

Snapshots of Wellness

By Symone C. Skrzycki

Earning a Healthy Diploma at UIndy

Students are calling the shots at the University of Indianapolis (UIndy), at least when it comes to enhancing wellness. Setting personal goals – such as running a marathon, transitioning to a vegan lifestyle or losing weight – is an integral part of the Healthy Diploma Program™. It's not all about fitness, however. Completing the program may also pay off professionally.

The economic downturn helped set the proverbial wheels in motion for establishing the program in 2009. “(We asked ourselves), ‘What could we do to make our graduates more attractive?’” recalls Lisa Hicks, Department of Kinesiology chair and associate professor.

Participants complete a variety of health and wellness courses (e.g., nutrition, financial wellness, stress management) and physical activity electives (e.g., aquatics, cardio hip hop, yoga).



Students pursuing a Healthy Diploma at UIndy must exercise their minds and bodies.

In addition, they take annual health assessments and work closely with a personal wellness coach.

Currently, enrollment is limited to 25 students per year (the application process takes place each fall and is open to all majors.)

Hicks believes the diploma increases graduates' employability.

“A physically fit and healthy student also makes a healthier learner,” she contends. “And once they graduate, that student is a much more productive and attentive employee.”

“We would assume that these students will not only be a role model in the workplace, but also will be (valuable) to the employer because they will come in healthy (which ultimately reduces health care costs).”

Striking a balance

For 20-year-old psychology major Faith Griffaw, part of the diploma's appeal is its comprehensive approach to wellness.

“It is important to be healthy in all aspects of your life, not just physically,” she emphasizes, noting that meeting with her advisor helps keep her motivated and brings all elements of health (mental, spiritual and physical) together.

Vincent Georgescu, a 19-year-old exercise science major, wrapped up his freshman year in May.

“Since I run cross country and track at UIndy, I'm in pretty good shape. My (wellness) coach knows that. (But), if there is anything I need to talk with him about, he's there for that. It can be social (in nature) – anything.”

“I'm excited that I'm part of the second generation of students to have the opportunity to take advantage of this diploma that will kind of make me extra elite immediately after college. And the fact that UIndy is the only campus in the country to offer something like this at this time makes it even more eye opening.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resource: Lisa Hicks, University of Indianapolis, at <http://uindy.edu>

Cultivating Homegrown Connections

Growing up on a farm planted the seeds for Matt Ewer's entrepreneurial ambitions. Along with wife Elizabeth, he founded Green B.E.A.N. Delivery (formerly Farm Fresh Delivery) – an online home delivery service that links consumers with local food producers and artisans – in 2007. Today, the Indianapolis-based company provides fresh organic produce and natural groceries to more than 10,000 Midwest families.

Green B.E.A.N. (Biodynamic, Education, Agriculture and Nutrition) serves Indianapolis, Fort Wayne, Louisville, Cincinnati, Columbus and Dayton.

Ewer points out that contrary to popular belief, “organic” doesn’t always mean “more expensive.” Healthy eating, he says, can help spur economic growth.

“I think there are certain things that go into producing organic food that do cause a slight price difference, but as the market’s grown, we’ve seen that become more competitive,” he comments. “Also, with the rising gasoline prices we’re going through right now (well above \$4 a gallon at the time of this interview), we can expect to see local food become more competitive in the market because it’s not being trucked across the U.S.”

Plowing ahead

The Ewers operate several ventures under the Green B.E.A.N. umbrella. One of the newest – The Feel Good Farm – spans 60 acres in Sheridan.

“We’re going to supplement our Green B.E.A.N. Delivery (offerings) with products directly from our farm,” he explains. “It also will serve as an educational resource for organizations and schools.”

Another platform connecting the agricultural world is Edible Communities, Inc. (ECI), the world’s leading network of magazines dedicated to the local food movement. Two offshoots – *edible* INDY and *edible* LOUISVILLE – include profiles of Hoosier farmers and producers. The quarterly publication was scheduled to debut in June in Indianapolis.

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Matt Ewer, Green B.E.A.N. Delivery, at www.greenbeandelivery.com

edible INDY at www.edibleindy.com

edible LOUISVILLE at www.ediblelouisville.com

Forum Features Best Practices

Disease management. Mental health. Smoking cessation. Legalities and practicalities of financial incentives. These are just a few key issues Hoosier employers are addressing as part of a joint effort between Anthem and INShape Indiana called the Indiana Workplace Wellness Partnership (IWWP).

“It started back in 2008,” explains Dr. Wesley Wong, regional vice president and medical director for Anthem National Accounts and Commercial Business. “The vision was, ‘How do we get companies – specifically in the Indianapolis region – to get together as a group to talk about wellness initiatives in the workplace, to discuss achievements, lessons learned and obstacles?’ The overall thought was (that) we could get a community of companies interested in wellness ... and eventually start working collaboratively across the board to promote wellness in the workplace.”

Approximately 100 individuals representing 60 diverse organizations (such as the Indiana State Department of Health, universities and employers ranging from pharmaceutical companies and hospitals to insurance agencies, consulting firms and more) have joined the IWWP. Quarterly meetings take place at Anthem’s downtown Indianapolis office.

What’s working?

Cutting costs and boosting morale are two valuable benefits of implementing a workplace wellness program.



Green B.E.A.N. Delivery partners with IU Health to provide fresh produce to underserved Indianapolis areas via “Garden on the Go” trucks, which make 12 stops per week.

In addition to emphasizing traditional wellness themes such as healthy eating and physical activity, the Indiana Workplace Wellness Partnership addresses issues such as mental health and disease management.



“A successful wellness program from the perspective of the employer can save money. More importantly, at an employee level, those folks are getting healthy, getting engaged and making better choices. They see employers investing in them and their future,” emphasizes Spencer Milus, president of wellness consulting firm Milus and Company and a co-chair of the IWWP.

Amy David, community health initiatives consultant for Anthem National Accounts and fellow IWWP co-chair, observes that enhancing employees’ health also boosts productivity.

“We’ve moved away from ‘absenteeism’ to ‘presenteeism,’ ” she comments. “Wellness programs allow you to be more present. Not only are (workers) absent less, but when they’re at work, they feel better and are doing a better job.”

Wong reveals that many employers neglect a crucial element of successful wellness programs: sustainability. He adds that it’s also important to include all employees in wellness efforts.

“We often look at wellness as a program for those who need wellness, (but) many successful clients are trying to reward people for staying well – keeping healthy people healthy,” he stresses. “There are incentives for that population also.”

INFORMATION LINK

Resources: Amy David and Dr. Wesley Wong, Anthem, at www.anthem.com

Spencer Milus, Milus and Company, at www.milusandco.com