

## **Breakout Session: Anne Charles**

To discuss:

- How to get the biggest bang for your wellness buck
- How to increase participation
- How to revive your program / give it new energy

Food is always a good motivator to bring people in, especially if classes are held during lunch time. Doesn't have to be a big meal, could even be snacks (can purchase in bulk from Sam's Club). Also good to use local caterers, to support local businesses. Wraps and good for "grab & go" type of meals. Other suggestions: make-your-own salad bar, with Committee members bringing in ingredients; Mason Jar meals classes.

Question: How to get people on shift work (especially men) involved?

Suggestions:

- Sponsor active events (disc golf, golf, ice fishing, gym memberships).
- Apple picking.
- Coupons for local farm stands.
- Make up incentive packets for all employees, and include Hannaford gift cards with "guiding stars" info on good nutrition.
- Put samples of all the MMEHT incentive prizes around the worksite so employees can see them.
- Promote individual activities, not just classes.
- Scavenger hunt; try different activities to win prizes.
- Raffle – every time you attend a class, you are entered into a raffle with prizes (gift cards) drawn at the end of the year.
- Gift card raffles at every class, plus every attendee gets a small door prize – something small, inexpensive, and useful (e.g., seedlings, measuring cup, etc.)
- Consider doing one-week challenges, scattered throughout the year.
- Remember, some people do better with short-term individual activities than with classes or big events.
- Healthy book club – read books having to do with health, life challenges, etc.

It's a good idea to tailor your class offerings to your employees, sometimes even different offerings for different departments. Ask employees what they want rather than deciding for them. Suggestions:

- Have a luncheon for all staff members. Provide a survey to everyone there and ask them what classes they want. Every employee who completes the survey receives a small (\$5 gift card).
- Short survey (no more than 5 questions) with open ended questions, rather than just a list of options to choose from.

Tap into:

- Community resources
- Internal resources (e.g., town arborist gives a class on gardening)

Suggestions to get people involved:

- Start a challenge – how to make your favorite comfort food healthier
- Have a healthy food super bowl party
- Pot luck lunch for all employees
- Have each department head choose an activity for a month, and invite all employees to join (e.g., walk with the Town Manager; bean bag toss at Public Works, etc.)

- Lunch with the Town Manager – each month the Town Manager has lunch with a different department (good for morale)
- Allow people to purchase a fitbit via payroll deduction – employer pays for it, then employee pays some \$\$ each payroll period to pay it off

WIG – groups could always use more money – any way to increase the grant amount?

WIG suggestions:

- Weight Watchers at work (subsidize part of the cost)
- Reimburse employees for fitness equipment (up to \$25 per year)
- Wellness Summer Fun (healthy lunch at Public Works, outside yard games like volleyball, badminton, etc.) – employees can win the games to take home

Always recognize that people are at different places in their journey. Take the focus off just losing weight (i.e., Biggest Loser challenges) and look more at making healthy changes and choices. Address the “why” and everything else will follow.

Smokers take their 15-minute breaks to smoke, and do some deep breathing (inhale/exhale) while they are smoking – encourage non-smoking employees to do the same (take breaks, deep breathing – but without tobacco!).

Good to do health risk assessments, test fitness – good to know where you are, even if it’s just a starting point.

