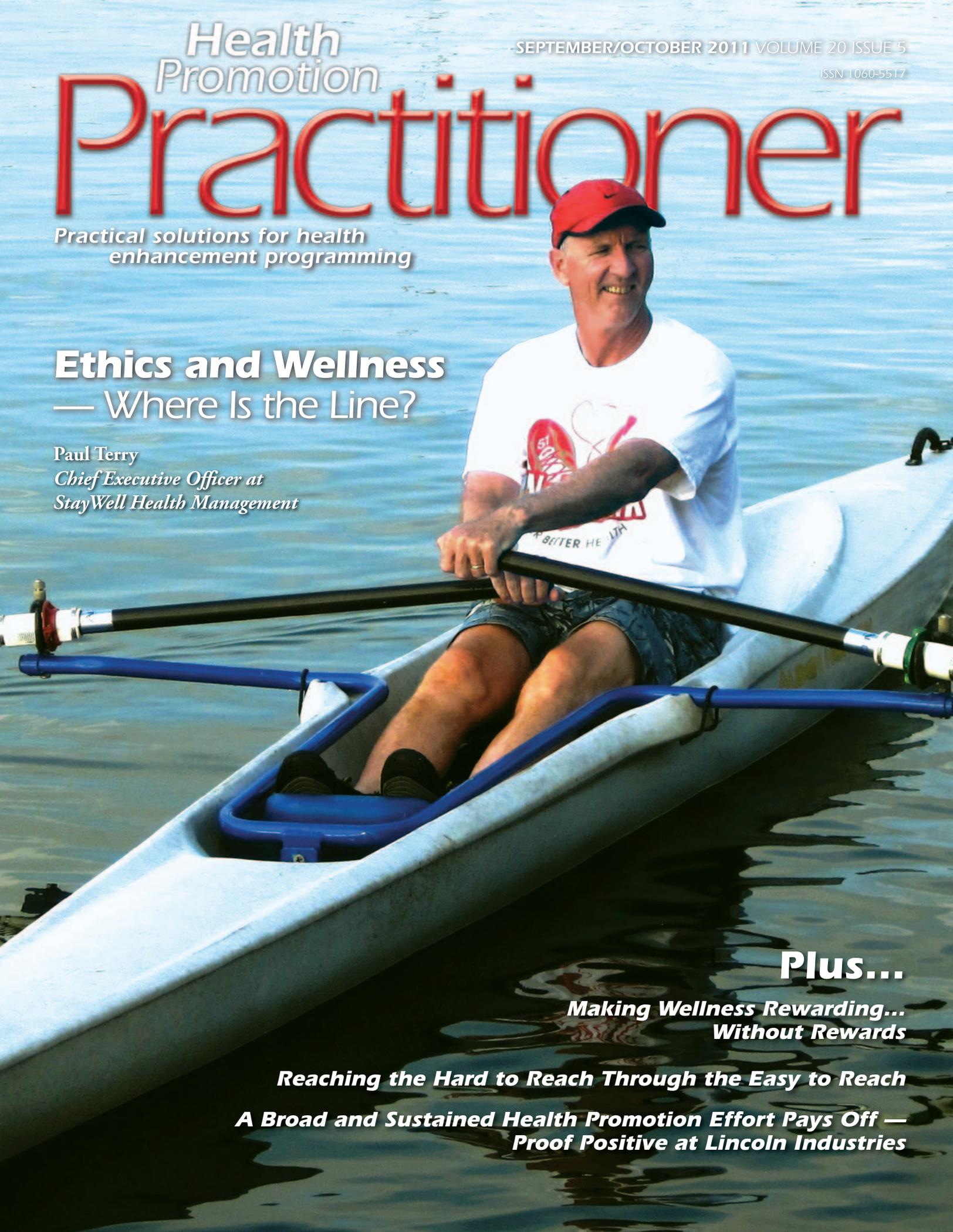


Health  
Promotion

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2011 VOLUME 20 ISSUE 5  
ISSN 1060-5517

# Practitioner

A man wearing a red baseball cap and a white t-shirt with a red heart logo and the text "STAY WELL" and "FOR BETTER HEALTH" is rowing a white boat on a body of water. The boat has blue interior components. The background is a calm blue sky and water.

*Practical solutions for health  
enhancement programming*

## **Ethics and Wellness** — Where Is the Line?

**Paul Terry**  
*Chief Executive Officer at  
StayWell Health Management*

**Plus...**

***Making Wellness Rewarding...  
Without Rewards***

***Reaching the Hard to Reach Through the Easy to Reach***

***A Broad and Sustained Health Promotion Effort Pays Off —  
Proof Positive at Lincoln Industries***

# on the cover & inside

*Out of voluntary participation comes continued success in behavior change.*

Paul Terry

This edition of the *Practitioner* highlights challenges all programs face in establishing an appropriate incentive structure (or not) for behavior change. We interviewed thought leader Paul Terry, CEO of StayWell, about the ethical concerns around incentives and disincentives. His thoughtful, reasoned arguments will give you plenty to think about as you plan for the future.

Continuing on the incentive theme, we dig deeper into the motivations that drive participants in “Making Wellness Rewarding... Without Rewards,” asking a fundamental question: Are all extrinsic rewards counterproductive?

Regular columnist John Harris details the remarkable health management success of Lincoln Industries and shares how other small to medium businesses can do the same.

And looking ahead to 2012, we encourage you to do a leadership skills checkup and partner with the benefits department for greater success in the new year.

As always, we want to hear from you. Send your comments to [editor@hesonline.com](mailto:editor@hesonline.com).

# inSight



...by **Dean Witherspoon**

## Making Wellness Rewarding... Without Rewards

It's widely, though not universally, accepted among established wellness programs that you have to provide some form of incentive or disincentive to get people involved in healthy lifestyle programs. At Health Enhancement Systems we've long argued against giving people cash because it becomes gas money, is used to pay off credit cards, or quickly dissipates in some other way. At least a T-shirt is a reminder of their effort and achievement — maybe enough of a positive reinforcement to keep the participant going a little longer.

