

2.2 Nutrition Success Stories



Honor System Healthy Food Program

the people

Medical Care Development (MCD) is a public health organization dedicated to improving the health of people in Maine and around the world. MCD employs approximately 60 employees in its Augusta office. MCD's projects include cardiovascular health, AIDS/HIV prevention, breast and cervical health, suicide prevention, mental health, and disease management. Many of these projects are grant-funded in collaboration with the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Health.

the need

The company's vending machines had an unhealthy balance between nonnutritious snacks and healthy alternatives. MCD's Wellness Committee decided that a change was needed to support employees in making healthy food choices.

the idea

The Honor System Healthy Food Program, adopted by the Wellness Committee, provides fresh fruits and healthy snacks at a reasonable price and on a regular basis.

the idea at work

The committee met on two separate occasions to determine how best to offer healthy foods to employees. First, a quick survey was conducted to determine the interest in such a program, along with the desired types and quantities of healthy alternatives. From this survey, the Wellness Committee created a shopping list of items that employees were interested in. A Coordinator was appointed to schedule two volunteers per month to handle food shopping. Another committee member developed a tracking sheet to monitor money in versus money out, as well as to track lost inventory. All items have been priced at a break-even price point. A list of common items along with their prices follows: Fruit (bananas, oranges, apples, plums, pears, nectarines, etc.) —\$.50 each; String cheese—\$.25 each; Yogurt—\$.75; Raisins—\$.25; Reduced fat milk—\$.75; Trail mix—\$.75.



the cost

With our current pricing, this project is self-funded. The Wellness Committee has worked hard to create “smart shoppers,” not purchasing too much at one time, identifying preferred types of fruit, and recognizing the ebbs and flows of the demand. To date in the current year, we have brought in approximately \$40 over the cost of the food. Wellness Committee members spend approximately one to two hours per week to handle shopping and inventory. The Wellness Committee meets every three months for 90 minutes to discuss the initiative.

the results

The number of employees eating healthy snacks has increased dramatically. Barbara Carney, a senior accountant, says that the healthy food program is great when she needs a quick pick-me-up. “There are times when I want a snack, but am trying to keep it healthy, so I just wander over to the basket and find something that looks good.” The healthy food program has also assisted employees participating in a Five A Day incentive program in getting their required servings. From a company perspective, the program is viewed as a great contributor toward a healthy work environment. “The honor system program takes up very little staff time and helps people eat healthy,” says John LaCasse, MCD president. “Given what we know about healthy behaviors and productivity, I am delighted with this program.”

contact(s)

Andy Spaulding, Worksite Health Coordinator, Maine Cardiovascular Health Program, 11 Parkwood Drive, Augusta, ME 04330, 1-800-427-7566, x262, aspaulding@mcd.org