



Shape Up Your Workplace

A monthly series brought to you by Get Healthy CT

Workplace Wellness Idea #15: Volunteer in the Community

Get Healthy CT aims to provide businesses with ideas that will facilitate healthy behaviors of their employees to improve employee satisfaction, productivity and showcase the employer as a role model for health. To support this, we will provide a "Workplace Wellness Idea" each month that employers can implement at low or no cost.

Volunteer in the Community: Volunteering in the community is a great way to promote health, goodwill and fellowship amongst your employees. When people volunteer and help others in their community, they feel healthier and happier. Employees who volunteered through their workplace found that it strengthened their relationships with colleagues. It is also good for your business to be recognized as an organization that cares about and gives back to its community.

In 2013, UnitedHealth Group conducted a study on the link between health and volunteering named "[Doing Good is Good For You.](#)" They found that volunteering makes employees feel better physically, emotionally and mentally. An astounding 76% of participants said that volunteering made them feel healthier and 94% said that volunteering improved their mood. By integrating volunteering into your wellness program, your company shows that you care not only about your employees' physical wellbeing, but also their mental! ¹

As an employer, you can help your employees engage in community volunteerism an employee volunteerism program or by simply providing your employees with some ideas on how to get involved. Some simple tips and links to volunteer resources can be found on the next page.

¹ Excerpted from The VolunteerMatch Blog for Business Leaders, Volunteering Does the Body (and Your Employees) Good, Written by Laura Ellis, June 2014

For more information, please visit GetHealthyCT.org

Let's work together to help make the healthy choice the easy choice in the workplace!

How to Engage your Employees in Volunteering

Starting an employee volunteer program can be easy. You can start small and build as it makes sense. Here are some key tips to consider as you start.²

Choice of Opportunities: Offer your employees a range of community service opportunities in which to participate. Partner with various nonprofit organizations in your community, such as those that provide education, health care and social services. This allows employees to volunteer with organizations closely aligned with their personal interests. For example, some employees might prefer the physically labor-intensive tasks required by volunteering for Habitat for Humanity compared to coordinating a March of Dimes community activity. You can allow employees to select the organizations where they prefer to volunteer.

Incentives: Hold awards ceremonies to celebrate your workplace's community service efforts. Ceremonies can be as casual as relaxing picnics or formal evening affairs. Give plaques and certificates to employees who volunteer the most, but avoid limiting accolades; every employee who volunteers should get a certificate. Consider providing corporate perks, such as increments of time off for every hour of volunteerism. Give away low-cost items such as T-Shirts, tote bags or mugs as prizes; however avoid offering cash or expensive gifts since these type of incentives contradict the spirit of volunteering.

Leadership: Form teams of volunteers. Some employees, who might not wish to engage nonprofit associations on their own, may be more willing to donate time if participating alongside their coworkers. Require teams to have leaders and rotate the leadership position. This strategy allows non-management staff members to experience leadership, which may boost morale significantly.

Considerations: Determine how you plan to engage employees in community service before launching a volunteer program. Form committees that include all levels of staff and community members to get everyone engaged in your business's social responsibility goals from day one. You might find it helpful to hire a consultant who specializes in employee volunteer programs to help you get such a program up and running successfully.

²*Written by Maya Black of Demand Media on Everyday Life*

To find local volunteer opportunities, check out these websites:

- United Way's 211 Infoline (www.211ct.org)
- Volunteer Connecticut (www.volunteerct.org)
- Volunteer Match (www.volunteermatch.org)
- CT Association of Nonprofits (www.ctnonprofits.org)