Community and Philanthropic Efforts:

Reconsidering Company Contributions

Employers have long been active, responsible and respected community members. Corporate philanthropy has enabled many non-profits, advocacy groups and charitable organizations to improve the quality of life of individuals nationwide. Many of these groups promote wellness and fight obesity among children by addressing its underlying causes: poor nutrition and limited physical activity. Employers interested in childhood obesity should evaluate the recipients of current company contributions and consider reallocating a portion of those contributions to initiatives focused on youth.

This section provides three ways companies can support the fight against childhood obesity in their local communities. While not an exhaustive list or the "gold standard" of programs, the examples below do illustrate the scope and range of community-based activities designed to address and reduce the burden of childhood overweight and obesity. The examples also highlight how Business Group members are taking action.

1. Sponsor or Promote Local Events

Companies can take advantage of a growing number of opportunities available to promote childhood physical activity through the sponsorship of or participation in local activities targeting families and children. Activities can be held in collaboration with the community or at company facilities.

Medtronic has sponsored the Medtronic Twin Cities Kids Marathon for several years. The Minnesota initiative offers 4-, 8- and 12-week online training programs for schools and families. Training can occur at any time, with three family races planned throughout the year (i.e., cross-country in the spring, a road race in the fall and indoor track in the winter). The program was named the "National Youth Event" of the year by Running USA.

CVS Caremark sponsors the CVS Caremark Downtown 5K in Rhode Island annually. The race promotes physical activity at a young age by holding competitions for children as young as age two. In 2009, CVS Caremark will be co-sponsoring a new initiative called "Walk the Nation." This initiative is being rolled out by Shape Up Rhode Island and piloted at three Rhode Island school locations. This wellness program is designed to encourage and inspire three fifth-grade classes to be more physically active. The program will provide each student with a map, a guidebook,

National Business Group on Health

INSTITUTE ON Innovation IN Workforce Well-being

a pedometer and a personalized logbook to help them "visit" each state by walking a certain number of steps every day and keeping track of their pedometers.

General Mills has hosted "The Run of the Mills" at its headquarters since 2003. General Mills' employees, friends and family can participate in a 5K run or 1-mile walk; children under the age of 12 can participate in a quarter-mile "Trix Trot."

2. Support Established Programs and Campaigns

International Walk to School Day

Walk to School Day began in Chicago in 1997 and has grown to more than 3 million walkers in all 50 states and more than 40 countries.[1] Ten years after its start, more than 6,000 U.S. schools participated in Walk to School Day.

Employers can become involved with the International Walk to School Day on the national or local level in a variety of ways:

- by encouraging employees to participate in Walk to School day with their children;
- by working with schools in their local area to provide refreshments or incentives such as pedometers or reflective gear; or
- by co-branding Walk to School Day events at the national or local level.

Employers can learn more about the campaign, as well as sign up as a resource for specific state activities, at: www.walktoschool.org.

Since 1999, **FedEx** has teamed up with SafeKids Worldwide to support International Walk to School Day with a specific initiative entitled "Safe Kids Walk this Way." In over 150 cities nationwide, FedEx and SafeKids work together to host walk to school events.[2] FedEx encourages its employees to volunteer to educate schoolchildren about the pedestrian safety issue, or walk with children to and from school on International Walk to School Day. In 2006, more than 1,000 employees volunteered to participate in the event. FedEx also provides funding to Safe Kids Worldwide to help form pedestrian safety task forces in high-risk communities nationwide.[3] Grants to more than 40 communities have been awarded.[2]

Worldwide Day of Play

To counteract the ubiquitous trend of childhood sedentary behavior, Nickelodeon began Worldwide Day of Play in 2004. During this annual event, the network temporarily shuts down its television and Internet outlets, encouraging children to "get out and play." The initiative is supplemented with educational programming about healthy lifestyle choices, including nutrition and physical activity.

By 2007, more than 1,000 events around the country were planned to coincide with Worldwide Day of Play, and more than 250,000 children participated.[4] Employers can encourage employee participation in local community efforts coinciding with *Worldwide Day of Play,* or can provide support to organizations in their community hosting local events. To learn more about *Worldwide Day of Play,* please visit Nickelodeon's website. To learn about activities in specific locations or sponsorship opportunities, employers can contact Nickelodeon at publicaffairs@nick.com.

