



Katz, Sapper & Miller employees pack food for the Million Meals Movement.



DK Pierce & Associates encourages employees to bring their dogs to work.

# WELL(NESS) DONE

## Teams Thrive in Healthy, Caring Culture

By Brenda L. Holmes



Steinberger Construction hosts fun outdoor activities to promote wellness.

The annual Best Places to Work program incorporates many aspects of outstanding workplace cultures. Wellness is certainly one of those critical elements. We bring the two together in this discussion.

In 2011, the Indiana Chamber of Commerce acquired the Wellness Council of Indiana (WCI), dedicated to positively impacting the economic vitality of the state by evaluating and guiding workplaces and communities through the development of their own comprehensive health and wellness strategies.



Representatives from LHD Benefit Advisors accept their recognition at the 2020 Indiana Wellness Summit.



The Wellness Council of Indiana begins its second decade in affiliation with the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. It guides workplaces and communities through the development of comprehensive health and wellness strategies. Learn more at [www.wellnessindiana.org](http://www.wellnessindiana.org).

This is the third of a yearlong series on a variety of wellness topics.



“Some of the brainstorming you do to come up with these fun little challenges (is great). Some of them are just totally off the wall ... different ways to stimulate participation on everybody’s part doesn’t have to be out of a book. It’s something creative that works with the group.”

– Denise Pierce, DK Pierce & Associates

AchieveWELL is the wellness assessment, evaluation and recognition program WCI uses to help a company through its well-being journey.

A quartet of this year’s AchieveWELL (and Best Places to Work) honorees came together in early March for a *BizVoice*® roundtable discussion. Sharing their perspectives on wellness in the workplace are:

- Denise Pierce, president, DK Pierce & Associates (fourth year on list), [www.dkperce.net](http://www.dkperce.net)
- Jim Nestor, principal and chief human resources officer, Katz, Sapper & Miller (one of two companies appearing on the list for all 15 years), [www.ksmcpa.com](http://www.ksmcpa.com)
- Matthew Lewellen, president, Steinberger Construction (first year on list), [www.sciteam.com](http://www.sciteam.com)
- Jeff Hadden, partner and president, LHD Benefit Advisors (fifth year on list), [www.lhdbenefits.com](http://www.lhdbenefits.com)

## Getting started

DK Pierce & Associates, based in Zionsville, teams with biopharmaceutical companies that are creating treatments for cancers and rare diseases. The small but mighty team of 22 works with the development of those drugs for two to three years before they come to market.

“Ten years ago, when we were significantly smaller, we started looking at (wellness) opportunities because we work in an environment of cancer and rare diseases. It makes you really think about the ‘what ifs’

and how to protect yourself from those things,” Pierce explains. “I call it Goldilocks because we kept trying to reach out to different programs and different companies. At that time, it really was a big company phenomenon, and it was really hard to scale it for a small business.”

Hadden says his firm started a wellness program for much the same reason – its services make employees very aware of their health and wellness.

LHD Benefit Advisors is a full-service employee benefits group based in Indianapolis. The company’s 50-member team operates in the health, welfare and retirement fields, working with employers of all sizes.

“I can see it from two points of view. One is we did our personal journey into wellness more out of culture. We’re fully insured, with a lot of reasoning behind it. We knew that was a vital part of our culture, always has been, and not as much from a cost-saving standpoint,” Hadden offers.

“On the other hand, we advise companies about the impact of wellness programs. So, (we) wholeheartedly understand the impact that will have on the cost of the benefit program, but also keeping people healthy, keeping people working longer. And that’s the approach that we saw from a cost standpoint. We actually formalized the process about seven years ago.”

Katz, Sapper & Miller (KSM) is one of the largest public accounting firms in the state. It has been around for more than 75 years and employs about 350 people, largely in Indianapolis. It also has offices in Fort Wayne and New York.

KSM already had a wellness program operating for about two years when Nestor joined the firm a decade ago.

“At that time, it was a little more focused on the traditional components of wellness programs – physical health, weight-loss programs, smoking cessation programs,” Nestor reveals. “We also wanted to provide a lot of different conveniences and benefits, perks, if you will, to folks. So we brought in a lot of free food and drinks for people for when they needed a break. They could just go grab something.”

Steinberger Construction has engrained wellness into its culture.

“Our initial launch or journey into wellness began in 2007, so 13 years ago. It’s been something that’s clearly transitioned a lot over that time. ... It looks a lot different today than it did then,” Lewellen says.

The company is a 74-year-old, fourth-generation industrial contractor located in north central Indiana. Its team of 60-plus partners on manufacturing, heavy energy and

heavy agricultural projects throughout the state.

“It took a big leap of faith to actually fund a position for the full-time wellness director and then create a budget for it,” Lewellen affirms. “But when they (the employees) see those things, when our team sees that, they say, ‘Okay, this is important to everybody. It’s important to the organization.’ And when they get to hear those successes that come out of it, then it just creates this huge buy-in across the organization.”

## All aboard

“It just became part of our culture,” Lewellen adds. “When we’re bringing somebody new into the team, it’s one of the first things we talk about, when we’re recruiting them. It’s not talking about wages and benefits and that, it’s talking about the team atmosphere, the culture ... safety culture, wellness culture.”

“It’s the caring-about-you culture because everybody’s throwing money at people and throwing benefits at people. But people don’t feel like they belong. And that’s what we want to create in our environment at Steinberger – a feeling of belonging.”

