



EMPLOYEE HEALTH & WELL-BEING:

Walking the YMCA Talk



A pathway to better health for all...

As we all know, health and well-being have always been central to the YMCA mission. Today, they are taking on a renewed focus through Activate America® and the increased attention of the National YMCA Employee Benefits Plan (NYEBP).

As leaders for these two efforts, we're asking the hard questions about how we do this work together. Are the NYEBP and Activate America in sync about our overall approach to the well-being of YMCA employees? Are we devoting as much consideration and energy to the health of those who work in our YMCAs as we do to those health seekers who are involved at the YMCA? If we want to lead our neighbors down the path to a healthier lifestyle, let us set the example ourselves.

Many HR departments in organizations across America, including, YMCAs encourage employees to take their health seriously. The benefit plans for employees

in NYEBP are focused on improving the health status of all by providing comprehensive health care benefits, including preventive care and an integrated wellness plan. But, let's be honest: we as YMCA staff are driven by our passion to provide a positive, life-changing experience for our members, and sometimes our own wellness takes a back seat.

If we can't find the path to maintain their well-being of spirit, mind and body, how will we help set these goals for our members? This is where Activate America can help.

Activate America brings organizational energy to the work HR staff already do by involving others and building broader support for making the well-being of employees an essential part of creating healthier communities. Plus, Activate America's holistic philosophy helps staff expand their understanding of health: while we may encourage each other to work out each day, what are we doing to maintain our spiritual, emotional and mental health?

In the next few pages, we share inspirational stories from YMCAs around the country that are integrating the core concepts of Activate America and NYEBP into the work of promoting staff well-being. We look forward to an ongoing dialogue on how we can "walk the talk."



Jonathan Lever

Jonathan Lever
National Director
Activate America



Steve E. Gustavson

Steve Gustavson
President
National YMCA Employee
Benefits Plan

The National YMCA Employee Benefits Plan (NYEBP) was created as an exclusive plan organized to leverage the collective strength of its member YMCAs. Our roots began in 1970, when the Chicago and New York YMCAs merged their health and welfare employee benefits plans under one contract. Four decades later, NYEBP's plans cover more than 14,000 YMCA staff from 345 YMCA associations, representing all sizes and regions of the country. NYEBP has aligned its employee health benefit plan mission with the YMCA's mission to improve the health and well-being of our communities.

NYEBP offers a variety of benefit plans to full-time employees, part-time employees and retirees at competitive and stable rates. NYEBP benefits meet a wide array of needs, including medical, prescription drug, dental, life insurance, long-term disability and an Employee Assistance Program.



Inside YMCAs across the country, we are influencing and motivating health seekers to make positive changes in their pursuit of well-being. Outside the Y, we are creating and sustaining healthier communities. And nationwide, we are positioning the YMCA as a leader in turning the tide of a growing health crisis.

It's all taking place through Activate America. YMCAs are shifting focus, expanding services, even changing facility space to better support Americans of all ages who are struggling to achieve and maintain well-being of spirit, mind and body. Activate America is a collaborative effort, and it includes everyone from wellness staff to child care teachers, from CEOs to program staff.

With an estimated 70 million households within three miles of a YMCA, we have the unique honor and responsibility to serve all Americans as they make their desire for a healthier lifestyle become a reality.



Taking the first steps

Carrie Phelps

Senior Director of Strategic Initiatives
YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region (Colo.)
Former Activate America Project Manager
for Y-USA

I travel often by airplane, and before every flight the attendant reviews the airline safety procedures. To be honest, I don't usually pay much attention. On a recent flight, however, I heard the flight attendant say, "Always put the oxygen mask on yourself before you help those around you who need assistance." At this particular time, during this particular flight, this statement caught my attention.

