

2009 Governor's Awards for Wellness Innovation – Recipients:

1. Setting: Worksites (employing less than 500 workers)

Awardee: *Taco, Inc. for Taco Ergonomics/Pre-Shift Stretching Program*

The Taco Ergonomics/Pre-Shift Stretching Program” was implemented in January of 2008 to improve the strength and flexibility of employees before they begin to perform strenuous and/or repetitive work activities. The focus of the physical activity program is on the prevention of injuries and increased wellness through proper body mechanic, correct posture, and maintenance of strength and flexibility. The routine was also developed to make physical activity a regular part of daily life at Taco and to promote teamwork.

Routines are customized based on the functions, tasks, and risk factors of employees in each unit. To accommodate the multi-cultural population at the worksite, the program is delivered by employees in a variety of languages. Employees with limited physical abilities are provided with modified stretches. In Taco’s evaluation of monthly and annual employee illnesses and injuries, the company found that Taco performed at its lowest incidence rates since 2003; for 2009, the company is exceeding its objectives for injury prevention.

Accepting the award for Taco Inc.: Ms. Kyle Adamonis

2. Setting: Worksites (employing more than 500 workers)

Awardee: *Gilbane, Inc. for Gilbane Cares Program*

The Gilbane Cares program was implemented in January of 2008 and has quickly become a part of the company culture. While originally intended to address worksite safety, the program soon broadened to include all aspects of wellness, including physical activity, nutrition, substance abuse prevention, stress management, diversity, and work/life balance.

The program has succeeded by developing a creative communication strategy and using social marketing tools to reach employees throughout the United States, and by mandating that a Gilbane Cares activity be incorporated into every department or team meeting. Company president William Gilbane regularly publishes a blog to highlight the program and express his personal support and encouragement.

Gilbane’s safety professionals also conduct safety training in high schools and with the RI Workers Compensation Court for the YES RI (Young Employee Safety in RI) program to teach teenagers and young adults about hazards in the workplace and how to prevent injuries.

Gilbane Cares activities include a daily morning stretch program that has spread throughout the entire corporation, tobacco cessation counseling, and walking programs. In a short time, the company has seen a 65% increase in the number of employees engaging in physical activity. Employee satisfaction scores for programs have averaged 98%, and the company has realized significant decreases in worker compensation claims and an increase in productivity.

Accepting the award for Gilbane: Mr. Paul Choquette, Chairman

3. Setting: Schools

Awardee: Newport Public Schools *for the Table Hosting Program*

The Newport Public Schools' Table Hosting Program received high scores for creativity, cost-effectiveness, and potential to influence students' food choices and eating behavior. The program was developed by the district wellness committee in consultation with food service provider Sodexo Services to help students accept the new food choices mandated by the strict RI Nutrition Regulations (RINR 2009). The program targets elementary school-aged children.

Each week a member of the community – parent, school committee members, Superintendent, or other interested party associated with the school – joins 8 to 10 students for lunch. The students are seated in a special room away from the cafeteria on a table set with linens and name tags for each child. Students join their table host in sampling a healthy food provided by the lunch program that is new to them. Examples of food items include Mac and Peez (wheat pasta mixed with garbanzo beans and a tomato-based sauce), Marinated Black Bean Salad, local fruits and vegetables, whole grain items, and some non-local produce.

Students feel special during the lunches, and receive significant personal attention from the table host who answers their questions and discusses the new food environment. As they sample new menu items, students join table hosts in discussing table manners, nutrition, and general wellness activities that should be part of their daily lives. The program has reached 90% of students in the first two Newport schools to run the program, and 38% of the entire elementary school population so far.

Accepting the award for the program: Superintendent John Ambrogi and Director of Student Services Amy Donnelly Roche

4. Setting: Healthcare Organization

Awardee: The Providence Center *for Wellness for Life*

Wellness for Life was originally designed in 1998 to address the specific needs of Latinos with mental health and physical health problems. The program has since expanded to meet other minority populations' needs. The goal of the program is to assist clients and the community in reducing mental health symptoms and chronic disease risk while improving quality of life.

Services include a weekly exercise group, exercise classes with local community partners, a soccer league, nutrition demonstrations, and an ESL class that focuses on nutrition to teach students English and educate them about the importance of healthy eating. Other activities include an annual walk, family picnics with healthy food demonstrations and family activities, a health fair, and distribution of a wellness handbook translated into several languages.

