



Hospitals for Healthier Workforces: 2008 Grants

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rising obesity rates have been identified as one of Ohio's most-pressing health issues. In 2008, this led the Ohio Hospital Association's Foundation for Healthy Communities to offer the most narrowly focused grant in its 14-year history, seeking applications from members of the Ohio Hospital Association for projects aimed at fighting obesity in the workplace.

In June 2008, the Foundation for Healthy Communities awarded five Ohio hospitals a total of \$100,000 in *Hospitals for Healthier Workforces* grants to team up with local schools, fire departments, manufacturers and nursing homes to offer employee wellness programs to help reverse the obesity epidemic. The five grantees and their community partners were:

1. Blanchard Valley Hospital & Whirlpool Corporation
2. Community Mercy Health Partners & Benjamin Steel Company
3. Memorial Hospital of Union County & seven local fire departments
4. Salem Community Hospital & eight local school districts
5. Twin City Hospital, Hennis Care Centre & Zimmer Orthopaedic Surgical Products



The purpose of these grants was to allow hospitals to work with other employers in the community to offer or enhance existing employee wellness programs. As mentioned above, a wide variety of businesses were targeted, from manufacturers to educators to fire/EMS professionals. Each of these professions deals with its own unique health issues. Manufacturing workers have a high rate of obesity (70 percent), fire/EMS workers are at increased risk of heart attack and stroke, and educators are in an ideal position to influence the younger generation by leading by example.

Overall, these projects made an impact on the individual lives of 600 participants. Positive clinical outcomes included not only weight loss and lowered BMIs, but also reduced blood pressure, hypertension and cholesterol levels. Additionally, participants saw an increase in energy levels and endurance, and were at decreased risk of type II diabetes and coronary heart disease.

As important as the clinical improvements were the lifestyle changes reported by the participants. Many of these employees, including the fire/EMS providers, had no previous exercise regimens and very poor diets. Because of the education and motivation they received as part of the wellness programs, many participants made the important lifestyle changes imperative to reversing the obesity epidemic.

Changes reported included a commitment to continue with weight loss and/or exercise routines, as well as changes in diet that bled into the participants' family lives. In several incidences, family members were able to improve their health status just because of the indirect access to wellness information and the positive influence of seeing the participants' success.

Incentives used throughout the programs ranged from water bottles and pedometers to gift cards and mountain bikes. Some of the incentives were used as "lures" to encourage participation, others were used as rewards for reaching certain achievements. In some instances, the incentives proved to work, in others the participants reported that incentives did not sway them to participate.

Along with successes, there were also some barriers encountered along the way. As with any voluntary program, several of the grantees had difficulty in getting some participants to either complete the program in its entirety or comply with all of the requirements (such as post-program testing). Methods to overcome these barriers ranged from adjusting the incentives to encourage continued participant compliance to rearranging schedules to make participation as convenient and easy as possible. The key was to identify what the specific barriers were, and to address them as directly as possible.

Because most of the professions involved have non-traditional hours, multiple shifts or several locations, offering programming convenient for all employees was a challenge. This issue was overcome through several methods, including directly involving the employees when scheduling, and getting the administration on board to allow on-the-clock time for participation. Programming also had to be offered at multiple locations and often repeated during different times of the day to accommodate the varied schedules.

Staffing was also key in keeping the momentum going. One grantee was struggling at the beginning of the project due to a program instructor who was not as enthusiastic as was needed, and was replaced midway through the grant period. Another grantee ran into a roadblock when she discovered that not having an on-site wellness committee at each remote location was hindering the success of the program. After identifying the barrier, the grantee worked creatively to make up for the lack of on-site support by working with a sister facility to offer more hands-on support remotely.

