



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: Creating Healthier Worksite Environments

Intervention Summary

The Fresno County Champions for Change's Worksite Program partners with employers throughout Fresno County to create healthier environments for their employees. The Worksite Program, in partnership with California Health Collaborative, aims to improve access to healthy foods and physical activity at workplaces, foster supportive work environments that encourage healthy lifestyle choices, and establish public policies that bolster health promotion efforts at worksites in order to empower low-income workers to consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables and enjoy physical activity every day.

Fresno County has high rates of overweight and obese adults (30.0% in 2011).¹ The Worksite Program focuses in various settings in the communities of Sanger, Kerman, Parlier, and Reedley, due to these locations having high rates of obesity and chronic diseases, as well as being considered food deserts.² Settings include local businesses, retail sites, and schools. As these health related problems layer in these cities, it is important that focused education and resources are applied to worksites located there. In Sanger, the Worksite Program benefits about 350 employees at four worksites: Del Monte, Gong's Market, Washington Academic Middle School (WAMS), and Jefferson Elementary School. Most of these employees are part of the SNAP-Ed eligible population. In Kerman, the Worksite Program is implemented with the staff at Sun Empire Elementary School. In Parlier, the Worksite Program is at U-Save Market, where about 36 employees enjoy the benefits of the program.

School Districts

Champions for Change started a pilot project to implement the Worksite Program in school districts. While the Worksite Program has been in existence for years, it is the first time that schools have been able to participate.

¹ UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. <http://healthpolicy.ucla.edu/Pages/Adult-Obesity.aspx>

² Food Access Research Atlas, <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>

WAMS is one of three school worksites making progress in improving their employees' health. WAMS is already conducting the following activities from the Fit Business Kit with their employees; completed the Check for Health, Wellness Committee, Physical Activity Integration, Employee Wellness board, and currently working on Healthy Dining Menu Guidelines. With a Wellness Council in place and physical activity classes for staff already happening on a regular basis, WAMS was excited to begin the Worksite Program with Champions for Change. Thrive Fitness has also partnered with this worksite to promote physical activity through a membership discount for WAMS employees and a conversation has started to have a weekly gym instructor go to the school to provide an exercise class for all staff. Through the Check for Health evaluation, the Wellness Council wanted to pursue healthy options for staff lunches. Discussions have begun with the director of nutrition about providing more of a variety of vegetables for a staff salad bar.

Jefferson Elementary School (JES) is in the beginning stages of the Worksite Program. JES selected their priority activities from the Fit Business Kit. Food demonstrations have been provided by Champions for Change staff to promote healthy recipes and introduce the Worksite Program to employees. Their Wellness Council has also started to talk about implementing a "bike to school" week during spring break.

Sun Empire Elementary School implemented their first walking competition during the timeframe of April 8, 2015 to April 30, 2015. The walking competition took place strictly during school hours and only Monday through Friday. Teachers and staff were given pedometers to track steps and reported these steps weekly. Teachers and staff were separated by grade levels and other categories to encourage teamwork and create competition. During the walking competition, the Champions for Change program assisted with providing two food samplings and educational sessions during lunch breaks to encourage staff to get in their steps, as well as educate them on the importance of reducing the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages, information on MyPlate, and portion sizes.

General Businesses

Champions for Change has continuously worked with local businesses in our local communities for years to promote healthy eating and physical activity among worksite employees. Doing so has helped to improve overall health and productivity for the businesses that are involved.

Gong's Market is one of two retail sites that have been implementing the Worksite Program for their employees and has done numerous activities from the Fit Business Kit. Gong's Market completed the Check for Health, Employee Wellness Board, and Physical Activity Integration and is working towards adding a breastfeeding room to the grocery store. One of the key activities encouraged in the Fit Business Kit is walking. At Gong's Market, there was a partnership built with the insurance broker to receive pedometers for employees to participate in a walking competition. Using pedometers in an effort to create an atmosphere of health, they participated in a one month program called Step It Up 2015. Through this program, Gong's Market employees increase their everyday physical activity levels using a pedometer to track their physical activity. The owner was willing to purchase movie tickets for those participating employees. Pre-tests

and post-tests were taken before and after the competition. Results showed that the competition was able to motivate employees and help them think about how much physical activity was needed for good health. Three of the 20 participants continued to be physically active and ate healthier, each losing weight from a range of 10 to 15 pounds. After the competition, the employee wellness board in the break room continues to be an area where employees can learn about healthy eating and physical activity, as well as the importance of choosing water over sugar sweetened beverages. In addition, a partnership was made with a local gym, Thrive Fitness, where an employee discount was given to those who signed up for the gym. There has also been collaboration with WIC and First Five of Fresno to receive funding to add a breastfeeding room that both customers and employees can benefit from using. The application for funding has been submitted and a response should be received by October 1, 2015.