It just so happened that during this flight, I was reviewing the data from our recent employee wellness survey. A light bulb went off in my head as I made the connection between the "oxygen mask" analogy and the work we are doing in employee wellness. We can't give away what we don't have. In other words, if we don't "get our own oxygen" we will not be able to help others. To successfully accomplish our Vision 2020 goals and improve the well-being of our community, employee well-being must be at the top of our priority list.

We have made a strategic attempt to create an employee wellness program that fits the needs of our employees. Under the leadership of our Director of Corporate Relations, Karen Kovaly, we set a vision for the program. We then collected baseline data from our employees. We collaborated with the Suncoast YMCA, the Houston YMCA and the YMCA of Treasure Valley on the design of a holistically-based employee wellness survey. We also consulted with two experts in the field: Kelly Putnam, who runs an award-winning holistic employee wellness program called Kailo at the Mercy Medical Center in Iowa, and Jonathan Robison, author of the book, *The Spirit and Science of Holistic Health Promotion*.

As we gathered data from our employees, we quickly realized that an employee wellness program that addresses the whole person—spirit, mind, body and emotion, as well as the relationships and environments that surround them—is crucial for the success of the program.

Some of the key lessons we have collected up to this point include:

- » **It isn't enough to simply think holistically** and provide programs that support spirit/mind/body awareness. We must work with each individual and their personal comfort level and interest. We are experimenting with a personal health coach model.
- » **The majority of people do not stay in a wellness program** because of external motivation. Although many employee wellness programs advocate using rewards and incentives for participation, our evidence points to internal motivation - the feeling that comes with accomplishing the task - as successful in ensuring long-term change.

- » **The involvement of stakeholders is crucial.** Applying a process like YMCA Program Design Innovation can help with successful development of stakeholder involvement.
- » **Staff-perspective data are extremely important** in the measurement of the program content and efficacy.

We are continually working to improve our employee wellness program. It is important work and a "win-win" for everyone involved.



Healthy Family Home: A community partnership with the YMCA

YMCA of the USA and Eli Lilly and Company have partnered to create a program called Healthy Family Home™ (www.HealthyFamilyHome.org) to help the entire family work together to make healthier choices and live healthier lives. Launched in conjunction with YMCA Healthy Kids® Day in April 2007, Healthy Family Home provides practical and flexible tools. Kids and grown-ups work together to improve the home environment and jumpstart habits that will lead to a healthier way of living.

Be sure to share the Web site link with your employees through your employee newsletter and other staff communication vehicles. Actions aimed at employees' entire families—leading to small, sustained changes like eating better, increasing physical activity and connecting as a family—are proven to have a long-term impact on behavior change.



Healthy Family Home™ | YMCA

Lori Leist

Vice President of Human Resources
YMCA of Central Ohio
 NYEBP member since 1985
 Activate America Capacity Building,
 Wave One

During **The YMCA of Central Ohio's** environmental assessment process in Activate America, we made sure to pay as much attention to our staff's wellness needs as we did to our membership's. The vending machines in our branches received a "nutritional overhaul" after the offerings were evaluated by the Snack Wise program. Staff needing an "on the go" lunch break are no longer limited to a candy bar and soda, but have options such as granola bars and water.

We also have worked with our health insurance provider, UnitedHealthcare, to structure our coverage to support wellness, early detection and early interventions for our staff. In our high-deductible health plan, all preventive procedures such as physical exams,

annual gynecological visits, colonoscopies, mammograms and immunizations are fully covered and do not count toward employee deductibles. Staff members receive grocery store gift cards when they submit proof of completing an annual physical exam.

We also fund a health reimbursement account (HRA) to help staff members offset their out-of-pocket medical costs. Staff can earn additional HRA dollars if they complete an online health risk assessment. The assessment provides a customized report summarizing any health risks and offers electronic or telephonic coaching programs to help individuals address those risk factors. Staff members are eligible to receive gift cards for participating in coaching programs.