Lessons Learned

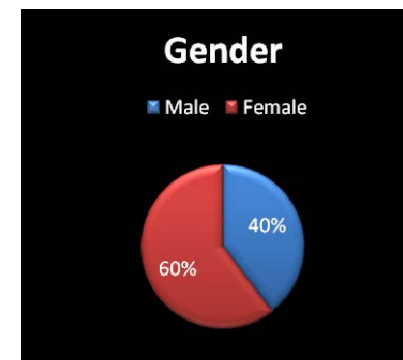
Several lessons can be taken from looking back at the 2008 *Hospitals for Healthier Workforces* grants for those employers looking to implement or enhance their employee wellness programs:

- Capitalize on employees' main motivation to participate: to **become healthier**.
- Offer the right **incentives** at the right time to encourage participation and/or continued progress toward wellness goals. The most successful incentives are **financial rewards**; specifically insurance premium discounts or similar monetary rewards.
- Engage both **employees** and **administration** in all aspects of the program, beginning in the planning stages.
- Accommodate all **shifts** and **locations** equally.
- Consider having a **wellness committee** including staff at all locations and all shifts.
- Allow for **on-the-clock time** to participate. Don't expect high participation during off-duty hours. At a minimum, offer programming during breaks or lunches.
- Craft the program to include a variety of options to account for different **motivation styles** and **personalities**.
- Offer **new material** on an ongoing basis and have a plan in place to continuously motivate employees.
- Integrate **individual accountability** into the program.
- Ensure **confidentiality** of any health or personal information collected by program coordinators.
- Consider starting your program with a **health risk assessment**. They are easy, fairly inexpensive, yield high participation and generate baseline data.
- Incorporate **group participation** and **competition** to enhance your wellness culture.
- Continuously evaluate the program; ask for **feedback** from participants and non-participants and adjust the program accordingly.
- **Commit enthusiastically** to the success of the program.

Lives Touched

The following graphs show the breakout of participants for the *Hospitals for Healthier Workforces* grant projects.

Grantee (total participants)	Gender		Race/Ethnicity				
	Male	Female	White	African American	Asian	Latino	
Blanchard Valley Hospital (75)*	16	59	71	3	0	1	
Community Mercy Health Partners (125)	75	50	122	3	0	0	
Memorial Hospital of Union County (114)	101	13	114	0	0	0	
Salem Community Hospital (227)	23	204	227	0	0	0	
Twin City Hospital (59)	9	50	53	5	1	0	
TOTAL PARTICIPANTS:	224	376	587	11	1	1	
	600	37%	63%	97.8%	1.8%	<1%	<1%



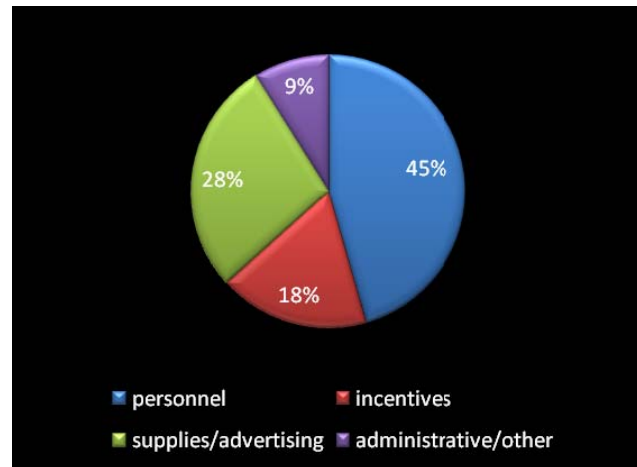
*Blanchard Valley Hospital was granted an extension in order to conduct another session of its program. Participation numbers will likely increase at the conclusion of that session.