In a new book called *How Cooperation Triumphs Over Self-Interest*, author Yochai Benkler provides plenty of data as well as anecdotal evidence suggesting extrinsic rewards may be counterproductive. Benkler concludes in a recent *Harvard Business Review* article: “We shouldn't try to motivate people only by offering them material payoffs; we should also focus on motivating them socially and intellectually by making cooperation social, autonomous, rewarding, and even — if you can swing it — fun.”

If ever there was a philosophy to guide wellness programming, this is it. Here's why:

- **Social motivation.** Forget about Facebook and Twitter for a moment and think about the times in your life when you've been most happy, engaged, inspired, uplifted.

Undoubtedly, those occasions occurred in a setting with family, friends, or coworkers — and live... in real time, not digitally/electronically. *Life's greatest highs are shared.* It only makes sense your wellness efforts should look for every opportunity to engage people in a group, not just on their computer screen, but eyeball to eyeball.

- **Intellectual motivation.** While people want to learn what to do for better health, they don't want to be patronized. Repeating the “take the stairs instead of the elevator” message a gazillion times over the years and leaving it at that is like beige walls: you know they're beige, but you couldn't care less. Give your participants a mental workout with each wellness program, pushing them to learn *and* do, for a better chance at making the behavior their own.
- **Autonomous motivation.** While people *want* to know what to do, they also want the freedom to decide *how* to do it. This is one of the hardest things for some health promoters to accept. (“After all, I've got MS, RD, MD, MPH, or LMNOP after my name; I *know* exactly what people should do to improve health.”) Maybe. But if they don't feel in control, if they aren't invested in their own ability to make the changes, it doesn't matter how many advanced degrees you have. Give clients the freedom to control

Coming  
Soon...



their own health destiny and be ready to support them as needed.

- **Reward motivation.** In our never-ending quest of population health management, ROI analysis for every wellness program expenditure, and the perfect ratio of healthcare premium incentives to gift card rewards, we seem to have lost sight of the most fundamental motivation: Good health is its own reward. Ask someone who's lost 20 pounds and fits into clothes they haven't worn in years how it feels. Watch their face light up as they go on about how much energy they have, how

good they feel about themselves, and their positive outlook. The reward of good health is priceless. Attaching a gift card to it only cheapens the accomplishment.

- **Fun motivation.** Of the thousands of wellness program managers we've served over the years, the ones who consistently report the most success with their population are those where fun is a central theme. That doesn't mean they're not focused on the dollars and cents, but they've learned to engage more people with a lighthearted approach than a risk-based, science, or economic-centered

focus. And let's face it, lots of things about work can be un-fun, so why not make wellness a place for smiles and laughter?

A wellness program's mission is so much greater than the temporary reduction in rising healthcare costs you may achieve with financial carrots. You can make a difference in how participants feel, their productivity, and impact on coworkers, family, and friends. You have the potential to change lives. Think carefully about that opportunity the next time someone proposes \$50 for completing an HRA.



# Time to Partner With Benefits

## 2012 Healthcare Costs Expected to Rise More Than 7%

According to the National Business Group on Health, a US trade group for large companies, leaders expect healthcare costs to climb 7.2% — more than double the rate of overall inflation.

Many employers, while not giving up entirely, are becoming less reticent every year to automatically pass on most or all cost increases to employees. Over half of NBGH employer groups say they're raising employee premiums, and 39% say deductibles are going up as well.

The shift in who pays for what is beginning to change the dynamic of how wellness program managers market services. It used to be solely a matter of selling potential participants on the physical, psychological, and emotional benefits of a healthy lifestyle. And while these should remain the centerpiece of promotions going forward, the financial benefits of healthy choices are now a clear advantage for individual participants as well. You can make a compelling case to those without chronic conditions that they can keep more of their

income when limiting out-of-pocket expenses by practicing a few simple health habits.

While the potential for disgruntled employees to vent their frustration at the changes is real, there's no going back. The benefit gravy train, which exists for government workers and a small percentage of obscenely profitable private enterprises, is gone for everyone else.

The new, permanent reality is that individuals will be primarily responsible for continued increases in healthcare expense. And just like personal housing, transportation, groceries, and entertainment, it's a cost they can manage if they accept responsibility and have the right information to make smart decisions. That's where your job starts.

Choosing the right benefit plan options in combination with a healthy lifestyle could save individual employees and families thousands a year. If you're not already working with your benefits department to educate employees on these cost-saving opportunities, it's time. Explore how you can work together to raise awareness and educate employees and family members on financial benefits your services offer — in combination with the physical, psychological, and emotional. 





...by **John Harris**

## A Broad and Sustained Health Promotion Effort Pays Off — Proof Positive at Lincoln Industries

Until recently there has been little peer-reviewed research on the efficacy of small employer health promotion programs. While good ones do exist, rarely have they been assessed with any kind of rigor. One small employer that has stood out in the crowd over the last decade is Lincoln Industries, a provider of products requiring high-performance metal finishing, in Lincoln, Nebraska. But even their health promotion program success hadn't been validated in the literature — until now.

For a study in *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, “Evaluation of a Best-Practice Worksite Wellness Program in a Small Employer Setting Using Selected Well-Being Indices,” Ray Merrill, et al used a survey technique to compare Lincoln Industries' nearly 500 employees to their local counterparts. Results demonstrated Lincoln Industries employees were significantly better in physical health, mental health, and healthy behaviors. The study compared results of Lincoln Industries employees who took the Healthways Well-Being Assessment to those of the general population in the Lincoln, Nebraska Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index random sample.