In conjunction with UnitedHealthcare, we also offer biometric screenings for staff in a "Know Your Numbers" campaign. Individuals receive incentives for participating in the screenings to learn their body mass index, blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol levels.

Studies show that investing in preventive health measures can actually save organizations more money in the long run, so spending money on employee health makes good financial sense. But knowing that our efforts may save the life of one of our staff members is even more valuable.

**St. Louis Staff**

YMCA of Greater Saint Louis
 NYEBP member since 1977
 Activate America Capacity Building, Wave One

Branches in the **YMCA of Greater St. Louis** experiment with different ways of reaching out to employees about wellness, such as group support, a new approach to staff meetings and special Friday lunch hours.

One branch offers group support for employees by posting a workout chart in a common area. All employees are invited to sign up and place stars by their names when they exercise. The management team recognizes efforts with notes of encouragement.

With a new agenda for staff meetings, one management group tries a new class every month, while others hold department meetings in different areas of their buildings,

One branch hosts "Salad Fridays."

incorporating exercise. If food is involved in the meeting, healthier options are offered.

Another branch hosts "Salad Fridays." Each employee brings one salad ingredient to share, making a healthy lunch available in the lunch room.

The YMCA of Greater St. Louis also measures progress on employee wellness efforts by incorporating personal wellness questions into the annual employee satisfaction survey.

Crystal Wicker

Director, Human Resources and Risk Management
Cleveland County Family YMCA (Okla.)
 NYEBP member since 1982
 Activate America Capacity Building, Wave One

"Time Out for You" (TOY) is the employee fitness program of the **Cleveland County Family YMCA**. This program was developed at the YMCA of Metropolitan Fort Worth in Texas and was brought to our attention when Chuck Dandridge became our CEO.

The goals of the TOY program are to enhance the morale and productivity of our full-time staff and increase their level of personal fitness through a regular schedule of physical exercise. As incentive, employees who exercise three times a week, every week for six months can earn one personal day off with pay. Program participants track their exercise schedule on a yearly calendar, using the honor system.

Staff members have seen dramatic results. In fact, one director said her elevated blood pressure returned to normal after participating in the TOY program for six months.

Another benefit of the program is having staff who lead by example. They connect with members by participating in group exercise classes and interacting in the health and wellness center. They develop camaraderie with others instead of just recognizing familiar faces. In turn, members appreciate that those who work at the YMCA "practice what they preach."

Out of 15 full-time employees, seven regularly complete the TOY program. Because of the success of this program among our full-time staff, we are currently exploring how we may offer it to our part-time staff.

Kim Decker

Chief Operating Officer
Alane McCahey
Rahway Branch Executive
YMCA of Eastern Union County (N.J.)
 NYEBP member since 1998
 Activate America Capacity Building,
 Wave One

Our favorite quote from membership consultant Alice Sawyer is, "If you don't feed the staff, they will eat the members." This mantra on staff well-being has taken on more importance, and a slight variation, with Activate America: "If you don't feed the staff with healthy food and activity, they will eat the health seekers."

Staff development and support have always been important components in **The YMCA of Eastern Union County's** strategic plan. We encourage our staff to become Y members at no cost, spread

the word about our Employee Assistance Plan and learn from our staff satisfaction surveys. However, Activate America has pushed our awareness up a notch now that we understand the importance of developing the total health and well-being of our staff.

Our Rahway branch is a pilot site for Activate America. When the branch staff met to discuss this new philosophy, they decided staff should be involved in all member incentive programs. They would be encouraged to exercise, and all staff meetings and gatherings would offer healthier food.

Earlier this year, we opened a health and wellness center designed for the health seeker. Employees were encouraged to take part in health screenings and start our new 12-week program. Twenty-five percent of the Rahway staff participated and many are continuing the program.

As Rahway was progressing, we continued our engagement with the rest of our staff. Our exempt-staff team meetings now include an Activate America activity, such as playing beach volleyball, participating in circuit training and even engaging the Board of Directors in some chair exercises.