Expenditure Summary



Grantee	Total Grant	Personnel/ Consulting	Incentives	Supplies/ Advertising	Admin/ Other	Cost per Participant
Blanchard Valley Hospital*	\$13,207	\$4,654	\$200	\$200	\$2,162	\$96.21
Community Mercy Health Partners	\$25,000	\$0	\$8,634	\$11,896	\$4,470	\$200.00
Memorial Hospital of Union County	\$24,973	\$15,211	\$3,908	\$5,051	\$803	\$219.06
Salem Community Hospital	\$24,564	\$18,227	\$2,440	\$3,520	\$377	\$108.21
Twin City Hospital	\$12,256	\$4,732	\$1,529	\$5,435	\$560	\$208.73
	\$100,000	\$42,824	\$16,711	\$26,102	\$8,372	\$166.44

Spending by Category



*Blanchard Valley Hospital was granted a four-month extension, at which time more complete expenditure information will be available.

Blanchard Valley Hospital & Whirlpool Corporation: Weigh to Wellness

Whirlpool Corporation, Findlay’s second largest employer, identified obesity as one of the most significant opportunities to improve wellness for its 2,000 employees. Blanchard Valley Hospital’s project aimed to provide a medically-directed weight loss program for up to 100 Whirlpool employees with a body mass index over 30. Customized treatment plans with specific diet and exercise goals were developed for each participant. Following individual health assessments, a four-week education program led to weekly support group meetings for three months and then monthly thereafter, with weekly weigh-ins and exercise tracking.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

During the first six months of the grant, Blanchard Valley Hospital engaged 75 participants in its weight-loss program, which included metabolic screenings, weekly educational sessions and one-on-one counseling with a dietician. Participants learned about and incorporated exercise and healthy eating into their lifestyles through reading labels, watching portion sizes and tracking food intake.

CLINICAL OUTCOMES

Participants have seen improvements in energy level, blood pressure, endurance and weight loss, with the biggest loser showing an 11 percent weight reduction.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

The participant survey showed a lack of enthusiasm for the program, which was due in large part to the program instructor. The instructor left the program and has since been replaced.

Although the grant period ended 6/30/09, Blanchard Valley was granted a four-month extension to conduct an additional session for Whirlpool employees. More detailed outcome information will be available at that time.



Community Mercy Health Partners & Benjamin Steel Company: Wellness Works!

At the beginning of this project, the Benjamin Steel Company's workforce had an obesity rate of 86 percent, far exceeding the national estimate of 70 percent of manufacturing workers who are overweight. Community Mercy Health Partners used the grant funding to expand the *Wellness Works* corporate wellness program at Benjamin Steel. Employees were encouraged to participate in many different activities to earn points toward the *Wellness Works* program, which would enable them to receive insurance premium discounts based on the number of points accumulated throughout the year. The program was open to employees at four different plant locations, with an estimated 220 eligible employees.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Community Mercy Health Partners used the grant to help Benjamin Steel build upon its *Wellness Works* corporate wellness program, which the company initiated in 2007. The following activities were initiated to help reduce the obesity rate among Benjamin Steel's workforce:

- Implemented the Body for Life program, encouraging employees to establish regular routines for physical activity and to change their eating habits in order to achieve long-term weight reduction. A total of 65 employees signed up, and 41 completed the 12-week program.
- Offered the Body Mass Index Challenge, a contest designed to promote teamwork and goal-setting to achieve weight reduction.
- Performed lunch presentations at all four facilities focused on wellness topics. Six sessions were held and each session had an average of 10 participants.
- Provided resources to employees to support their wellness efforts.
- Provided insurance premium discounts and additional reimbursement to employees who participated in annual wellness activities, including the activities listed above. Sixty-four employees participated in the *Wellness Works* program over the course of this grant.

Overall, employee health has improved dramatically and insurance claim amounts have decreased as a result of increased employee participation in the health and wellness initiatives at Benjamin Steel. Personal health care costs for employees have also decreased.

INCENTIVES

The major incentive that Benjamin Steel offered was the ability to earn points to receive discounts on employee health insurance premiums. The discounts were earned as a result of participating in a number of activities integrated into the *Wellness Works* program. Other incentives for specific activities included gift cards, T-shirts, pedometers, gym memberships, mountain bikes and paid vacation time.