(Winner of Gong's Walking Competition)

U-Save Market is the other retail site that has also been implementing activities from the Fit Business Kit for the Worksite Program. U-Save Market has implemented a wellness board and a water station for employees in the break room. The wellness board allows for employees to share healthy recipes, motivational quotes, quick physical activity exercises, and other health-related information with one another. In addition, Harvest of the Month is posted and updated every month on the board, to which the worksite coordinator posts corresponding recipes with the fruit or vegetable being highlighted. A water station is being implemented to encourage U-Save Market employees to drink more water rather than sugar sweetened beverages. The worksite coordinator sets up the water station and, at times, does fruit-infused water as well. The Worksite Program and Re-Think Your Drink educational materials have also been posted on the walls around the break room for employees to read.



(U-Save Market's Wellness Board)



(U-Save Market's Water Station)



Del Monte is a local business in Sanger that is in the beginning stages of the Worksite Program and selecting their priority activities from the Fit Business Kit. Food demonstrations have been provided by Champions for Change staff to promote healthy recipes. Del Monte has been focusing on providing their employees with information and education on nutrition. With the amount of time given to Champions for Change staff to come into the worksite, food demonstrations have been done to educated staff about what worksite wellness is and connect the Harvest of the Month recipes with those that are being promoted at their children's schools. Also, free or low cost physical activity opportunities have been posted on the staff wellness board, such as the gym membership discount and classes that are provided by the City of Sanger Parks and Recreation Department.

There have been numerous partners that have contributed to the successes of the Worksite Program. Important partners that have given physical activity opportunities at multiple worksites have been Thrive Fitness and its manager in providing gym membership discounts, as well as City of Sanger Parks and Recreation with the city-run low cost classes like Zumba, kickboxing, open basketball, and volleyball opportunities.

Champions for Change have also worked with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation to provide technical assistance to Kerman Unified School District in their efforts to make healthier changes through the Healthier Schools Program. Champions for Change worked with the principal and a teacher from Sun Empire Elementary School, to tailor specific worksite wellness components to their site.

For Gong's Market specifically, United Health Centers – WIC and First 5 have been important in starting the application process to receive funding to add a breastfeeding room to a grocery store. Gong's Market's insurance broker Kutz Kiehl Insurance & Financial was a great supporter and donated the pedometers to start the pedometer competition. The Fresno County Office of Education staff, Champions for Change funded partners, have been helpful and provided needed information about Harvest of the Month to connect to WAMS and retailers.

For the current worksite activities that have been implemented at U-Save Market, there are two instrumental individuals whom Champions for Change partnered with to create a healthier work environment: the owner and an employee designated as the worksite coordinator. The owner is supportive of all Champions for Change work that is provided to both U-Save Market employees and customers. The worksite coordinator

continuously updates the wellness board, sets up the water station for employees, and brainstorms ideas that may be beneficial to sustain a healthy work environment with other employees. In addition, local gyms have been willing to provide membership discounts to U-Save Market employees who choose to register as a member and have given free 1 week trial passes to employees as well.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

One barrier with the Worksite Program was the explanation of the program itself to all of retail employees. When the program first started, no one understood what the wellness board was for or why educational posters were suddenly around the break room. To overcome this barrier, Champions for Change staff provided food demonstrations to the employees to gain a better understanding of Champions for Change and the importance of the Worksite Program.

Another barrier was the frequency in which the water station at U-Save Market is set up for use. While the worksite coordinator sets up the water station at each of her scheduled shifts, she is one person, and does not have a shift every day, nor does she work for the full hours in which the store is open. Champions for Change staff discussed this issue with both the owner and worksite coordinator. As a result, the owner has agreed to designate another employee to help share the water station responsibilities.

There were also barriers with the walking competitions that were conducted. The pedometer competition started with donated pedometers that employees could keep. However, many employees did not continue with the walking competition due to difficulties with the pedometers, which were of poor quality. Once better quality pedometers were purchased per Champions for Change approval, which employees could borrow through a checkout system, many employees joined the competition, but many did not want to try again due to first experience. Another barrier was the design of the walking competition and the guidelines of only walking during the school day. Some staff felt like the day needed to start earlier to equate for their morning duties while on campus. The staff themselves decided to make changes to the rules mid-competition and felt it worked out well for the rest of the competition.

