maria initiated the original weight loss challenge, she wanted to give employees the knowledge and resources they needed to lose weight in a healthy way, and the *California Fit Business Kit* provided just the right tool with *Take Action!*. *Take Action!* inspired employees to eat more fruits and vegetables and to be more active for ten weeks. The *Worksite Program* provided weekly classes, food demonstrations, exercise demonstrations like yoga, and distributed resources for healthy eating and active living. Next, *Take Action!*

helped employees examine the daily recommendations for fruit and vegetable consumption and develop strategies for meeting the recommendation for those who weren't. Maria says, "It's been great. I really appreciate all the work that [the Worksite Program has] done and all the information they've brought to our employees. And [the employees] learned a lot. They've learned more in the last 3-4 months than maybe they have in the whole year." Teresa, an UltraPro employee, says that since the beginning of the program, she has been more careful about her food portions and nutrition. She eats more fruits, is cooking fewer fried foods, now reads nutrition labels and has lost 20 pounds! It has been good for her family too because she shares the information with them. "The program is very important because it has helped everyone in the company."

One great way that the *Worksite Program* is tailored to meet the specific needs of the company is by providing bilingual presentations and resources. Because the company has many spanish-speakers, this bilingual, bicultural approach helps make the presentations and resources accessible to all employees.

The company is now hosting another weight loss challenge, but this time, they have the benefit of having health education and resources from the *Worksite Program* to make sure that people are safe and healthy in their weight loss. UltraPro offers incentives for participating, and the biggest loser is rewarded with a paid day off, a \$25 gift card, and his or her photo posted on the health board. Monthly winners who lose the most weight receive a gift card and his or her photo posted. The weight loss challenges are popular with the employees and visible for those who don't participate – promoting a healthy lifestyle and illustrating the rewards.

### Walking Clubs and Healthy Meetings Reinforce Healthy Habits

At UltraPro, many activities support weight loss and healthy living. The *Fit Business Kit* has provided the tools for them to create four Walking Club groups that go out every day at 11:00, 11:30, 1:00 and 3:00, to coincide with employee morning and afternoon breaks. They have an outdoor route around the building and an indoor route around the perimeter of the warehouse. They have measured the inside distance to be a quarter mile and can get five times around on their 15 minute break – that's pretty fast walking! Exercise equipment in the game room, which had lain dormant for years, is now being used with enthusiasm, owing to the wellness program's emphasis on exercise.

Healthy Meeting resources from the *California Fit Business Kit* have led to UltraPro offering healthy choices at their celebratory meetings for birthdays and holidays. While cupcakes or cakes were once the only option at these gatherings, now employees can choose low sugar, lowfat options, such as strawberry shortcake or yogurts. They also offer healthy choices for working meetings, such as deli sandwiches with fruit or vegetables on the side and water to drink.



UltraPro employee



Champions for Change materials provided by local Worksite Program representative



**Local Worksite Program representative, Esther, right, with an UltraPro employee**

## A Healthier Workforce is a Happier Workforce

One important motivation for improving employee health is to reduce sick days. It is Maria's perception that employees are coming in to work more often, and are happier and more productive. She explains that walking clubs and shared goals give employees an opportunity to get to know each other better. *"I think people are happier. I think we've built up the team environment because while they are walking, they are talking. And they are not talking about work; they are talking about life around them, their families, stuff like that. So I think it's built up the team. It makes for a happier environment around here."* Worksite Program representative, Esther, applauds Maria's contribution to the wellness program, saying, *"Maria has been able to foster a family environment and people feel comfortable with her. There is trust, they feel taken care of."* Filemon, the employee who won the first weight loss challenge by losing 17 pounds, agrees that the program has had a positive impact on the work environment. *"There is less stress involved when people are healthy; it's a good environment."*

*"There is less stress involved when people are healthy, it's a good environment."*