CLINICAL OUTCOMES

The following improvements in clinical measurements were obtained as a result of the new wellness activities at Benjamin Steel:

- 2.4 percent reduction in obesity rate
- 14.6 percent of participants reduced their waist circumference
- 17 percent reduction in hypertension
- 17 percent of participants reduced their total cholesterol
- 9.3 point drop in group total cholesterol
- 9 point reduction in group LDL cholesterol
- 7.3 percent reduction in cases of pre-diabetes
- 7 point drop in group systolic blood pressure
- 2.6 point reduction in group blood glucose

In addition to the outcomes listed above, the disease risk among the Benjamin Steel population was analyzed. The percentage of employees at relatively high risk for coronary heart disease decreased from 20 percent to 12 percent; type II diabetes risk decreased from 22 percent to 17 percent; and those above average risk of heart failure decreased from 33 percent to 15 percent.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Two participants in the program successfully stopped smoking. Approximately 25 percent of the program participants have maintained a regular workout routine, and employee carry-in meals include nearly all healthy choices.

One employee set a goal to bench press 300 pounds prior to his 50th birthday. He made tremendous strides in the program, nearly met his goal and became the biggest loser of body fat percentage. Another employee set his goal to lose weight and build strength. He went on to become the biggest loser of weight and cholesterol, and tied for highest reduction in body fat. He continues to exercise daily during lunch and has maintained his health and fitness levels.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

The program encountered some difficulties implementing the program elements at the remote locations due to the lack of a hands-on wellness committee at those locations. Some of these obstacles were overcome by working with the hospital's sister facility, which was able to promote the wellness activities at one of the remote locations.



Memorial Hospital of Union County & Fire Departments: Lighten the Load

Seven Union County fire departments with 230 firefighters were the focus of this project, which recognized that because of their work schedules and situations, firefighters are at increased risk for obesity. Obesity is a major contributing factor to heart attacks and strokes, which are the most common causes of fatalities in the fire service. The fire chiefs of all seven departments committed to provide staff time and resources to support the program, which aimed to take advantage of the family-like environment, camaraderie and inherent competitive culture of fire stations to promote behavioral changes to improve firefighters' nutrition and exercise.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

The Lighten the Load program had three basic goals: teach healthy nutrition, implement exercise and fitness, and gain an ongoing commitment from the firefighters at the seven fire stations. The program began with a commitment from the fire department leaders that on-duty time would be permitted for participants to take part in exercise, wellness, education and training opportunities.

The hospital staff made 13 site visits to the seven departments to perform individual pre-measurements, including biometric information, heart risk level and self-reported baseline data. A needs assessment was also conducted and individualized programming for each department was designed based on the results of the assessment. Some of the activities that resulted from the needs assessment included:

- On-site Weight Loss 101 education
- Bulletin boards
- Educational materials
- Family night open house
- Exercise education

INCENTIVES

Bosu balls, portion plates and scales were provided for each department. The Lighten the Load program included a "climb the ladder" exercise incentive program, which included incentives such as T-shirts, water bottles and gift cards. However, post-program surveys found that most of the participants were not motivated by these incentives.

CLINICAL OUTCOMES

During the first six months of the grant, 126 firefighters at the seven fire departments participated in pre-measurements. At the end of the program, five of the seven departments saw a decrease in body fat percentage, and individually 43 percent of overall participants saw a decrease. Additionally, 21 participants (18 percent) saw a decrease in body weight.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

The "rate your plate" scores looked at overall dietary habits, and were measured at the beginning of the program, at the midpoint and again at the end. According to these reports, participants made some significant lifestyle changes as a result of the Lighten the Load program, including:

- 61 percent ate more vegetables
- 63 percent ate less fast food
- 54 percent increased their cardiovascular exercise (43 percent more exercise at work)
- 61 percent made better choices when dining out
- 52 percent saw positive changes in the family diet

Additionally, one department shared that because of the recipe book that was distributed, healthier meals are being prepared at the station. Another individual reported that in addition to himself losing 14 pounds because of the program, his spouse has lost 12 pounds and healthier meals are being prepared at home.