Results and Achievements

In general, the implementation of the Worksite Program has helped employees broaden their view on the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables, as well as incorporating physical activity and water consumption into their lifestyles. Wellness boards have been beneficial to employees, as it allows them to connect with one another and have shared interests. Employees contribute to wellness boards to share healthy recipes with one another, as well as physical activity opportunities that they may attend in their local communities. There are frequent conversations discussing what should be on the wellness board next.

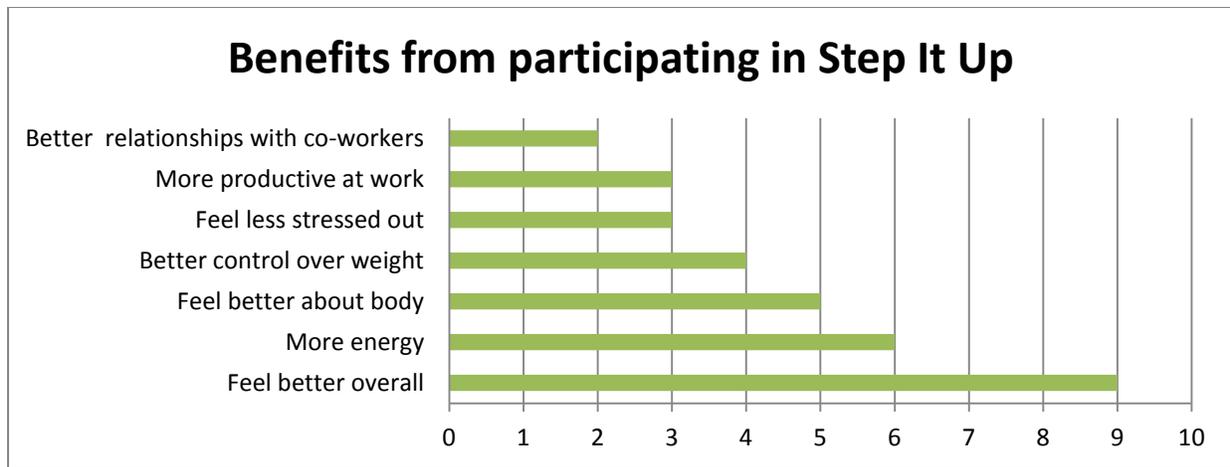
One of the most successful activities achieved by worksites is walking competitions for employees. The walking competition at Sun Empire Elementary School was very

successful and participants were eager to start their next competition. One success achieved came from the walking competition was the establishment of “Walking Wednesdays” assisted by Fresno County Office of Education (Champions for Change partner). Teachers, staff, and students walked around the track outside during lunch and recess with music provided for entertainment. Another great success was in the timing of the competition. The staff decided to compete in the competition during April which fell during testing time. Since this is usually a time where staff are more sedentary, this was a great use of time to get them more active. Another achievement from the walking competition was the level playing field the employees created for themselves. Since they were only counting steps during the school day, this allowed for those that may not be as active outside during the school days to still feel like they could compete.



(“Walking Wednesdays” at Sun Empire)

A walking competition was also done with Gong’s Market employees, which not only motivated staff to be more physically active, but it has also left them yearning for more activities. The walking competition has also started a consciousness of healthy eating. Some employees even lost 10-15 pounds after the pedometer competition was over. “The pedometer competition started my motivation to eat healthier and be more physically active,” said one of Gong’s employees who lost 10 pounds. Evaluation of the four week walking competition showed that of the 11 participants, on average, participants met their goal 2.6 weeks of the program, with some meeting their goal only for one week, while others met their goal all four weeks. All of the participants reported feeling good about themselves as they participated, and most reported feeling a sense of support from their peers (10 out of 11). Additionally, all of the participants would encourage others to participate and almost all would participate in the program if it was offered again (10 out of 11). They also reported benefiting from the competition in various ways; the most common benefit reported was feeling better overall (9 out of 11), followed by having more energy (6 out of 11), and feeling better about their bodies (5 out of 11). Additional benefits reported are summarized here:



Future Directions/Sustainable Success

While there has been much success with the Worksite Program this year, there are still new plans for the future Participating worksites with a wellness council demonstrate more success and sustainability of the activities. For those that do not have wellness councils, Champions for Change understands the importance of having one in place and hopes to help create Wellness Councils to sustain the work that has been started at worksites.

Contact information about this Narrative

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