Esther, Worksite Program Representative

# Northgate González Markets Prioritize Health and Community with Winning Wellness Program

Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego counties, CA; Retail; 5,700 employees

Northgate González Market (“Northgate”) is a family-owned chain of grocery stores that currently owns 39 stores throughout Southern California and employs over 5,700 people. Their stores cater specifically to the Latino population – featuring traditional Latino foods and offering specialty services, such as tortillería and prepared foods in their cocinas. Northgate Corporation shows that they care about health and community through unique and ambitious wellness programming for their employees and their customers. Northgate Wellness Program Manager Teresa says, “We are becoming a wellness portal and it is our mission through our stores to be able to educate and guide employees and customers to make healthier choices for themselves and their whole families.” Because of the large scale of their operation and the reach of grocery stores to impact the community, the company is making a significant impact by infusing a culture of wellness and health into their business practices.

**FIT BUSINESS KIT TOOLS USED:**

- Check for Health
- Worksite Wellness Committee
- Establishing Worksite Walking Clubs
- Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines
- Physical Activity Clubs
- Physical Activity Integration

**WELLNESS ACTIVITIES:**

- Health fairs
- Healthy meetings & events
- Healthy partnerships
- Nutrition education & promotion
- Physical activity promotion
- Healthy incentives

*“I think it’s a great program, its helping us all very much. All of the employees as well as in their homes.”*

Northgate González Market Employee

## Branded Wellness Program Gains Support from the Worksite Program

In 2009, the González family, in an effort to give back to the communities in which they live and serve, developed a wellness program. Branded *Viva la Salud*, the goals of the program are to improve the health of employees and consumers. Northgate gained support for their efforts through a partnership with the NEOPB – Retail Program and Worksite Program. As Northgate has strengthened and expanded their wellness programs, their partnership with the Worksite Program remains a critical part of *Viva la Salud*. The Worksite Program provides regular staff support at Northgate Market stores, routinely working directly with employees and store managers to improve wellness programs at the store and educate employees on healthy choices. The Worksite Program also provides education, resources and tools for healthy eating and active living. They use these materials for on-site education and demonstrations, and Champions for Change provides online resources for Northgate’s corporate



Viva La Salud hanging poster promoting the quality 5 day guarantee in produce department

website. Teresa noted, “*Champions for Change [Worksite Program] is always willing to support us on giving us the advice and/or tools needed so we can better the community and our resources that we have at the store.*”

The approach of *Viva la Salud* is to target both employees and customers by improving healthy choices for customers in stores and increasing opportunities and education for employees. For their customers, Northgate has created signage, education and increased healthy food choices. They have implemented healthy cooking techniques in their prepared food departments, including using whole grains, decreased sugar, and more fruits and vegetables. They have increased the number of options and visibility of healthy grains, prepared produce, salad bars and organic foods. These changes are geared primarily towards consumers but also set a tone for healthy living for employees, who often shop and eat at the stores.



Northgate employees receiving nutrition education from local Worksite Program representative, Esther, in L.A. County

### Stores Organize for Health and Have Fun Doing It!

In 2013, Northgate transformed their existing safety teams into *Buen Estar* teams, or “well-being” teams that include representatives from each store department. These teams meet weekly to discuss safety and wellness issues within the store. *Buen Estar* teams work with the *Worksite Program* to help determine the focus of each store’s wellness activities. Programs differ from store to store, although many of the tenets of the *Viva la Salud* are similar across stores.

- Each store keeps a *Buen Estar* bulletin board in the break room that provides resources, tools and information about health from the *Worksite Program*.
- Representatives from the *Worksite Program* teach educational sessions at each store about healthy eating and active living during employee breaks.
- Individual stores and the Northgate Corporate office have organized times set aside daily for stretching and physical activity.
- Individual stores have used the *Worksite Program’s California Fit Business Kit* to organize Physical Activity Clubs – including Walking Clubs, sports teams (especially soccer), yoga, and Zumba® groups. These clubs meet during break time or during off-hours for organized physical activity. Northgate has an employee soccer league that regularly plays against each other in store-based teams. They are looking to develop a similar volleyball league to appeal to women.
- Northgate stores and corporate office participate in a 5K Run/Walk. There is an organized annual Northgate 5K run, in which employee teams train and participate together. In 2010, Northgate Corporate initiated participation in a 5K race and had 75 people participate, 80% of whom had never done a 5K before. In 2013, over 250 employees participated.

