



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



Worksite Wellness Conference Honors Workplaces That Support Healthy Behaviors

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BURLINGTON – A bright red Radio Flyer wagon pulled throughout the patient care units at Northwestern Medical Center in St. Albans, carrying healthy fruits and vegetables and snacks for front-line medical staff, used to squeak. So the hospital worked with the maintenance staff to assure a nearly soundless delivery of grapes, apples, oranges and other healthy snacks.

Each delivery includes a reminder to staff of the free health risk assessment program and free health club membership. Northwestern Medical Center is setting the “Gold Standard” for worksite wellness programs in Vermont, with 93 percent participation in their wellness program. Nearly 500 staff currently participate and momentum for the program continues to grow.

“In a hospital setting where healthcare providers are juggling multiple demands on their time, 93 percent participation is remarkable,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD, who will open the Worksite Wellness Conference at 8:45 a.m. on March 29 at the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center in South Burlington.

“Decreased absenteeism, less employee turnover, and lower healthcare costs are just some of the measurable benefits of getting employees involved. Everyone at the medical center should be congratulated,” Dr. Chen said. The Vermont Department of Health, through the **Fit and Healthy Vermonters** program, provides support to workplaces to create environments that support healthy eating, physical activity, tobacco use cessation, and breastfeeding, contributing to the overall health and wellness of all Vermonters.

More than 280 participants in wellness programs from award-winning companies statewide are signed up for the conference. The awards will be presented by Gov. Peter Shumlin beginning at 9 a.m. The keynote address “Creating Supportive Cultural Environments for Wellness” will be presented at 10 a.m. by Judd Allen, president of the Human Resources Institute, LLC.

Presentations and exhibits will include how to create a “skinny workplace,” motivating employees, reducing stress, setting goals, bringing order to chaos, and “Not on My Time,” a discussion of alcohol availability and workplace drinking.

A record 79 Vermont businesses applied for the 2011 awards, sponsored by the Vermont Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness & Sports. For more information about the conference, including the **conference brochure**, visit healthvermont.gov.

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