

# Moving Instead of Smoking

By Charlee Beasor

## Smoking Impact Even Worse Than Realized

Smoking is bad for your health – not exactly a surprising revelation.

But the host of diseases now linked to smoking is a bit more shocking. A recent report released by acting Surgeon General Boris D. Lushniak, M.D., M.P.H., concludes that smoking is now also a factor in these diseases: age-related macular degeneration, diabetes, colorectal cancer, erectile dysfunction, liver cancer, ectopic pregnancy, rheumatoid arthritis, inflammation, impaired immune function and orofacial clefts in infants.

The report adds that secondhand smoke is a contributor to stroke and women are at just as much risk of dying of smoking-related diseases as men.

*The Health Consequences of Smoking – 50 Years of Progress* comes on the 50th anniversary of the first Surgeon General report on the impacts of smoking.

The latest report also highlights that over \$150 billion in productivity is lost annually from premature death due to smoking. The annual direct medical costs attributable to smoking are over \$130 billion.

Smoke-free air policies, such as the one that went into effect in Indiana in July 2012, are one of the action steps the Surgeon General discusses in the report in an effort to reduce smoking rates.

The Wellness Council of Indiana, in partnership with the Indiana Tobacco Prevention and Cessation Commission, offers the Quit NOW Tool as a benefit of membership. The tool is available to help assist employees in quitting smoking.

**RESOURCE:** Wellness Council of Indiana at [www.wellnessindiana.org](http://www.wellnessindiana.org)

## Growing Workplace Trend: Wearable Fitness Monitors

There's nothing like a little healthy competition in the workplace – especially when it promotes health and wellness.

For one Terre Haute-based company, using wearable fitness monitors has engaged employees to take more steps throughout the day, as well as communicate with co-workers in other departments.

"I'm in legal and there's a construction guy – I don't do a lot of business with them – he and I are neck and neck (in steps). You can taunt, cheer and message people. I'm communicating with an employee that I wouldn't communicate with a lot," offers Tami Robertson, who helps run the FitBit program at Thompson Thrift, a full-service development and construction company.

Thompson Thrift purchases the entry-level FitBit monitor, and employees can upgrade by paying the difference between the basic and expanded models.

If employees are inactive for two weeks during active challenges, the monitors must be returned.

Partner Paul Thrift, who co-founded the company in 1986, notes that while Thompson Thrift hasn't seen any tangible reduction in health care costs since starting the program in January 2013, that wasn't the point of using the monitors.

"It's more of a long-term investment in that the fewer illnesses we have, the healthier employees we have. In the long period, it will help us. It's also not just the FitBit, but other aspects of the program – the metrics, screenings; if we can catch something early, the saving in health insurance costs is the smallest benefit of that. It's somebody's potential health," Thrift explains.

Spouses may also purchase FitBit monitors and participate in the challenges.

"It's about one-to-one as far as persons insured – there is one family member for every one employee," Thrift relates. "It's equally important from an economic standpoint and the health and happiness of the employee to keep their family fit as well."



Employees at Terre Haute-based Thompson Thrift use wearable fitness monitors to track their daily steps and activity.

## LaPorte Mayor Makes a Run for Health and Wellness

Imagine running a 5K every Saturday. Now imagine running a 5K every Saturday in three different communities in an effort to promote physical activity and good health.

That's exactly what LaPorte Mayor Blair Milo has been doing with her time so far this spring and summer. She will continue until she hits the last of Indiana's 92 counties in mid-October.

Dubbed "Step Up Saturdays" (a spinoff of LaPorte's "Fitness Friday" events, in which LaPorte citizens can join in a walk or run each week), Milo's goal is to show more Hoosier communities just how easy and inexpensive it can be to support physical activity programs in their communities.

Since starting in March, Milo has visited more than 30 communities and has interested eight (as of press time) in starting their own events. She began in Southern Indiana and is working her way north as the summer progresses.

"Some counties are ready to participate; some are still a little wary of what the program is and that's okay," Milo explains. "All I ask for them is to help me identify a 5K route. Then, to provide some water, which can be as simple as jugs and some cups, and help get the word out and have people come out and participate."

Even a slight improvement in Indiana's annual poor health rankings would be a welcome step.

"It's just so important that we start making these changes and that first and foremost it's going to make people feel happier – they'll feel better," she asserts. "Seventy-five percent of spending in health care goes to chronic disease management, and almost all (of that) can be prevented."

Milo's progress and locations each weekend are discussed on a local radio program and posted on the events page at [WIMSRadio.com](http://WIMSRadio.com).

**RESOURCE:** Blair Milo, city of LaPorte, at [www.cityoflaporte.com](http://www.cityoflaporte.com)

**RESOURCE:** Paul Thrift and Tami Robertson, Thompson Thrift, at [www.thompsonthrift.com](http://www.thompsonthrift.com)