

## Good Signs Program Proves Successful at Goodwill

By Karma Anderson, PHR

**G**ood Signs™ is a culture of wellness in which employees at Goodwill Industries of Central Indiana actively seek information and support to make better choices for their own well-being. It began as an employee health initiative in 2004 and included four targeted health concerns based on our population's greatest risks: stress, tobacco usage, nutrition and activity.

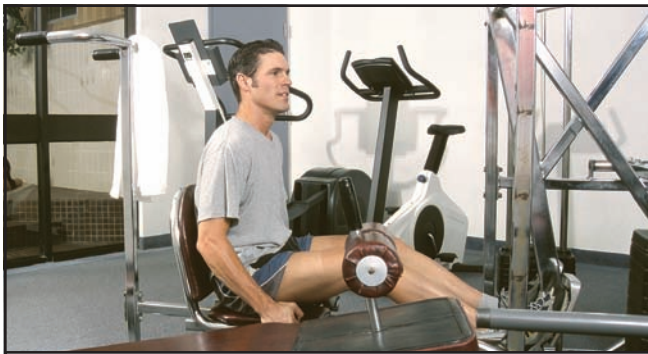
Good Signs now encompasses educational advancement and financial well-being in addition to physical health. Beyond our 2,200 employees and their families, we're now able to serve the community through students, alumni and families of Goodwill's charter Indianapolis Metropolitan High School and job seekers who are referred to Goodwill or who come to us for help.

From its inception, Good Signs had leadership support and employee voice through a Wellness Advisory Council. The initiative was aligned with the five basic principles that govern Goodwill operations: respect for people, customer satisfaction, informed decision-making, continuous improvement and good stewardship. As a result, Good Signs program goals were linked to Goodwill's business goals. We also reshaped our benefits structure and incentives to meet the employee demand.

### Reaching a broad audience

Goodwill employees have widely diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds, speak more than 10 languages, and have varying computer access and competency. And they work in 65 separate locations throughout Central Indiana. We didn't launch Good Signs with a splashy kickoff. We knew the more effective approach would be patient and consistent communication backed by informed managers, ongoing outreach and practical incentives.

Wellness programs initially focused on health plan participants. Data was available on this group, and the return on investment could be calculated immediately through lowered health plan costs. One of our earliest efforts involved a voluntary Health Risk Assessment (HRA) with telephonic health coaching. (Today, the HRA is required for employees and spouses on the plan.)



Physical health is only part of the Good Signs program.

We also focused on preventive care and good consumerism, including some onsite health screenings with in-person coaching. We were thrilled to see a 2.5:1 return on investment the first year, exceeding our initial projections of 1:1. In 2007, Goodwill saved \$4 in health care claims for every \$1 spent on wellness, prevention and disease management. That same year, Goodwill employees saw a 33% reduction in out-of-pocket health care expenses.



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Integrating wellness services into our health plan drove us to select a new benefits provider based on value and cost-efficiency purchasing principles. This transition also provided covered employees with tools and resources to push them into higher quality health care.

### Employee involvement

Goodwill learned quickly that programs cannot be pushed on people simply because the data shows people need them. Employees engage in programs that interest them and that they help create. We offer wellness grants in which individuals or groups apply for assistance to achieve their personal wellness goals through programs they design themselves.

For example, employees have used wellness grants to sponsor "Biggest Loser"-type contests; offset memberships in local fitness clubs; subsidize GED classes; and purchase patches or medications to help quit smoking. Employees are held accountable. As long as they move toward their goals, they receive support and incentives.

Services have expanded through face-to-face coaching and direction to resources. The addition of a wellness educator and a resource specialist to the Good Signs team in year four put our programs and services in front of people we cannot reach through electronic or print communication.

We aligned participation with incentives to further promote well-being. Incentive accounts were established to help offset medical expenses. Sound behaviors – routine checkups and immunizations, preventive screenings, tobacco cessation, reducing stress, eating better and increasing activity – were tied to goals and earned incentive dollars that employees can use much like a flexible spending account. Other incentives are tied to outcomes, such as tuition reimbursement to encourage ongoing learning and development.

### Signs of success

We monitor requests for information, health claims, return-on-investment and other data-based measures to assess Good Signs' impact on the organization. But we've set our sights on the kind of cultural change that comes one employee at a time