It's important to note that Lincoln Industries has had their program since 2000 and committed significant resources to the health promotion effort. The program has a wide scope — focusing on culture, benefit structure, corporate policy, and relationships, as well as more standard health promotion initiatives. Lincoln Industries also conducts quarterly health screenings — and wellness is a component of each employee's annual performance evaluation.

This study suggests that small employers' health promotion efforts can be highly effective if significant in scope and sustained over time. Previous evaluation of the Lincoln Industries health promotion program has demonstrated decreasing trends in tobacco use and workers' compensation costs as well as stable healthcare expenses/employee that compare favorably with escalating national cost trends.

Here are other interesting findings — compared to the sample, Lincoln Industries employees are:

- More satisfied with their lives
- Less likely to get the flu, to be obese, or to experience health problems that restrict normal activities

- More likely to feel well rested
- Less likely to have been diagnosed with depression, or to feel worried or sad
- Less likely to smoke, more likely to eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables/day, and more likely to exercise 30 minutes/day
- More likely to be told by a health professional that they have high cholesterol, but less likely to be told they have diabetes or to have experienced a myocardial infarction (this may be a testament to the quarterly health screening the company conducts).

Perceived access to basic needs such as food, shelter, financial resources, a safe place to exercise, and affordable fresh produce was not significantly greater for Lincoln Industries employees, which isn't surprising given both Lincoln Industries employees and general citizens have access to the same community resources.

The Healthways Well-Being Assessment is a health risk assessment-type instrument administered at the worksite; the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index surveys 1000 Americans a night (except major holidays), representative of the US population and subpopulations such as metropolitan areas. Both tools have a common question set in the areas of well-being that were studied.

While these are remarkable results, nothing Lincoln Industries has done is outside the reach of any small business. They've simply created a program of significant scope and persistently stayed the course for 11 years — making healthy lifestyle a core value.

This study demonstrates the results that can be produced with commitment. We hope it will encourage more small businesses to develop exceptional programs and to prove their efficacy in the peer-reviewed literature. Remember, the key appears to be wide scope, effective resources, and sustained delivery. 📊

*John Harris is Chief Wellness Officer and Senior VP of Healthways.*

Merrill RM, Aldana SG, Pope JE, Anderson DR, Coberley CR, Vyhldal TP, Howe G, Whitmer RW. Evaluation of a Best-Practice Worksite Wellness Program in a Small Employer Setting Using Selected Well-Being Indices. *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*. 2011; 53:448-454.

## Market Research Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

We've helped several clients conduct simple to elaborate needs assessments and are struck by the seemingly illogical conclusions reached by some high-level managers. When it comes to wellness data, market research rules sometimes get tossed in favor of opinion or the way they think things ought to be. Four common mistakes to avoid:

- **Don't expect your research to necessarily produce dramatic news.** Some managers want to justify their project by making something from nothing. If you're lucky, the data will grow in your direction over time, but just as often it moves in the other direction and you've made the wrong decision.
- **Don't make good news out of bad.** If 51% of the survey group is "somewhat in favor" of the action but 29% are "strongly opposed," you're probably dealing with a largely neutral to negative audience on this issue — back off, or regroup and try a different approach.
- **Don't make projections from samples that are too small.** Even the most seasoned health promoter will sometimes make a single positive or negative comment the primary factor in changing direction.
- **Don't mistake opinion for fact.** The CEO saying it doesn't make it so. Counter strong, wrong opinions with data.

Even more common is the paucity of data collected before big decisions are made. If you're contemplating major additions, deletions, or changes to the way you manage your program, do comprehensive research — internally and externally — then evaluate it honestly. 📊

# Does Your Day Feel Like Whack-a-Mole?

That's the arcade game where the rodent pops up sporadically from different holes and you attempt to bonk it over the head before it retreats. Are you jumping from one problem, challenge, opportunity, to the next — without making significant progress on any front? Some things to try:

- **Find out what's really important to management.** You have to ask; guessing is gambling. Do they want your service to boost morale, reduce risk, save money, help with retention, all of the above? Don't stop at your boss; they may not know any better than you do. Once you know, you can ignore the jumpy rodents and focus on what matters by limiting the breadth of your services.

This may go against your belief that more is better. That's not necessarily so, especially if you aren't excelling at what matters. Car companies periodically eliminate a model and even an entire line if it's a distraction from where they really make their money.

- **Get help.** I know what you're saying... "I can't get help! That's why I play whack-a-mole all day." Maybe you can get some temporary help by shifting budgets around. A college intern? High school co-op? Borrowing help from another department? If you demonstrate you can get more important work done over time, you may be able to add the help permanently.



Waiting for things to get better is a mistake in most instances. You could wait yourself right out of a program. Take some time today to make an honest appraisal of how you're spending your time, then put the mallet down and work on getting the rodent out of your days permanently. 🚧

## Wellness Program Leadership Skills for 2012

Check your skills against this list to see how well you're progressing as a wellness program leader:

- **Share credit and blame.** When things go well it's easy to accept the accolades of participants and management. A sign of growth is being able to accept your share of the blame when things don't go so well.
- **Have a sixth man attitude.** Like the valuable sixth player on a basketball team, wellness leaders are important contributors who can enter the game when needed, but are just as content to watch from the sidelines when the team is doing well.
- **Manage people adversity.** Wellness professionals like to be liked. But as

a leader you're sometimes required to make unpopular decisions about people and resources. A successful leader can make the tough decisions and move forward with self-esteem intact.

- **See the big picture.** Leaders spend a good deal of time on issues that affect the entire organization, and leave day-to-day operations to assistants best positioned to sweat the details.
- **Teach as well as lead.** Many of today's top wellness managers learned in the school of hard knocks. Leaders make time to teach aspiring professionals the shortcuts to success.
- **Let go of the reins.** Top professionals allow others to take over successful

projects, then move on to new activities that add more value to the organization.