- Company-wide, Northgate hosts a Biggest Loser Contest to encourage weight loss through physical activity. Employees participate in teams of five. In a recent contest at store 27 in Chula Vista participants lost between 11 and 20 pounds and the winner of the contest won a tablet computer.

### **Viva la Salud Helping Employees Make Healthier Choices for Themselves and Their Families**

Employees at Northgate stores are clear about the positive impact that the wellness activities have had in their lives. Education about healthier food and beverage choices, the importance of physical activity, and increased access to healthier food has made a big difference in many employees' lives. Many employees noted that health risks from being overweight are prevalent in Latino culture. Ramon, an employee from the Northgate Paramount store in the Los Angeles area said, *"That the employer is doing these changes, it is good for the entire community... unfortunately the Latino community sometimes lacks information and this program has helped spread the word, and little by little we live healthier lives."*

These changes in diet benefit the family and community of employees as well. A Paramount store employee noted that her son did not previously eat a very healthy diet, but through her example, he has now improved his diet and is more physically active. An older employee from the Norwalk store in the Los Angeles area has lost 13 pounds from eating healthier. She also regulated her grandchildren's diet and has set limits on sugary drinks like soda. These changes have allowed her to be more active with her grandchildren and she is now able to play with them in the park, which is something she was unable to do before. Another employee agrees, *"I think it's a great program, its helping us all very much; all of the employees as well as in their homes."* These individuals' experiences mirror Northgate's mission to encourage and empower employees and customers to lead healthier lives.

### **Wellness Activities Support Northgate's Good Business Practices**

Teresa, Northgate Human Resources Senior Manager, believes, *"If employees are exercising and eating healthy it is keeping them [...] from missing work."*

For Northgate, *Viva la Salud* appears to be a successful business strategy for sales and employment. They feel their expanded healthy selections and education to the public has resulted in growing sales and increasing popularity across their stores. They also believe they have seen lowered employee absenteeism and health insurance costs since they began *Viva la Salud*.

Northgate Corporate continues to explore new ways to improve employee health and decrease company costs, including a new program to provide reduced health insurance rates to employees who take preventative health measures, such as smoking cessation or weight loss.



Northgate employees promoting the bilingual nutrition education signage at shelf level



Northgate store management from Chula Vista, San Diego supporting their worksite wellness program

## Caring, Innovation, and Flexibility Help Create Success for *Viva la Salud*

Northgate and the *Worksite Program* developed their wellness strategy with employees as a top priority. They recognize that employees need to be the ambassadors of health to the customers, and that as a company they need to live their values within their corporate practices. This strategy has allowed them to build a successful program in which employees feel cared for, and enthusiastically spread the message of healthy eating and active living to customers, family and community members.

Northgate also shows that they are willing to try new things and give stores the flexibility to implement their own ideas.

### Healthy Options in the Cocina

The Anaheim Store in Orange County is piloting new, healthier options in The Mexican Kitchen (also known as “Cocina”) by bringing in two new chefs to incorporate principles of healthy eating with natural ingredients and traditional flavors in traditional Mexican meals. This will provide customers and employees with healthy food options that are consistent with the nutrition information they are learning through the *Worksite Program* and *Viva la Salud*. For example, they have developed a vegetarian posole, a Southwestern salad, and a grilled vegetable side dish with peppers, zucchini and cactus. Employee response has been overwhelmingly positive. Northgate’s hope is to grow the program and to add new stores that offer healthier prepared foods to their customers and employees.