We added some Coordinated Approach to Child Health activities to our staff and family picnic. Nothing boosts staff involvement more than seeing the CEO playing a rousing game of "March and Move." Adults and children of all ages were able to participate together.

Staff outnumbered members who participated in our first annual Fun Walk and Run, and we hope to offer a staff incentive program for exercise and healthy eating soon.

Our efforts will improve the lives of our employees and exponentially improve the quality of services they deliver to our members and community. We have only just begun this journey, but we are committed to our staff and their well-being.

"If you don't feed the staff with healthy food and activity, they will eat the health seekers."

Lauren Jay

Senior Director, Benefits
YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago
 NYEBP member since 1977
 Activate America Capacity Building, Wave One

The **YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago** has developed a wellness program to help employees take a more proactive role in their health and make lifestyle choices that will positively impact their well-being. As an incentive, employees who participate in the program receive savings on their medical premiums.

Our wellness program includes a comprehensive biometric wellness screening, a self-reported health risk assessment, case management, wellness interventions, non-chronic health coaching (e.g., pregnancy, knee surgery) and disease management. Participants receive a detailed health report about their personal health risk factors and preventions.

In our first year, we had an outstanding 87 percent participation. These numbers exceeded our expectations and proved that employees are ready and willing to live a healthier lifestyle.

Janice L. Haug

Human Resource Director
Kettle Moraine YMCA (Wis.)
 Activate America Capacity Building, Wave One

The **Kettle Moraine YMCA** has introduced Healthy You, an employee wellness program that encourages total wellness and offers savings on employee health insurance. By participating, employees have the potential to reduce their health insurance deductible from \$5,000 to \$500 annually. The administration of the deductible is done through our limited health reimbursement account.

The Healthy You wellness program begins with a health risk assessment and a Y's Way to Physical Fitness Test. Participation in Level One brings the deductible down to \$4,000. Level Two requires completion of Level One, encourages a tobacco-free lifestyle and further reduces the deductible to \$3,000.

Level Three requires completion of the first two levels, emphasizes physical exercise within the optimal range and brings the deductible down to \$500. The optimal range for the first six months is aerobic activity three times each week at a 55 percent target heart rate for 20 minutes. All aerobic activity is monitored through FitLinxx.

Our Healthy You wellness program addresses staff well-being by rewarding our staff for their commitment towards healthy activities and increased wellness. Presently, we have 30 out of 42 staff in the \$500 deductible. The old saying goes, "If you're going to talk the talk, you've got to walk the walk." This is the reason why Healthy You was designed, as we all walk together toward wellness.

Heidi Leavitt

Human Resources Compensation and Benefits Administrator

YMCA of Greater Seattle

NYEBP member since 1983

Activate America Capacity Building, Wave One

The **YMCA of Greater Seattle** is committed to the health and well-being of every staff member. This commitment is evidenced by our Employee Wellness Vision Statement, which states that the Y will:

- » **Create healthy work environments** consistent with Activate America ideals and guidelines
- » **Provide an array of program options** and health promotion resources that effectively support the health and well-being needs and preferences of each employee
- » **Provide the financial and human resources** needed to offer programs and tools that are comprehensive, accessible and inclusive

During the summer of 2007, the Employee Wellness Task Force was created. The group has 12 members, including staff from the association office as well as branch and program staff from across the association.

In just one year, the group has made significant progress in changing the culture at the Seattle Y by emphasizing the importance and value of holistic employee wellness. Some of the group's accomplishments include:

- » **Seventy percent participation in an online employee wellness needs and interest survey.** High participation was rewarded with a medical self-care book for full-time employees.
- » **A presentation by the Y Retirement Fund** because financial well-being was a common need and interest identified in our online survey.
- » **Increased staff participation in America On the Move Week with the YMCA.** Staff received a letter from the YMCA president and a pedometer to track their steps.
- » **Adding a wellness/Activate America piece** to new employee orientation.
- » **Branding** of the wellness effort, including a logo that is featured on all communications.
- » **Participation in a workplace wellness study,** assessment and consultation conducted by a team of experts representing the University of Washington and the American Cancer Society.