- **Champion talent.** Confident managers grab on to rising stars and help propel them to even greater heights within the organization.
- **Understand strengths and weaknesses.** The best leaders strive to be surrounded by individuals with complementary talents who can compensate for shortcomings.

As you prepare for the new year, take time to make an honest appraisal of your management skills. Then plan how to enhance your strengths and shore up your weaknesses. 🚧

# wellNews

## Today's Health Headlines

**15 minutes a day = 3 years,** suggests a study conducted in Taiwan. People who exercise for 15 minutes a day, or 92 minutes a week, extended their expected lifespan by 3 years compared to inactive people, according to this study in *The Lancet*.

**ACOG recommends annual breast cancer screening begin at age 40,** fueling the 2009 controversy when the US Preventive Services Task Force changed its recommendation to every other year, beginning at age 50, for those not known to be at high risk. ACOG (American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists) recommendations align with those of the American Cancer Society and National Comprehensive Cancer Network.

**This Bud's for reduced Alzheimer's risk —** but a little vino may be even better — say Loyola University researchers. After analyzing data from 140 studies covering more than 365,000 subjects, the authors concluded that a glass or 2 of wine or beer a day reduced Alzheimer's risk by 23%. The authors emphasize that light to moderate drinkers benefit; in this instance, more is not better.

**Get a dog to reduce kids' allergy risk,** claim scientists reporting in *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology*. They found that children exposed to animals at a young age had lower rates of nasal allergies as adolescents.

**Fat and healthy?** A study by York University and reported in *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* finds that obese people who are otherwise healthy live just as long as their slim counterparts, and are less likely to die of cardiovascular causes. The authors suggested that trying (and failing) to lose weight may be more detrimental than simply staying at an elevated body weight and maintaining

a healthy lifestyle that includes physical activity and a balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.

**Fiber may lower breast cancer risk,** conclude Chinese researchers in an *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* study. They found women who ate the most healthy plant components were 11% less likely to develop breast cancer than women who ate the least.

**Hiding vegetables in kids' meals doubles consumption and lowers calories,** finds a study in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. Researchers added pureed cauliflower, broccoli, squash, zucchini, and tomatoes to triple or quadruple every dish's dose of vegetables. The kids liked the doctored meals just as well as those without added vegetables, nearly doubled their daily produce, and ate 140 fewer calories.

**School telling parents their kids are fat has no impact on behavior,** indicates a study in the *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*. Children whose parents were told they were overweight were no more likely to have lost weight years later than children whose parents were not notified. Is anyone surprised?

**Boost iron consumption with dark beer,** say researchers from the University of Valladolid in Spain. Okay, it's not much — 122 ppb (parts per billion) vs. 92 ppb — but if you're going to drink beer... 🍺



# Ethics

Ethics in business  
moral principles  
rules and regulation  
of right conduct rec  
values that guide t



## Ethics and Wellness — Where Is the Line?

When discussing ethical challenges facing the wellness industry, Paul Terry (CEO, StayWell Health Management) boils it down to doing the right thing for clients. “Successfully navigating ethical issues is simply about staying true to our professional training. Always honoring a professional perspective and keeping it in the background... like a whisper in your ear... will guide you toward the best interest of those you serve.”

How does a wellness professional determine what is in a client’s best interest? Paul points to one of the earliest definitions of health education: a combination of learning experiences designed to facilitate voluntary adaptations of behaviors conducive to health. “The word *voluntary* was chosen for a very specific reason. Out of voluntary participation comes continued success in behavior change. Health education works best when the participant is motivated and engaged in a process of achieving personal health self-management.”

Paul believes current ethical dilemmas relate to programs that truly engage and support participants versus coercing them or placing blame when progress is slow. “The use of incentives by employers to increase engagement of employees has become commonplace. The current national average spent on incentives is close to \$400/person/year. At that level, it’s not likely that programs would be viewed as coercive. However, healthcare reform’s Affordable Care Act, which encourages employers to provide more health promotion services at the worksite, allows for increases in incentive levels as a proportion of health benefit value, from 20% to 30%. This gives employers funds to use for advancing a health promotion agenda.”

Congress obviously sent employers a strong message regarding its support of health promotion. Paul asks: “How will increasingly larger financial incentives, often tied to medical benefit premiums or copays, be viewed by employees? Will the wellness program still be seen as a fun, engaging, and voluntary benefit? HIPAA makes it clear that if

we tie financial incentives to health outcomes, those who cannot achieve a health standard, such as a healthy BMI, must be given a reasonable alternative standard.”

He questions whether overreliance on monetary incentives will improve health outcomes. “StayWell has been researching the relationship between financial incentive size and participation in health assessments, health coaching and health outcomes. It appears there is a point of diminishing return. Incentives can increase participation in programs, but how incentives relate to sustainable behavior change is far from conclusive. Our preliminary assessment is similar to other behavioral economics research: too large of an extrinsic reward may actually sap intrinsic motivation.”

“As a health coach, I can tell when we get on the phone with employees who have a very large financial inducement; we’re often dealing with precontemplators. The primary reason they’re there is the financial incentive. It really changes the dynamic.

We're great coaches, so we help many find their intrinsic motivation over time; but some don't. It's an interesting policy conundrum for the funder. How much are they willing to spend to evoke change?"

Paul finds it hard to differentiate between carrots and sticks. "You may intend your incentive to be a carrot, but many participants will perceive it as a stick if they don't make their goals."

## "Progress-Based" Wellness

Paul keeps a close eye on federal legislation and how employers interpret changes. "When using 'outcomes-based incentives' — the practice of offering premium differentials to employees achieving desirable health standards — I see little consensus about what EEOC and HIPAA consider a reasonable alternative. Some conclude that a doctor's note saying it's not medically realistic for the employee to reach a particular standard is reason for a reasonable alternative. The problem with that approach is that wellness programs could become an 'opt-out' program. Employees can simply turn to their doctor without trying to achieve the standard, yet still get the incentive."