MEND: The British Perspective on Engaging Communities

The United States is not alone its struggles with obesity. Countries around the world also face this issue and have developed programs to combat it. MEND (Mind, Exercise, Nutrition, Do It) is a United Kingdom (UK)-based childhood obesity program currently expanding to the United States. The program aims *"to enable a significant, measurable and sustainable reduction in global childhood and family overweight and obesity levels."*[5]

MEND programs are tailored to accommodate individuals of various ages and weights. Twenty two-hour sessions over 10 weeks cover the mental and emotional aspects of obesity, nutrition, exercise and fitness, food label comprehension and other skills for children and families. MEND is designed to be replicable and scalable — a "solution in a box," including an online management monitoring system.[5]

MEND was established in 2005 and has expanded to more than 300 sites throughout the UK, with support from grants and sponsorships. In October 2008, MEND began its first U.S. program in New York. Employers have the opportunity to bring the MEND program to their communities by serving as a funding or delivery partner. Delivery partners provide venues, staff and participants, while funding partners help subsidize new program development.[5]

Business Group members interested in hosting or sponsoring the MEND program in their area can obtain more information at: http://www.mendprogramme.org.

Boys & Girls Clubs of America

The Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) provide children 6 to 18 years old opportunities to develop positive uses of leisure time, active lifestyles and strong interpersonal skills. The Boys & Girls Clubs have a variety of sports and recreation intiatives with which employers may become involved as volunteers or corporate sponsors, including baseball, softball and football programs. Employers interested in working with children in their community can either contact their local Boys & Girls Club or the headquarters office in Atlanta. For more information, please visit: http://www.bgca.org/programs/sportfitness.asp.

3. Participate in Community Coalitions

Many grassroots efforts are underway across the country to improve healthy behaviors and eliminate obesity. Employers have an opportunity to participate in local constituency groups or coalitions to help bring about change in the communities in which they live and work.

Business Group members **Paychex, Wegmans Food Markets** and **Xerox,** along with other companies, including Bausch & Lomb, the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and Kodak, have formed a health planning team in Rochester, N.Y., to help implement environmental and policy changes, with the goal of making Rochester the healthiest community in the United States. The following are just two examples of initiatives that have been undertaken.

1. In 2008, 204 companies and over 44,000 employees participated in the 8-week "Eat Well. Live Well. Challenge" (10,000 steps and 5 cups of fruits/vegetables per day). In the last 3 years, participants in this challenge have walked over 40 billion steps and have eaten more than 15 million cups of fruits and vegetables.

2. A goal to increase the utilization of generic medications in the Rochester community to 70% was established. This goal was achieved by the 3rd quarter of 2008; savings realized are estimated to be $57 million.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides funding to selected communities across the country to develop community coalitions through its program *ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and EnVironmental changE).* ACHIEVE brings together local leaders and key stakeholders to build healthy communities nationwide through policy changes and environmental strategies. Through

ACHIEVE, employers can partner with other community organizations, including health departments, local parks and recreation agencies and YMCAs.

ACHIEVE currently supports 43 communities nationwide and adds communities annually. Employers can participate in ACHIEVE communities by working with the local community coalition or providing input to it. Through participation, employers can help foster a healthy environment where their employees live, creating opportunities for off-the-job behavior change and healthy lifestyles. To learn more about the communities in which ACHIEVE is active, employers can visit its website at http://www.achievecommunities.org.

References

[1] National Safe Routes to School. About international Walk to School in the USA. Available at: http://www.walktoschool.org/about/index.cfm. Accessed July 8, 2009.

[2] SafeKids USA. 5K Walk this Way. Available at: http://www.usa.safekids.org/tier2_rl.cfm?folder_id=3124. Accessed July 8, 2009.

[3] FedEx Express. FedEx and Safe Kids Worldwide. Available at: http://www.fedex.com/us/about/responsibility/community/safekids.html?link=4. Accessed July 8, 2009.

[4] Alliance for a Healthier Generation. Nickelodeon's Worldwide Day of Play takes place Sept. 30. Press Release (September 18, 2006). Available at: http://www.healthiergeneration.org/uploadedFiles/For_Media/WWDOP_Sept18_final.pdf. Accessed July 8, 2009.

[5] MEND. Fitter, healthier, happier families. Available at: http://www.mendprogramme.org. Accessed July 9, 2009.

[6] Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Our Partners: The Coca-Cola Company. Available at: http://www.bgca.org/partners/cocacolacent.asp. Accessed July 9, 2009.

[7] Boys & Girls Clubs of America. Triple Play: A Game Plan for the Mind, Body and Soul. Available at: http://www.bgca.org/programs/tripleplay.asp. Accessed on July 9, 2009.