Pierce agrees wholeheartedly on inducting new hires into the culture of the business, emphasizing the wellness component.

“We just hired someone; they started Monday. Day one, they learned about our (wellness) portal. It is part of the day-one communication related to them.”



“Celebrate your successes and celebrate your failures. Just like in business. I think that especially when you’re not in an organization that you have buy-in from the top, it’s very challenging. What it really boils down to: You’re making a difference and that builds energy. It’s really creating a legacy.”

– Matthew Lewellen,  
Steinberger Construction

New hires at DK Pierce also get a lunch box with a favorite snack inside as a personal welcome to the team.

“And it doesn’t matter what position you’re in, you get your lunch pail. This person who started (on Monday) said, ‘I’ve never experienced this before.’ And I think that’s it. It’s creating a different experience for the employee.”

Making sure a company’s culture is promoting wellness with intention can be accomplished through small gestures; extravagance is not required.

Hadden gives an example from a recent hire.

“So, this was day four and she said, ‘I can’t believe the little things you guys have. Free coffee and fresh fruit that’s available to everybody. And everybody’s so committed.’ It’s nice to hear. I shared with her, ‘Well, this is just who we are.’ So, the little things add up. All of those little things roll up into a big thing.”

KSM also sees that effect. “It’s the little things that people use, but sometimes it’s the fact that there are just options and choices that some people may use,” Nestor explains. “But the fact that they’re there gives them (employees) some peace of mind. That they know, ‘If I want to use this, it’s available to me.’”

### Keeping up with best practices

A common phrase – “the only thing you can count on is change” – certainly applies to this topic.

Accordingly, the wellness philosophy at KSM has evolved over the past decade.



“We are trying to define it (wellness) in the broadest sense. It covers everything from diversity and inclusion to again, mental health, to financial planning, to relationships, to spiritual ... whatever it may be, whatever it means to you.”

– Jim Nestor, Katz, Sapper & Miller

“I think for us the biggest, and I bet for many of you, is this focus on stress, anxiety and mental health,” Nestor details. “There are so many aspects that influence and impact that. We’re an accounting firm, but believe it or not, our folks have every bit as much stress around financial planning and retirement planning (as you do).”

“We’re great at doing that with our clients, but not so great at doing that for ourselves. There’s a lot more around providing services, resources that really meet everybody where they are in their mental health journey,” he continues. “We’re shifting our focus and it really impacts all those other aspects, financial wellness ... relationships are huge. Having people you can talk to and connect with makes a big difference in terms of your state of mind and mindset.”

Pierce says she completely agrees with putting a focus on the mental side of the equation.

“Our industry is stressful,” she contends. “I wanted to have the comforts of life in my office and that included dogs. At most, we will have, I think, six or seven dogs (in the office) at one time. It makes us laugh, sometimes hysterically. It makes us take a break. I go back to the term thriving, being able to avoid some of the stressors if we can. And, boy, dogs definitely do that.”

“You know it’s funny, they say Google or Amazon are the pioneers. I’m sorry, we’ve been doing this a long time,” she jokes.

KSM provides childcare on Saturdays during the busy tax season.

“That could be a challenge in terms of figuring out what we do with the kids. We just started a program. We call it the KSM Family Room, where we have brought in sitters and nannies. Now granted, it was quite a feat to make this happen,” Nestor recalls. “The utilization has been phenomenal. And we’ve had almost as much positive feedback from people who aren’t using it. The fact that it’s relieving them of that stress – not knowing where their kids are and they don’t have to worry about trying to make arrangements – is huge in terms of the return.”

### Leading by example

All agreed that to have a truly successful wellness program requires participation from leadership.

“Once again, you’re walking the talk. If it’s important for them, it’s important for me,” Hadden concludes. “I enjoy it. I mean, we have these walk and talks, so instead of sitting in a meeting like this, we’ll do a walk. It’s technically a walking meeting. I’ll do them even when I’m not really in that meeting



“Cost is always going to be a challenge. It’s going to keep wellness or well-being from becoming more and more widespread. It comes down to the communication and importance. I think discussions like this of how important wellness is and to the overall culture of an organization is becoming more and more recognized.”

– Jeff Hadden, LHD Benefit Advisors

just to enjoy the interaction with folks.”

Lewellen insists, “I think you have to live it. I mean, for someone that doesn’t live it, it’s really going to be hard to be perceived as anything but maybe a fake. I feel like I’ve got to be part of these challenges because it’s what I should be doing as a leader. For one, it’s best for me, but it’s something that’s part of everything we do. ... When our people are much happier, you’re going to have a consistent crew on your job site. It’s in everything we talk about.”

Pierce enjoys being involved, even if her ideas may fall flat from time to time.

“You have to nurture your employees and you have to engage in your community,” she suggests. “Hurst Beans (N.K. Hurst Co.) is down the street, and so I’ve been talking back and forth, and I thought, ‘What a great wellness opportunity. We’re going to get a whole bunch of beans and we’re going to have soup day and we’re going to make all sorts of different soups ...’ and all I get back is, ‘Who’s going to bring the Beano (gas relief)?’”

Nestor applauds Pierce’s intent.

“But I’ll bet you five years from now, that story will be told and it’s a laughter moment,” he offers. “Let’s get creative; let’s have some fun. It’s not always what we do. Sometimes it’s just the idea and trying to generate that conversation.”