Instead, Paul advocates a "progress-based incentive" approach that challenges employees to either achieve an established health standard or demonstrate good effort. "This would mean I'd earn an incentive by

---

"You may intend your incentive to be a carrot, but many participants will perceive it as a stick if they don't make their goals."

---

participating in appropriate wellness programs or by actively achieving incremental goals tailored to my needs and abilities. For example, if it's not realistic or medically viable for me to attain an ideal BMI during this incentive period, an alternative standard would be to achieve 10% loss of body weight."

Paul worries that wellness advocates or legislation could cross a line. "I'm loath to be a part of a profession that would discriminate against people who, by reason of their genetics or life circumstances, are more vulnerable. If health incentives become a regressive tax, the impact will be disproportionately felt by the older, chronically ill, or poor. It places the healthcare cost burden on those who can least afford it."

"Health insurance only works if we obey the law of large numbers. Younger, healthier people must pay premiums at rates that offset the cost of older, sicker people. If risk rating occurs, as with outcomes-based incentives, costs shift to the sicker, older, or poorer — making these groups' health insurance less affordable. If a younger, healthier demographic gets all the breaks, we've crossed a line."

## Walking the Line

As health promotion practitioners, we face another ethical dilemma: responsibility to our target audience while being accountable for performance goals set by the purchaser of services. "When policy leaders lose sight of what really motivates people, we need to recall what makes us professionals. It's a combination of knowledge, experience, and a code of conduct that requires us to employ strategies substantiated by scientific evidence."

Paul believes, to the extent wellness professionals can hold true to those core expectations, we can meet such challenges. "For instance, if an organization wants to try a



questionable approach, respond with what you know to be true in terms of principles of behavior change and suggest better alternatives. It's troubling that many look for some new magic bullet at a time when we're under-investing in best practices demonstrated to produce a positive ROI."

The only successful change is voluntary self-change. Paul advises patience: "It takes time to improve health within an organization. I suspect a reason some so aggressively test incentives is a belief that they accelerate employee engagement. But filling up an intervention pipeline with people who aren't ready to change may not get the intended health improvement *or* may even create a backlash of resistance to change. To achieve the best outcomes, we must counsel our colleagues, clients, and policy leaders that a patient, comprehensive, best practices approach to programming is essential."

Advocating for a supportive environment is another aspect of the ethical imperative facing wellness professionals. Paul reminds us,

“Incentives must be congruent with the organization’s plans and efforts to create a culture of health. If the incentive value goes up, will it be reinforced by an environment that makes healthy choices the easy choices? There’s nothing more ironic than to make incentives irresistible and raise the bar on employee accountability, yet send them into an environment toxic to their efforts. An ethical organization strives to align employee accountability with a commensurate business commitment in such areas as break policies, healthy food choices, walking paths, stress-relieving activities, and positive relationships within the workplace.”

Paul recognizes the wellness industry is in competition for the hearts and minds of consumers. “Thankfully, our product is oriented toward saving the world, where so many are not endowed with such goodness and greatness. To compete, we must be as smart as the other purveyors of products and services, often working with much bigger budgets. I love that our field is increasingly sophisticated in social marketing and tailoring our messages.”

## A Time for Disciplined Reflection

Paul urges wellness professionals to look within for any attitudes that might be condescending to certain lifestyles. “Consider the plight of our obese clients. Clearly, we don’t all start from the same point. The variations in environmental exposures, education, income levels, and genetic backgrounds all influence why someone became obese and how quickly they can effectively manage their weight. If we ever get comfortable discriminating against someone because of health status, we’ve started down an ethical slippery slope. If we begin to blame the victim and believe they alone are responsible for their troubles, we lose sight of ‘There but for the grace of God

go I.’ We’re all potentially a day away from an unexpected diagnosis or a life-altering accident. We all live in glass houses.”

“In health coaching, I find that principles of positive psychology and motivational interviewing also promote fairness and ethics. Effective coaches come up alongside their clients and earn their trust. A nonjudgmental attitude opens up honest dialogue about the client’s struggles. A coach who becomes judgmental, scolds, or responds to a client’s disclosures with a ‘here’s what you should do’ directive, becomes ineffective. Coaching with integrity means helping clients focus on their personal needs/values and answer their own questions about ‘What am I ready, willing, and able to achieve now?’”

Paul concludes: “Our training is grounded in science, not dogma. If we stay true to good evidence and if we’re zealous about flawless execution of what we know works, ethical concerns should be minimal. When ethical dilemmas occur, it’s often because we tried to evoke change too quickly or we didn’t properly prepare the culture for success. Gladly, our profession is getting better and better at balancing individual and social responsibility for health. I feel keenly fortunate to work in a profession where we can celebrate the extraordinary diversity of the people we serve and their wondrous ability, when offered generous support, to voluntarily and successfully improve their health and their lives.”

For more information, contact:  
[paul.terry@staywell.com](mailto:paul.terry@staywell.com). 



Paul Terry, PhD

## 4 Steps to a Successful Launch



Before you commit to offering a new wellness service, be sure you’ve covered these bases:

- **You’re rolling something out that’s going to be better or address a new need.** Don’t launch a new service simply to attract the same participants at the same level of involvement. Strive for new folks or more signups from existing participants, clients, or patients.
- **You’ve done your homework.** You should know before flipping the switch that there’s a demand for the new service. Notice we didn’t say “need.” What you think people need and what they really want may or may not be the same. The only way to know is to ask.
- **You’re really ready.** If the service is completely new and untested within your organization, consider a brief pilot phase with a small representative group to work out the kinks. It’s a lot easier to adjust at this point than to fix once it’s out there for the whole world to see.
- **You’ve trained support staff completely.** Be sure the people who answer emails and phones, vendors, committee members — anyone who could be asked about details of the new service — are comfortable with its content and processes, or can at least refer people for the right information. 