The fire chiefs have expressed concern about the future of the wellness relationship once the grant funding has expired. There is interest in developing an ongoing relationship to make wellness an accepted culture within the stations. Several of the firefighters at one particular location have requested making program participation mandatory, knowing that healthy behaviors should be adopted as part of their regular lifestyle.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

The hospital found it challenging to access all seven departments on all three shifts on a regular basis. The program coordinator began holding monthly meetings with the fire chiefs to obtain feedback in order to stay connected to the needs of the departments.

Also, the program faced challenges getting participation from the volunteer firefighters, as they only meet monthly and it was difficult to gain face-to-face time and participation was not mandatory. The program administrators and the fire chiefs felt that the more face time that existed, the more likely the program would be successful.



Salem Community Hospital & Columbiana County School Districts: Get Schooled and Dump Your Plump

Nine Columbiana County school districts were targeted for better nutrition and exercise, using the *Dump Your Plump* worksite wellness program already offered by 1,000 organizations nationwide with a 96 percent completion rate and an average weight loss of seven pounds. The program was offered to over 200 school employees who set group exercise and weight loss goals, and worked toward those goals for a 10-week period. The project was aimed to build on the hospital’s community partnership work to promote healthy behaviors with youth, engaging school staff as influential catalysts for healthy lifestyles to students at all levels.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

During the grant period, 227 participants were recruited to participate in the *Dump Your Plump* program, during three different 10-week sessions. The participants were formed into teams of four to 10 people, and a “team captain” was selected at each location. Individual and group exercise and weight loss goals were established. Each participant received pre-assessment and body-fat testing. Weekly weigh-ins and exercise logs were collected and summary reports were provided to each of the districts. Continuous guidance was provided to team captains. Post-assessment testing and program evaluations were performed after each 10-week program.

INCENTIVES

Incentives such as pedometers and exercise class passes were given to teams who met certain weekly goals. Each participant received a “Road to Wellness” manual, an exercise log and a water bottle.

CLINICAL OUTCOMES

A total of 214 participants in nine school districts completed the program – losing a total of 1,314 pounds (6.14 pounds average) during the 10-week sessions. Nearly 20 percent (42) of the participants lost at least 10 pounds, and four participants lost more than 20 pounds. Of the 137 participants who filled out the post-session survey, 90 percent reported a loss of body fat, and the majority of survey participants reported increased muscle mass and overall positive physical benefits as a direct result of participating in the program.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

According to the weekly reports, nearly 65 percent of program participants reported exercising four to five times a week during the 10-week session. Additionally, according to the post-assessment surveys, 90 percent said they planned to continue their exercise programs as a result of participating in the *Dump Your Plump* program.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

The program coordinator noted that on occasion it was difficult to obtain weekly exercise logs and weigh-in reports from some of the individual participants, if they did not meet their own personal weekly weight loss or exercise goals. A great deal of time was spent counseling team captains regarding strategies to motivate their teams to achieve both individual and team weight loss and exercise goals, and reassuring individual participants that their results would be held confidential. Also, not all participants attended the post-assessment evaluation, even though it was listed as a condition of participation.



The winning team from the Columbiana County Career and Technical Center of Salem Community Hospital’s first Dump Your Plump session.



Twin City Hospital Corporation, Zimmer Orthopaedic Surgical Products & Hennis Care Center: Fit for Life

Twin City Hospital was awarded a \$12,256 grant to offer its successful *Fit for Life* program to employees of Hennis Care Center nursing homes and manufacturer Zimmer Orthopaedic Surgical Products. The *Fit for Life* program was developed by Dr. Tim McKnight, utilizing his own extensive training in nutrition and his experience as a board certified family practitioner who specializes in sports medicine. *Fit for Life* is an existing program that has been available to the community at large for three years and the participants have seen great success in weight loss, reduction in BMI and other clinical improvements. The purpose of this grant was to take the program into the workplace setting as one more way to address the 31 percent obesity rate in Tuscarawas County.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

