

## Chamber, Council Team Together New Partnership Presents Expanded Opportunities

By Mike Campbell

The popularity of corporate wellness programs in the United States has grown to the point that most surveys cite better than 70% of the nation's employers being involved in some type of wellness endeavor.

The state of wellness in Indiana is not far removed from the national statistics.

Many wellness programs in Indiana as well as nationally, however, have failed for a number of reasons. The leading causes have included the programs being "sold" to the wrong people – and for the wrong reasons. Most have been participation based with precious few measuring data that will drive positive outcomes. This unfortunate picture has developed due to the lack of "C suite" buy in.

The Wellness Council of Northwest Indiana was created in 1988 to encourage employers to reach not only levels of high employee engagement, but also positive health outcomes. In the early part of the last decade, this council transitioned to a statewide effort. During the past several years, the Wellness Council of Indiana (WCI) searched long and hard for a means to create sustainable success in wellness. On this journey, the WCI Board of Directors joined forces with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce and Gov. Mitch Daniels' INShape Indiana initiative for the first annual summit on September 17, 2009.

On January 1, 2011, the Wellness Council of Indiana officially joined forces with the Chamber with complete support from INShape Indiana. The overall mission of this merger (unlike any other organization of its type in the United States) is to work hand in hand with our state's industry leaders to certify and drive outcomes in health and productivity.

### Full-time focus

For the first time in the council's history, a full-time director, Chuck Gillespie, officially came on board January 31, 2011 as an employee of the Chamber. Working closely with the executive and advisory boards of the WCI and with the full support of the Chamber, our director will lead the charge for health and productivity for employers in the great state of Indiana. Services to WCI's members will range from our state-of-the-art certification process to scholarships for those striving to better their skills in health and productivity.

One of the most exciting recent national developments was the creation of the National Network of Wellness Councils (NNWC), of which the WCI is a charter member. The NNWC's primary function is to assist and support its 22 state wellness council members in bringing the best of certification processes to the employers of the states they represent. This

nationally benchmarked approach will drive outcomes and place the WCI employer members in the lead for industry competitiveness.



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### More stories to tell

The successes in the last few years will increase in multiples in the near future. Those stories include the achievement of three- and four-star certification level award recipients such as Draper Industries, Deaconess and Deaconess Women's Hospitals, Toyota of Princeton and Butler University, which is on the brink of the five-star certification (the first in almost 10 years). During this same time, selected scholarships have been awarded to those striving to improve their skills in wellness, health and productivity.

This is but a glimpse of the dreams and visions for the tools and achievements yet to be realized through this journey these organizations have set upon. We realize and fully understand that this effort alone will not achieve what must be accomplished in our state. It is vital that all striving to improve the health and productivity of our residents embrace collaboration as not only desirable, but also critical to improving the health of our citizens.

It has been well established by organizations such as the National Business Group on Health that companies that have experienced success have found that it's about more than implementing a "wellness program." Wellness is not a program, process or policy; it is a way of life or "lifestyle." Life is full of choices, and it has become obvious that when it comes to health and health care, we have been making one wrong choice right after another. The question remains: How can we encourage, provide incentives for or steer our employees toward consistently making those right choices?

According to most national experts in health and productivity, the bottom line is creating a culture of health and the workplace is a great place to start. To many this may seem rather radical, but in true holistic wellness it is really just that – "radical." This word comes from the Latin word "radix", which means back to the "root." The Wellness Council of Indiana is all about empowering the employers of Indiana to get back to the fundamentals of good health, resulting in greater productivity and ultimately outstanding corporate fitness.

### INFORMATION LINK

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