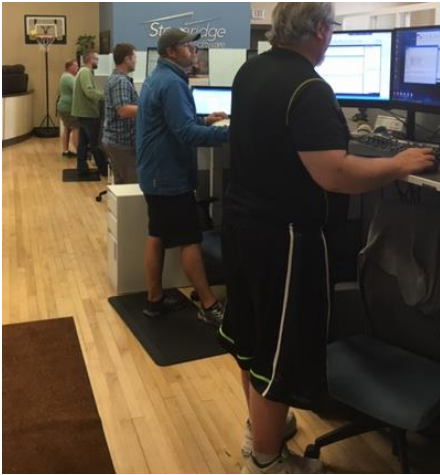


# Healthy Options Become a Worksite Reality

Though we usually know what to do to improve our health, it is easier said than done. Even with the best of intentions, we are often swayed by the food, beverage, physical activity, and tobacco options that surround us where we live, learn, work, play, and worship. Unfortunately, many worksite environments unintentionally surround employees with less than healthy choices.

PartnerSHIP 4 Health (PS4H) tackles this reality as it partners with worksites to create a culture of wellness. Using a collaborative model, PS4H brings together worksites from Becker, Clay, Otter Tail and Wilkin counties to establish policies, systems, and environments that support worksite wellness. Stoneridge Software, a Barnesville company that sells and supports two key Microsoft business software solutions, participated in the 2015-2016 Worksite Wellness Collaborative. They created a six-member wellness committee and met via monthly conference call to determine monthly educational topics, identify quarterly challenges, and brainstorm ways to promote the initiative. The committee crafted a workplace wellness vision statement: *“Encouraging wellness by creating awareness, providing resources, and promoting healthy competition.”*



Because sitting for long periods of time is linked with a number of health concerns, including obesity (Hamilton, 2008), Stoneridge Software established a policy to increase physical activity opportunities during the work day. The policy promotes active or standing meetings, the use of flex-time for physical activity before, during or after work, and standing workstations. LeAnn Moos, Recruiting and Human Resource Manager stated “establishing a policy to increase physical activity opportunities has created awareness for our employees and new sources of information. There are scheduled stretches and meditation breaks twice per day which helps to remind employees to take a break, and the standing desks were a big morale booster. Several employees were inspired by our initiative to change behaviors.”

In addition, Stoneridge Software addressed food and tobacco at the worksite through policy and environmental changes. They adopted a policy to ensure the availability of healthy food and beverage options when the company offers food to employees or clients. The company improved food storage and prep areas, increased low/zero calorie beverage vending machine options, encourages employees to bring their own lunches, and added healthy snack stations to each office refrigerator. Stoneridge Software also formalized a tobacco-free workplace policy and a breastfeeding-support policy.



According to Moss, Stoneridge Software’s involvement in PartnerSHIP 4 Health’s Worksite Wellness Initiative has been a very valuable experience: “PartnerSHIP 4 Health has provided us with endless resources and ideas to promote wellness in our workplace. Through education, policy and environmental changes, and fun competitive activities, we have made healthy choices part of our company culture. It’s very rewarding to see employees enjoying new activities, sharing personal experiences, and encouraging other team members.”

Hamilton MT, Healy GN, Dunstan DW, Zderic TW, Owen N. Too little exercise and too much sitting: inactivity physiology and the need for new recommendations on sedentary behavior. *Curr Cardiovasc Risk Rep.* 2008;2(4):292–8.

Made possible through support from the Minnesota Department of Health’s Statewide Health Improvement Program and U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