# Make an Offer They Can't Refuse

In a promotion rut? Doing the same thing you did last month, last year, your whole career? As you prepare your 2012 promotions, freshen them with these ideas:

- **Price incentives.** Take \$20 off when you register by January 15.
- **Payment options.** Have your registration fee deducted over 3 pay periods.
- **Selectivity.** You have been specially chosen to...
- **Premiums.** Get a free Resolution Solutions™ mug if you're in the first 100 to register.
- **Samples.** The enclosed BSE shower card is just one of the tools you can use to decrease your risk for breast cancer.
- **Free trial.** Attend the first session free, then decide if you want to sign up for the entire program.
- **Member get a member.** Take 50% off when you register a friend along with you.
- **Volume discounts.** Sign up for a 2-year membership at the fitness center and get the 2nd year for half price.
- **Deluxe accommodation.** For more in-depth counseling and support, sign up for Nutri-Coach™ today. 

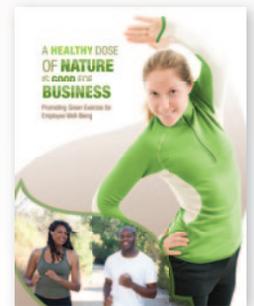
# A Healthy Dose of Nature Is Good for Business and Your Wellness Program

Compelling research points to green exercise — defined as exercising in the presence of nature — as a promising and practical way to cultivate a more physically active workforce. Here are 6 ways to encourage green exercise at work and home:

- Link to websites that offer easy ways to find local outdoor areas, such as the National Park Service ([www.nps.gov/parks.html](http://www.nps.gov/parks.html)) or TrailLink.com ([www.traillink.com/home.aspx](http://www.traillink.com/home.aspx)).
- Organize lunch-time and break-time outdoor walking groups as well as outdoor walking meetings.
- Hold group exercise classes — like yoga, tai chi, or strength circuit — outdoors.
- Sponsor local fitness events such as 5K/10K fun runs, charity walks, and sprint triathlons.
- Offer discounted group downhill ski tickets, cross-country ski trips, or other winter recreation opportunities in addition to outdoor events for other seasons.
- Use *MapWalk* ([www.mapwalk.com](http://www.mapwalk.com)) a free, easy tool to plan several convenient walking, running, and bicycling courses close to the workplace, and link it to your intranet site.

Green exercise combines the mental and physical benefits of being active with the psychological and physical rewards of exposure to natural environments — a synergy that adds up to healthier, happier employees who are more likely to stay fit.

To learn more about the personal benefits of green exercise, download the white paper at (<http://whitepapers.hesonline.com/green>) and call us (800.326.2317) for a free PowerPoint presentation you can share with management to support outdoor exercise programming initiatives. 



# 5 Due Diligence Questions to Ask Before You Hire Your Next Wellness Vendor

Hiring a service provider is every bit as important — maybe more so — than hiring a new employee. Yet we often run into potential clients who have had a bad experience with another vendor and so are naturally skeptical that we can or will do what we say — even though they've had no prior experience with us.

It's more common than you think, as wellness vendors routinely over-promise and under-deliver. To these doubters, we always encourage them to talk to current or previous clients. And for those considering any wellness vendor's service, here are some questions and things to look for as part of your evaluation and due diligence process. The goal is to end up with exactly the right provider for your organization.

## ***Can I talk to 3 or more customers you just started doing business with?***

New customers will have a fresh perspective and can tell you the reasons they chose this particular service provider. You can ask about their process and compare it to yours to see if you've any holes to fill as you complete your evaluation.

## ***Can I talk to 3 or more customers you've served for 3 years or more?***

It's easy to keep someone happy for a year. But after 3 years the initial shine will have worn off and you can get a real sense of how well this provider serves customers long term. Unless you want to be switching providers

annually, it's important to have a comfort level that they'll be able to meet expectations and deliver on their promise for more than a year.

## ***How long have you been providing this service and what is your greatest success so far?***

You're looking for a track record of success over multiple years with multiple clients. Ideally, the provider will have several examples of great success with organizations that parallel yours. If they don't, that's not a deal-breaker in itself, but may be a signal you need to dig deeper for a reason they've not had success in that area.

## ***How much repeat business do you get?***

This is a crucial question because it tells you if they consistently meet or exceed client expectations. The challenge is verifying it. The only way to do that is ask for references and have direct conversations. Be skeptical of firms that lock clients into long-term agreements. You can structure agreements so it's easy to renew, but it's just as important that it's easy to get out of. If a provider is giving you a line about how they need 2 or 3 years to demonstrate ROI, which is why they need a long-term contract, run. Most everyone we know who has locked into long-term agreements regrets it.

## ***What changes will you be making to this product/service in the next year?***

Any provider worth their salt will have some enhancements planned a



year or more out. But be careful of complete overhauls expected during your contract. You should have the option of maintaining the status quo or implementing the enhancements without leaving that to the provider's discretion.

Each of these questions and their answers will lead to others. And it can be legitimate that a vendor may not wish to answer one or more for proprietary reasons. But when you add up all the questions answered and unanswered, you need to come away with a comfort level that this is a relationship you want. And the only way to get that is to follow up on the answers with real current and former clients.

The greatest cost for a mistake made in selecting an inappropriate provider isn't the dollars spent, but the lost opportunity in not working with the right vendor to move toward achieving your goals. You'll get a new budget next year, but you'll never get the time back you lost on the wrong firm. 📧

# Reaching the Hard to Reach Through the Easy to Reach

We often hear wellness managers complain about the fact they get the same participants over and over — as if this is a bad thing. True, you want to reach as many people as possible, but those repeat participants will bump into a lot of nonparticipants. And if you treat them well they're going to spread the word about your quality programs and services — the easiest way to attract new people.