### Nike 3-On-3 Basketball Tournament at L.A. Live

In late July 2013, Northgate Corporate was buzzing with anticipation as they prepared to participate in the Nike 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament at L.A. Live. This tournament included teams from other major corporations throughout Southern California. The corporate team moved quickly to distribute information to the stores and to recruit players. They recruited players from stores, distribution and the corporate office and held a company-wide 3-on-3 basketball tournament at the on-site basketball courts at Northgate Corporate offices. They were able to get 24 (all male) teams from all three counties to compete. The tournament was three evenings of play and many fun side attractions, including an in-house sports announcer, cheering sections and fun team names. The top four teams went on to compete in the L.A. Live Tournament.



Store management in Paramount receiving a safety and wellness award



Flyer to promote Nike-sponsored tournament

## Employee Health Ambassadors are Trained to Advocate for Healthy Food Choices

Northgate has hired a full time, bilingual dietitian as a pilot program. One of their overall goals is to create healthy choices in every department of the store. For example, they offer lean meats in the Meat Department and whole grains and low-sugar goods in the Bakery. The dietitian trains employees to be “experts” on health and nutrition by spending time educating them on the healthy choices available within their own departments. The dietitian identifies employees to serve as health ambassadors. Health ambassadors are responsible for leading the efforts to educate customers and other employees on healthy eating. By increasing employees’ knowledge of health and nutrition, Northgate hopes to further empower employees and educate customers on making healthy food choices.

## Northgate is a Shining Example of What Community Partnerships and Motivated Businesses Can Achieve!

The *Worksite Program* has supported Northgate from the beginning in creating opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating in the stores. Their in-store support through local *Worksite Program* representatives, educational materials and online resources provides the on-the-ground education and support that has made such a profound difference in Northgate employees’ lives. Additionally, the *Worksite Program* has provided the framework for Northgate to develop its own policies and practices at the corporate level. As Teresa says, “Our #1 partner in the community is Champions for Change [*Worksite Program*].” The combination of the in-store approach and top down policies and practices from corporate has indeed shown, as Henry, *Worksite Program* local representative said, “I’ve learned from Northgate Markets that everything is possible if you believe it. At Northgate Market, it can be done.”



Employees excited about the healthier options being offered for their breaks and lunch

## Acknowledgements

The Nutrition Education Obesity Prevention Branch recognizes the following key contributors in the development of this project:

### Public Health Institute

Jane Beal	Emily Pérez
Stephanie Carillo	Iain Rylett
Amy Delisio	Kamaljeet Singh-Khaira
Kristy Garcia	Sharon Sugerman
Jerry Herrera	Betty Sun
Randal Longbottom	

### California Department of Public Health

Jackie Richardson

### Smith and Lehmann Consulting

Marisol Ayala  
Erika Lehmann  
Jeff Marquez  
Nicole Oehmke  
Evan Schmidt

### Worksite Program Regional Managers

Eddie Arellano – Central Valley Health Network  
Esther Bush – Los Angeles County Department of Public Health  
Valerie Comeaux – County of Riverside Community Health Agency  
Suellen Haggerty – Santa Clara County Public Health Department  
Daisy Lozano – University of San Diego Community Pediatrics  
Brandi Salters – Health Education Council  
Henry Torres – Orange County Health Care Agency

### Participating worksites and the staff of:

Arteaga's Food Centers  
Camfil U.S.A., Inc.  
Embassy Suites  
International Seal  
Pardee Tree Nursery  
Days Inn  
Pomona Valley Workshop  
Ruskin Manufacturing Company  
Goodwill Industries San Diego  
Goodwill Industries San Jose  
South Bay Respite Services  
Sunrise Farm  
UltraPro Collectibles  
Northgate González Markets





This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education, known in California as CalFresh. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit [www.CaChampionsForChange.net](http://www.CaChampionsForChange.net).

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