

Nogales Businesses Creating Healthier Workplace Environments

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SUMMARY

Adults spend more time at work today than any other place, so the workplace environment has a major impact on their health. By making the workplace environment more conducive to active living and healthy eating, employers can support the health of their employees. As part of Mariposa Community Health Center's REACH initiative, community health workers supported two small businesses in Santa Cruz County, Arizona to create a culture of health and wellness in their workplaces. The success of these workplace wellness initiatives has inspired employees of these businesses to share these wellness strategies with their families and communities.

CHALLENGE

The population of Santa Cruz County is primarily of Mexican American/Mexican origin. The majority (95%) of Hispanic/Latinos in Santa Cruz County reside in Nogales and in the neighboring unincorporated community of Rio Rico to the north, where 85% of the county's population is concentrated. In Santa Cruz County, Hispanic/Latinos experience higher rates of diabetes and obesity than non-Hispanics. County Health Rankings further demonstrate the challenges that Santa Cruz County faces – the county fares poorly on 12 of the 27 rankings when compared with both Arizona and the U.S. Santa Cruz County ranks 12th of 15 counties in Arizona for Social and Economic Factors and 8th for Health Factors/Health Behaviors and Clinical Care. Since the majority of Santa Cruz county adults spend more time at work than anywhere else, the food and physical activity environment in the workplace can have a major impact on their health outcomes.

SOLUTION

Our REACH program has worked to integrate healthy eating and active living into workplace environments in the border town of Nogales, Arizona. We worked with two small businesses to improve the workplace environment. Improvements focused on integrating healthy eating and active living into workplace culture. Such workplace wellness initiatives are a win-win for businesses and employees, because healthy employees have been shown to be more productive at work and more likely to stay with their corporation long term.

RESULTS

One of the small businesses established walking meetings, which has increased the daily physical activity of their employees. One of the walking meeting locations is a nearby farmers market, which also serves as a good source of fresh, healthy snacks. The business also prohibited unhealthy snacks during meetings. Although these may seem like small changes, they have had a big impact on employees. The changes to

the workplace environment have also inspired employees, who report packing more healthy snacks and lunches and opting for salads when they have lunch at nearby restaurants.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

In the future, both of these businesses want to continue to improve the workplace food and fitness environment. They plan to continue to provide exercise breaks during the work day and offering access to healthier food options at work. Additionally, both businesses plan to offer free health screening opportunities to all staff.

YOUR INVOLVEMENT IS KEY

You can help make your own business a healthier place to work by making small changes to the environment that promote healthy eating and active living. In fact, nearly 60% of all companies and 95% of large companies already have policies to create a healthy work environment. A healthy workplace means happier, more productive employees!

"Now that I have the opportunity to walk more throughout my workday, I feel better and more energized." - Clariza Gastelum