Some ways to make repeat participants feel special:

- Write personal “Nice to see you again” notes on registration confirmation notices
- Go out of your way to introduce new staff or outside providers to loyal participants
- Call repeat participants after they attend a new service or program to get their feedback — even if you've distributed a written survey (and you should)
- Send a New Year's message to loyal customers — wish them the best and let them know you look forward to seeing them again in the new year (see example at right)
- Seek the advice of regular participants on how to attract and retain new customers
- Forward “sneak preview” announcements to frequent participants before promoting to the general population
- Send links to articles on health issues loyal participants are interested in, along with an FYI note
- Call or email congratulations on promotions or recognition regular participants receive on the job or in the community

- Host an annual breakfast and brainstorming meeting for repeat customers to share their ideas on programming for the next 12 months.

## New Year's Note

This letter is guaranteed to raise participation in the first quarter — get it out to last year's participants in January.

Dear (name)

*Just a quick note to thank you for participating in XYZ wellness program last year. I hope you're continuing to achieve your health and fitness goals.*

*As we begin a new year, I'd like to invite you to help us do a better job of meeting your needs. If you have any suggestions for improving our programs or services, please call or email. If there's anything we can do to help you focus on priorities and maintain a healthy lifestyle, I'd like to hear from you as well.*

*I've enclosed our program schedule for (time frame). Let me know if you have questions or comments on our offerings, or if there's something else you're interested in.*

*Thanks again for your participation. All the best in 2012.*

*Regards,*

*(your name)  
Phone number  
Email address*

This will have more impact as a paper letter, especially if it includes a hand-written note and signature. 





## Getting Participants Off the Fence

Depending on the behavior change it can take multiple attempts (at least 2 or more) — at quitting smoking, losing weight, starting exercise, managing stress — before a participant experiences long-term success and real commitment. You can't rush this, but you can help people get off the fence so they can reach commitment on their own, and ultimately achieve the goal of long-term behavior change. Here's how:

- **Ask for a “first-step” promise.** What's the easiest commitment the participant can make and feel they've accomplished something? A little confidence builder up front can set the tone for later attempts.
- **Create some urgency.** What can the participant do today or this week that will move them toward their goals? You're not trying to say the

opportunity won't exist in the future, but that there's no better time than the present, so let's get started.

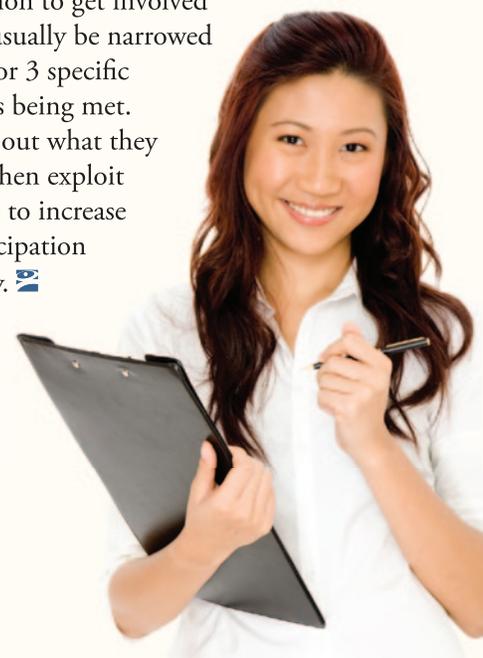
- **Eliminate barriers.** Having pat answers for the “I don't have time to...” excuse isn't all that helpful. Instead, acknowledge that the participant may have challenges, try to identify the top 1 or 2, and plan how to overcome them now. Get the participant to come up with the solution and simply be a reality check for them.
- **Make it personal.** Talk about what this really means to the participant... why they want to make this change now... what it will mean to them if they're successful. Getting a participant to commit to a cholesterol number under 200 isn't very personal. Being able to wrestle with their grandkid is — go for the emotional jugular. 🎯

## Do What You Do Best, Better

Some wellness managers spend a lot of time and energy trying to determine why nonparticipants don't get involved, then creating strategies to attract them. While it's a worthwhile exercise, there are easier first steps to increasing participation. They all involve doing what you do well even better. Some suggestions:

- **Outline the top 3 reasons participants come to your programs.** If you're like many health promoters, you don't know. Find out by asking, then work to enhance your skills in those areas as well as highlighting them in promotions.
- **Know your most consistent users.** Review records to get a demographic profile of regular participants. Interview the top 20 to determine why your services appeal to them.
- **Ask “what did you like most?”** On each program evaluation, ask participants what was most appealing, then try to replicate it in other services.

Reasons for not participating can be many and varied, but the decision to get involved can usually be narrowed to 2 or 3 specific needs being met. Find out what they are, then exploit them to increase participation today. 🎯



# Families That Walk Together, Stay Together

SHARE THE HEALTH  
**takeaway**  
for duplication & distribution

Plenty of evidence out there says walking is good for the body, mind, and soul. No other exercise requires such a low-maintenance approach with such a high return. You need little start-up money — enough for good shoes and comfortable attire — and there's hardly a location that doesn't suit your purpose. All the while, walking improves health, tones muscles, heightens mood, and reduces stress. So what more reason could you possibly have to take up the pedestrian cause? Family.

In an age when workdays are long, leisure time is minimal, and physical activity consists of hurrying from the house to the car, families are hard-pressed to find quality time together. Yet regular togetherness helps maintain communication and deepen relationships for parents, children, and each other. Double your benefit by staying fit and healthy while enhancing closeness.

Whether just starting out with a newborn, retired, or at stages in between, you can use these simple ideas to get the most from family walks.

## Families With Infants or Young Children

Walking is a wonderful, inexpensive way to get out when you're toting a baby or toddler. Apart from the recreation and health benefits, a walk outdoors provides visual stimulation for little ones, and gives you the opportunity to educate them about their surroundings.