In just one year, the group has made significant progress in changing the culture at the Seattle Y



- » **Launch of a health assessment** through myuhc.com/groups/ymca during the 2007 open enrollment period, with nearly 70 percent participation.
- » **Creation of healthy food guidelines** to be used for YMCA-sponsored events and meetings.
- » Promotion of **monthly wellness topics.**
- » **Recruitment of branch Wellness Champions** to advocate employee wellness initiatives.

While the group has accomplished some great things thus far, the work is far from done. Currently, the task force is developing a vendor list and strategy for on-site employee health screenings and flu shots, promoting and coordinating America On the Move Week with the YMCA and publicizing the 2009 calendar of events.

Dear Colleagues,

For nearly 160 years, YMCAs have responded to the nation's most pressing social issues. A core area of focus from the YMCA's earliest days—health and well-being—continues to be at the forefront of our work.

Through Activate America®—the YMCA's response to the nation's chronic disease crisis—we are increasing our capacity to help Americans reach their goals of a healthier lifestyle. We are developing new, holistic programs, changing our facilities and enhancing the skills of staff, all in a concerted effort to effectively support the long-term health improvement of our members and our communities.

But are we engaged in a similar commitment to supporting the health and well-being of our own employees and their families?

The strength of Activate America lies in its powerful goal to engage all health seekers—from those in the broader community to our members and staff who work in our YMCAs every day. In short, we must ensure that we have just as strong and steadfast a vision for sustaining the health and welfare of our staff as we do for the rest of America.

Integrating an employee benefits approach that supports holistic employee health and well-being into our operations is essential, not only because it is wholly in keeping with the YMCA mission, but also because it makes good economic sense. A number of studies show that lifestyle and environmental changes both prevent chronic disease and save health care dollars. For instance, research shows that reducing adult smoking rates by 1 percent could result in 30,000 fewer heart attacks and 16,000 fewer strokes—saving more than \$1.5 billion over five years. And if one-tenth of Americans began a regular walking program, \$5.6 billion could be saved in the treatment of heart disease.

And study after study shows that the benefits of employee health are numerous: increased productivity, lower health care costs, reduced employee absenteeism, improved employee retention and increased staff morale, just to name a few.

Resources like the National YMCA Employee Benefits Plan (NYEBP) bring our movement's national health commitment to all YMCA staff and their families. The program unites us in the common purpose of strengthening our own mental, physical and spiritual health so that we can better serve others in strengthening theirs.

YMCAs can truly change the landscape for healthy living in communities nationwide and help stem the tide of chronic disease. But we must not forget that change outside the YMCA must begin inside the YMCA.

Sincerely,



Neil Nicoll
President and CEO
YMCA of the USA

America On the Move Week with the YMCA: September 20-27

America On the Move Week with the YMCA is a nationwide event to inspire individuals and families to incorporate healthy activities into their daily routines. Since 2006, YMCAs across the country have promoted America On the Move Week with the YMCA in September, in partnership with the America on the Move Foundation, Inc. (www.americaonthemove.org), to encourage Americans to take small steps toward a healthier lifestyle.

In addition to member and community outreach for America On the Move Week with the YMCA, engaging Y employees is a natural enhancement to other health and well-being activities supported in your workplace. Ideas implemented by other YMCAs include converting one meeting a week into a "walking meeting," encouraging healthy competition among departmental or branch staff teams, using America On the Move Week with the YMCA as a kick-off for an employee wellness program and arranging CEO-hosted employee walks.

