



## Worksite Wellness at Wilkin County Reaches New Heights

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Ann Samuelson  
Worksite Wellness Committee Member



Wellday at Work

What if during a morning break at work you could take a brisk walk and enjoy a crisp fresh apple plucked from the company orchard? Employees of Wilkin County located in Breckenridge, MN have taken a worksite wellness journey that makes this scenario a reality.

In 2009, Wilkin County collaborated with PartnerSHIP 4 Health to increase employee access to healthy foods and physical activity. Wilkin County’s wellness team, branded as W.O.W (Working on Wellness), assessed current policies, systems, and environmental supports to employee health, and then utilized a wellness committee to strengthen each of these areas.

W.O.W met monthly to develop Vision and Mission Statements and set nutrition, physical activity, tobacco cessation, and stress management goals to encourage a healthy lifestyle and health-friendly work environment. The Wilkin County Commission approved their plan.

W.O.W. conducted an employee survey and employees requested improved access to nutrition. In 2010, a healthy snack pilot project offered healthy snack alternatives in a refrigerator in the Court House. The wellness team kept the refrigerator stocked with healthy snacks, and employees paid for the snacks using the honor system.

Employees enjoy the increased access to fresh fruits and vegetables, and the program pays for itself. Thirty employees consume approximately 50 to 100 healthy snacks each week. According to Ann Samuelson, wellness committee member, “Court house employees love the wellness refrigerator and appreciate the opportunity to buy a healthy lunch or snack for a minimal cost. When the food supply gets low, employees request that it be restocked!”

Working with Orthopedic Sports and Physical Therapy, Inc. of Breckenridge, MN, Wilkin County integrated an innovative workday strategy to support physical activity among Highway Department Employees: *5 and 5 Feel 100%* provides equipment and training for employees to complete 5 stretches, 5 times a day.

In 2011, Wilkin County sponsored a seven-month “Biggest Loser” nutrition and physical activity support system, increasing access to supportive teams, nutrition tracking, monthly wellness education, walking routes, bike racks and wellness messages.

In 2013, “Wellday at Work,” software that promotes Well Breaks throughout the day, was installed in the Wilkin County Computer System. Well Break is an optional schedule reminder tool that provides the opportunity to schedule up to ten Well Breaks throughout the workday.

In 2014, surplus funds from the healthy snack initiative were used to purchase and plant 2 apple trees on county property. The apples will be available to employees, and the county plans to add additional fruit trees each year.

Wilkin County Public Health Director Deb Jacobs found that collaboration with PartnerSHIP 4 Health enabled the wellness committee to “literally step up their wellness initiative so that employees could take steps to a healthier organization and a healthier community.”

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PartnerSHIP 4 Health is community and public health partners in Becker, Clay, Otter Tail, and Wilkin counties working together to create an environment that supports improved health for all.

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