

## CITY OF TRENTON REALIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF A WELLNESS PROGRAM

by Kerry Sampson and Rosetta Marsh

What does it take to have productive and efficient employees? It takes happy and healthy employees. The city of Trenton, Missouri has realized the importance of a healthy lifestyle for their employees. In October 2003, an ordinance was passed adopting a healthy lifestyle program for the city of Trenton and its municipal utilities.

Not only did the City make this choice because of rising insurance premiums, but also because we were seeking a way to increase employee morale and improve productivity. "We recognize that in order to contain health care costs, we the employees have to take a pro-active approach to the problem," said City Administrator Kerry Sampson. "We needed to inspire our employees in making healthy lifestyle choices."

The City began by establishing a health care committee. This committee set forth goals and objectives. The objectives were to increase participation of employees taking responsibility for their own health, establish a wellness program that will run throughout the year, implement a program that can be used by other City organizations as a model, and have healthier employees that in the long run will save on insurance premiums and yearly medical claims.

The program was divided into four components. These components consisted of:

- ✓ Diagnostics – blood tests, fitness evaluations and annual preventative checkups.

- ✓ Education – providing self-care manuals, counseling for high-risk individuals and awareness training.

- ✓ Ongoing exercise, nutrition and stress management – designing the program unique to each employee.

- ✓ Follow-up – ongoing monitoring and review to facilitate adjustments and to insure success of the program.

These goals are measured by par-

ticipation in the program. Employees established goals that they would like to meet throughout the year and these goals were put into a point system. On a monthly basis employees earned points for exercising, healthy eating, preventative health care and achieving their own personal goals as set by each employee. Points are collected on a monthly basis. Employees are given incentives such as gifts, gift certificates and paid days off.

The City has paid for an overall health screening to inform employees of their current health risks. The City also has contracted with Angie Bonderer, founder of Life-Balance IT, LLC. Angie acts as a personal trainer to the employees on health issues. She conducts pro-

grams on stress and time management, healthy eating, exercising and other motivational health related issues.

What will this program do for the employee? Along with incentives for the employee, this could reduce out-of-pocket employee health care costs such as fewer doctor visits or prescriptions. It could avoid increasing the employee portion of insurance premiums. It should also reduce stress and personal injury, increase morale and increase employee's energy level. □

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