**Jim Weaton**

Activate Y-USA Project Manager

YMCA of the USA

NYEBP member since 1977

Activate America Capacity Building, Wave One

In the past, national initiatives supported by **YMCA of the USA** did not actively involve our staff in implementing a strategy of their own. Not so with Activate America! For the first time, our entire staff has become engaged in the capacity building effort, thus mirroring the work of the YMCA movement.

"Listen First" learning and implementation introduced our staff to an important skill set that has proven useful in many settings. We are now following this with the health seeker video and

discussion guide, which we believe will create additional conversation and build stronger relationships.

What I find personally exciting is the current environmental assessment being conducted by our cross-departmental team in the identified primary focus areas. This assessment will improve our work environment and the health and well-being of Y-USA staff.

Throughout the year, we hold staff healthy challenges that encourage relationship building among departments, healthy activities for staff and a focus on commitment to their own individual health.

We look forward to the continuing journey with the movement to better health for all!



America On the Move Week with the YMCA » September 20-27, 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Throughout the U.S., there are tens of thousands of staff doing the meaningful and satisfying work of the YMCA. As we look for fulfillment in our work, it's important to take heed of the advice we're dispensing every day.

There is great wisdom in Activate America. Preventive care is the key to reducing the chronic diseases plaguing our country's children and adults. Take care of yourself now, and you'll be better equipped to take care of your loved ones. Raise a strong and healthy family, and you'll be happier and live longer.

Through Activate America, we're encouraging employers in our communities to implement employee wellness programs to improve health and reduce insurance costs. But are we listening to our own advice?

Is a free YMCA membership just another perk of working at the Y? Or, is it an invitation to explore first-hand the YMCA's power to engage individuals in taking care of their own spirit, mind and body in order to reach their potential? Is comprehensive health insurance, like that offered through the National YMCA Employee Benefits Plan, just a way to remain competitive in the job market? Or, is it a means of showing our staff that we are invested in keeping our YMCA family healthy and strong?

As each of us recommits to positively impacting the health of our communities, let's remember to look inward and dedicate ourselves to being role models in everything we do. Building strong families begins in each and every one of our own homes, where we're someone's mom or dad, son or daughter, brother or sister. But let's not forget to tend to that other family we're a part of, the fellow staff members who work beside us, getting a lot done and having fun. Let's remember to activate ourselves as we take on America.




Jack Lund

President & CEO, YMCA of Greater New York

Chair, Activate America Steering Committee

Board Member, National YMCA Employee Benefits Plan

We hope this special supplement of Perspective will lead your YMCA to make the health and wellness of your employees a top priority. We also hope that it has excited your YMCA about Activate America.

Register today

for Activate America Capacity Building

Register today so you can begin to experience the transformation that 400 YMCAs around the country are already undergoing. By beginning this work, your YMCA will receive:

- » A video and discussion guide to better understand health seekers
- » Tools to change your environment
- » Curriculum, including Listen First, to strengthen relationships with members. And more!

To register your YMCA for the capacity building phase of Activate America, visit www.ymcaexchange.org/activateamerica and complete the registration process. For more information about capacity building, please visit www.ymcaexchange.org/activateamerica or e-mail activate.america@ymca.net.

You're making the RIGHT choice

Managing your YMCA's health care plan can be a challenging job. We're here to make that job easier. The National YMCA Employee Benefits Plan (NYEBP) provides comprehensive medical, dental, life and AD&D, vision and long-term disability plans, along with an Employee Assistance Program. Not only do you receive high-quality plans, but you also get the peace of mind knowing that NYEBP employs the same core values that you do.

Think about that. We value caring, honesty, respect and responsibility the same way your YMCA does. These values are instilled in our business practices, and you can rely on us as an extension of your YMCA. The YMCA movement is our community, and we are all stewards of health and well-being. Our mission directly supports your mission: putting Christian principles into practice through programs that build healthy spirit, mind and body for all.

Contact us

Toll-free: 800-872-9622

Hours: Weekdays from 8am to 5pm Central Time