Consider making Saturday or Sunday morning your family walk-and-talk day, or pick an evening a couple times a week to take a family stroll. Go to a park to show the different flowers and trees, or to a zoo for learning about animals. Use the time to reconnect with your spouse as well. Since both of you are probably pulling double duty with work, diapers, and early morning feedings, it's important to catch up in a quiet, slower-paced environment.

## Families With School-Age Children

As the kids get older and are lured by video games and TV, family walks are a great way to keep them active — and decrease the risk for childhood obesity. It's also a good time to talk about school, friends, life, and any problems they might be having.

With so little time in the day, try to walk your kids to school instead of letting them go by themselves or driving them. On the weekends, when soccer games and grocery trips take up most of the afternoons, think about morning as the time to walk to a local restaurant for breakfast or to your place of worship. You can even make a family outing from your trip to the mall for school clothes or supplies.

By spending time walking with your children in these years, you instill a sense of support and love that they'll take into their teens, while developing a healthy pattern of physical activity.

Also use family walks to teach your kids safety tips about traffic dangers — looking both ways, sticking to crosswalks, and staying on the sidewalk.

## Families With Adolescents

Teenagers often declare their independence by retreating from family affairs and keeping to themselves. Many prefer to spend time with friends and are far less inclined to open up to parents or hang out with siblings. Although family walks may be hard to coordinate, they're probably most important at this stage. Walking with your adolescent is an excellent opportunity for casual conversation to open up communication lines.

Use your teen's interests to help spark a walk. If they like to shop, ask to join them for a day at an outdoor swap meet or the mall. Organize a weekend camping trip with your son or daughter and a few of their friends; you can chaperone and lead hiking excursions.

You may not get to talk one on one, but at least you're spending time together and you know where they are. Promoting a regular walking routine also will help keep your teen in shape, especially during these years when weight gain can become a real issue for sedentary kids.

Even if your teenager declines your invitation to take a walk, don't fret. Keep making the offer; you'll show them you're interested in them and their lives. Wanting to walk with your teen can have far-reaching effects on their decisions and self-esteem.

## The Later Years

After all the years of working and raising a family, the joints might be a little stiffer. Fortunately, walking is low impact — an excellent exercise choice for middle age and beyond. If the kids are in college or out on their own, regular walks with your mate help the two of you keep the relationship fresh and alive.

When the kids and grandchildren make their way home for a visit, walking can be a wonderful outing for everyone. Whether it's going around the block after Thanksgiving dinner or a weekly get-together at a local trail, try to incorporate walks into your family gatherings.

## A Family Affair

As you can see, walking is an easy, inexpensive form of physical activity that caters to any age level or ability. It allows you to break away from daily burdens. And it's more accommodating for family talks than other sports. 🚶

# 10 Health for the Holidays Ideas

It's not too early to start planning for the holidays. Here are 10 ways to end 2011 with a bang:

- **Turkey Trot/Walk.** Sponsor a walk/jog event the week before Thanksgiving to kick off a holiday program. Award door prizes and highlight upcoming activities.
- **Holiday Tune-Up.** Conduct a health screening or nutrition assessment as a way for participants to prepare for the holidays. Use the opportunity to promote other services.
- **Gifts From the Heart.** Offer discounted registrations to everyone who donates a gift to charity.
- **Healthy Holiday Bake-Off.** Invite participants to share holiday treats and recipes. Have a contest for healthiest, tastiest, most appetizing, easiest-to-prepare, etc.
- **Holiday Harmony.** Invite local school or church choirs to perform holiday songs in high traffic areas over lunch or after work. Set up a registration table and hand out fliers to the audience.
- **Holiday Cooking Demo.** Hold a cooking demonstration and taste test featuring low-fat holiday recipes.
- **Holiday Card Contest.** Sponsor a kids' holiday card design contest. Encourage employees' children to submit drawings that depict healthy activities during the holidays.
- **Holiday Helpers.** Organize a food drive, afternoon of labor, or other worthy contribution to a local charity. Award door prizes.
- **Wealth for the Holidays.** Offer a free seminar on financial fitness during the holidays.
- **Maintain Don't Gain.** Conduct a friendly weight management contest from Thanksgiving to New Year's. Consider making it a team vs. individual competition. 



Free E-Newsletter!



Sign up for the  
**Wellness Solutions**  
E-Newsletter at

[www.HealthEnhancementSystems.com](http://www.HealthEnhancementSystems.com).

**Managing Editor, Dean Witherspoon**  
President, Health Enhancement Systems • Midland MI

**Editor, Debra Sanders**  
Sanders Editorial • Tucson AZ • 520.795.4834

**Subscription Services, Joanna Lee**  
Health Enhancement Systems • Midland MI

*Health Promotion Practitioner* (ISSN 1060-5517) is published every 2 months for \$119 per year in the US, \$129 (US funds) per year in Canada, \$139 (US funds) per year in other countries by Health Enhancement Systems, Inc., 712 Cambridge Street, Midland MI 48642. Periodicals postage paid at Midland MI. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Health Promotion Practitioner*, PO Box 1035, Midland MI 48641-1035.

Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the publisher. Mention of products or services is not an endorsement. Medical, legal, or other comments are offered for guidance only; professional counsel should be sought for specific conditions.

COPYRIGHT © by Health Enhancement Systems, Inc. All rights reserved. No part of this publication (except *takeaway*) may be reproduced without publisher's permission. Group subscription rates available. Back issues, \$9 each.

**Health Promotion Practitioner**  
PO Box 1035 • Midland MI 48641-1035  
Phone: 800.326.2317 • 989.839.0852  
Fax: 989.839.0025  
[www.hesonline.com](http://www.hesonline.com)

As always, we want to hear from you.  
Send your comments to our managing editor: [editor@hesonline.com](mailto:editor@hesonline.com).