During the 12-month grant period, a medical team headed by Dr. McKnight assisted 59 overweight and obese employees develop weight-loss and wellness goals. Employees participated in one hour per week of educational and motivational instruction during one of two 11- or 12-week sessions. Sessions were offered at two different times of day to accommodate the three different shifts of participants. At these sessions, participants received personalized diet and exercise plans, taking into consideration personal health issues. After completing the entire program, participants were invited to continue attending monthly support group meetings.

INCENTIVES

In addition to educational materials, participants received pedometers and personal journals for recording diet and exercise information and personal experiences. As a reward for completing the program, participants were eligible for a raffle of month-long YMCA memberships and \$50 Wal-Mart gift cards. To add an element of competition, the top male and female “biggest losers” were crowned based on the highest percentage of body fat loss.

CLINICAL OUTCOMES

As measured by pre- and post-program clinical testing, significant improvements were made in several areas. The average weight loss was 2.7 percent, or 6.2 pounds per participant. The average decrease in BMI was 1.22 points (higher than the 1 point goal). The participants also saw an 11.4 average reduction in triglyceride levels and an average reduction in waist circumference of 3.72 inches.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Participants were asked to complete a survey at the beginning and the end of the program. The number of participants who reported that they did not exercise was reduced from 63 percent to 18 percent. When asked at the beginning of the program about fruit and vegetable consumption, 67 percent of participants reported they only ate 1-2 servings per day. At the conclusion of the program, 87 percent reported they ate at least five servings per day. Additionally, 21 percent of participants reported they were keeping a daily food journal at the end of the program.

Several participants who started the program at a fairly heavy weight saw great success over the course of the program. Specifically, five participants who weighed between 219 and 358 pounds at the beginning of the program lost a total of 117 pounds and were motivated to build on that success at the end of the program and continue their journey to a healthier lifestyle.

OBSTACLES ENCOUNTERED

Overall, Twin City Hospital found that the workforce-based *Fit for Life* programs were not as popular as the community-wide sessions. This may have occurred because some of the employees were unhappy that their employer wasn’t picking up the tab for the \$56 registration fee (which is used for the clinical testing). Another issue the program faced was that only about 60 percent of the participants from the first session completed the program. The hospital followed up with those who did not finish with a survey to assess why this occurred. The hospital will use these results when planning future workforce-based *Fit for Life* programs.

The hospital was able to address a few additional obstacles during the course of the grant period. After scheduling the first session, complaints were received from some employees that program times and/or days of the week were not amenable to their schedules. Therefore, the second session was scheduled based upon employee input, not solely coordinated through the human resources department. There were also challenges in the first session with obtaining 100 percent participation in the post-program clinical testing. Once again, scheduling was adjusted during the second session to accommodate more employees’ schedules. And lastly, comments from speakers and participants following the first session indicated that they felt rushed through the materials in 11 weeks. Therefore, the second session was stretched over 12 weeks, covering the same material, to ease the ‘information overload.’

About the Foundation for Healthy Communities

The Foundation for Healthy Communities, the charitable arm of the Ohio Hospital Association, was established in 1994 and its mission is to advance good health for all Ohioans. The foundation initiates and champions health improvement and education by engaging partners, promoting proven strategies and advocating for wellness.

Each year, the foundation solicits grant applications from not-for-profit members of the Ohio Hospital Association for grants dealing with a specific community wellness need. Since its inception, the foundation has awarded nearly \$1.5 million in grants to 124 Ohio hospital community health improvement projects.

For its 2009 grant cycle, the foundation awarded four grants for projects that aim to engage local communities in long-term efforts to reduce *childhood* obesity. Grants were awarded in June 2009.

Learn more about the Foundation for Healthy Communities at www.HealthyCommunitiesOhio.org or contact one of the following:

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