The Providence Center attributes the long-term success of the program to flexibility and incorporation of participant feedback. Community-based services are built around cultural needs and strengths, and are individualized as needed. Program evaluations have revealed the following positive outcomes: 50% of participants report an increase in daily fruit and vegetable consumption; 50% of participants report an increase in weekly physical activity; improved mental well-being and ability to engage in social interactions; decreased depressive symptoms and ability to function in the community; greater satisfaction with fitness; lower levels of negative mental health symptoms; and increased motivation.

Accepting the award for The Providence Center: Ms. Deborah O'Brien, COO

5. Setting: Community-based and Faith-based Organizations

Awardee: *Coventry Housing Authority for the Silver Sneakers and Community Connections programs*

The Silver Sneakers and Community Connections program have been developed for residents at all complexes of the Coventry Housing Authority with the goal of encouraging physical activity at individual levels of function while promoting improved levels of functioning, range of motion, and flexibility. Programs include Wii bowling, Line Dancing, and a weekly exercise program. The certified exercise instructor utilizes weights and bands in weekly classes for strength training, and accommodations are made for residents who require the use of wheelchairs or walkers. Grandchildren are allowed to join grandparents for line dancing classes during school vacations.

Participating residents report greater confidence in completing daily activities, and some report improved hand-eye coordination. Some of the most important benefits have been an increased level of socialization among residents, resulting in better resident-to-resident relationships and enhanced well-being; a higher level of consciousness, concern, and understanding of the needs of other tenants; and an overall improvement in residents' quality of life.

Accepting the award for the program: Executive Director Julie Leddy

6. Setting: State Agency

Awardees: Rhode Island Department of Health and Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (Joint Award) *for thrive*

While state agency wellness awards have been presented in the past to recognize worksite-based programming for employees, the unique collaboration of two state departments to improve the health and wellness of all Rhode Island youth and develop a new generation of healthier adults has been singled out for the award this year. Their departments' partnership has been recognized nationally as a distinctive, innovative and effective effort.

The RI Department of Health and the RI Department of Elementary and Secondary Education share responsibility for the RI Coordinated School Health Program called *thrive*, a nine component approach to health in schools that was started in 1994 to prevent serious health problems among youth and to improve educational outcomes. The departments have successfully built infrastructure supports with state, school, and community partners to help create safe, healthy, and nurturing schools that reduce barriers to learning. In addition to providing the *thrive report* and the comprehensive *thrive* website, the program administers *thrive e-Academy*, an online professional development program for teachers.

The program has been successful in effecting legislative and regulatory changes; developing and implementing policy, standards-based curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and designing and providing professional development opportunities for school administrators, policy-makers, teachers, parents, students, and community organizations. The *thrive* coordinated school health program, website, and *e-Academy* have been gained international attention and have been identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as national models.

Accepting the award for the program -

**From the Department of Health: Rosemary Reilly-Chammat,
Adolescent Health Manager**

**From the Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education: David Abbott,
Deputy Commissioner**

7. Setting: Restaurants and Food Service Establishments

Awardee: Pinelli Marra Restaurant Group *for its gluten-free menu program.*

The Pinelli Marra Restaurant Group has pioneered the concept of gluten-free menus in Rhode Island restaurants while generating interest in addressing this health issue. Five years ago, the chef at the Post Office Café initiated a conversation at a weekly chef's meeting about accommodating the growing number of people diagnosed with Celiac Disease. The chef was tasked with developing recipes to comprise a gluten-free menu.

Gluten-free menus, which are posted on the Pinelli Marra website, have allowed individuals with Celiac Disease an opportunity to safely enjoy the experience of dining out. Over the last several years, the number of restaurants offering gluten-free menus has increased to provide more dining options.

In addition to introducing a gluten-free menu, the Pinelli Marra restaurant group offers gluten-free cooking demonstrations for various community groups and at public events. They group is a participating member of the Gluten-Free Restaurant Awareness Program. Chefs also demonstrated gluten-free cooking and alternatives at the Gluten-Free Culinary Summit in September of 2008.

Accepting the award for Pinelli Marra: Mr. Stephen Marra, owner

Citation Recipients

The following organizations and agencies placed among the higher scoring applicants during the review process, and were honored for distinguished achievement in wellness programming.

1. Setting: Worksites (less than 500 employees)

Recipient: **Beacon Mutual Insurance Company**
for Maintain, Don't Gain Program

Accepting the citation for the program: **Ms. Laurie Ruth, co-chair of**
Beacon Wellness Committee

2. Setting: Worksites (more than 500 employees)

- a. Recipient: **Amica Mutual Insurance Company**
for Tobacco Control/Smoke Cessation Assistance Program

Accepting the citation for the program: **Diane Wilkie, RN and**
Mr. Scott Boyd, Director of Employee Benefits & Compensation

