

Corporate wellness helps all involved By Mike DeCinti

In my short time writing these articles for The Robesonian, I have been concentrating my efforts on, what I like to think of as, three simple ways to begin living a healthier life. We've discussed how important it is to quit smoking, the need to make better choices with the quality *and quantity* of the food we eat, the importance of drinking water and getting more exercise in our life.

When you look at it, it really does seem simple enough. I mean it's a total of eight words (quit smoking, eat better, drink water, exercise more) but we all know those eight words carry with them a lot of hard work and dedication, and although it may appear like sometimes I don't appreciate that, please know that I fully understand how hard it is to not only start practicing these things, but how it's even harder to continue. So we all need some help. That's why for this article, I'm not talking to you, I'm talking to your boss. Unless of course you are the boss then I am in fact talking to you.

Let's talk about corporate wellness programs. If you're the boss of a group of employees, whether it's one or one thousand, you have an obligation to them to set an example and start encouraging a healthier lifestyle. No matter how much you have invested in equipment, inventory or technology, your employees are your greatest assets. When your employees feel healthy and happy, your business is healthier, too. Not only do employees do better work, but sick time and absenteeism are reduced, and productivity and morale are enhanced.

Studies have also proved that incorporating a health and wellness program can help in:

- Lowering health care costs
- Increasing productivity
- Decreasing worker's compensation and disability
- Strengthening employee/employer relationships

As you can imagine, what I'm asking employers to do is no small task. It can be just as hard to set up a wellness program, as it will for your employees to get involved. But with the proper leadership and dedication both parties win, and for every one dollar an employer spends on a preventative health program, a company can save six dollars in insurance costs.

Studies by the University of Michigan and Johnson and Johnson show that employers who successfully run a wellness program for their company can save:

- \$1,100 a year for every employee who quits smoking
- \$1,200 a year for every employee who reduce their high cholesterol levels
- \$269 a year for every employee who goes from couch potato to fitness enthusiast
- \$177 a year for every employee who goes from obesity to a healthy weight

But what kind of proponent for healthy living would I be if I didn't do all of this myself. So in the spirit of "Putting my money where my mouth is." I've started a wellness

program at my place of business as well. As you can easily see by my byline, I work for Lumberton Radiological Associates, and a few weeks ago we started the LRA Fit Club. It's a group of 15 employees who have made the first step toward living healthier. We have meeting where we discuss everything from proper nutrition and recipes to exercise techniques and dedication. Now I'd be lying if I told you it's been easy keeping everyone motivated, but we're not giving up because although we know how hard it is, we also know how important it is, and in the end how rewarding it is. If you would like information on starting your own wellness program please feel free to contact me or check out these websites www.clubone.com or www.sparkpeople.com.