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**Quad City Health Initiative Wellness Champions' Project Demonstrates Effectiveness of Wellness Messages and Worksite Wellness Programs**

Key Points:

1. The Wellness Champions of the Quad City Health Initiative are working to raise awareness of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease and have developed a series of advertisements (Choose Health. Live Well.) that can be used at worksites or in the media to promote wellness.
2. A recent test of these advertisements in combination with worksite wellness programs at two local employer sites demonstrated a positive shift in attitudes about wellness and significant health status improvements for many employees.
3. Organizations across the Quad City community should explore how worksite wellness can improve employee productivity and lower health insurance costs while improving the quality of life of employees and thus the overall health of our community.

The Wellness Champions of the Quad City Health Initiative want the community to Choose Health. Live Well. by making healthy decisions regarding diet and exercise. As part of this goal, the team has been working to raise awareness of the risk factors for cardiovascular disease with a specific emphasis on encouraging employers to address these issues in the workplace.

Over the last year, the Wellness Champions of the Quad City Health Initiative have been developing and testing a series of educational messages meant to prevent cardiovascular disease. These messages encourage individuals to:

**Move It.** Accumulate at least 30 minutes of activity most days of the week.  
**Lose It.** Eat well-balanced meals. Reduce calories if you are overweight.  
**Check It.** Get regular checkups.  
**Know It.** Know your numbers, blood pressure and cholesterol. If high, get them treated.  
**Quit It.** If you smoke, stop.  
**Chill It.** Improve your mental and spiritual health, control your stress.

With the help of advertising agency, Charleston-Orwig, the Wellness Champions translated these messages into advertisements that can be used at worksites, organizations or in the media to promote community wellness. Wellness Champions team members, Genesis Occupational Health and Trinity Work Fitness, then piloted four of these messages at two local employer sites to demonstrate the value of these messages and the value of worksite wellness programs overall.

“Augustana College and Nichols Aluminum, clients of Trinity Work Fitness and Genesis Occupational Health, were very generous in agreeing to help us to test these wellness messages as part of an overall program of worksite wellness”, says Nicole Carkner, Project Coordinator for Quad City Health Initiative. “Our goal was to demonstrate the impact that educational messages can have on individuals’ attitudes and behaviors towards wellness with the longer term goal of enlisting community support for promoting these messages. We also hoped to showcase the overall impact of employer-based wellness programs to the community.”

“A healthy employee is a healthy investment,” says Colleen Borts, Corporate Wellness Director for Trinity Work Fitness. “With obesity, heart disease and adult onset diabetes on the rise, what better place to implement wellness initiatives than in the workplace. If done carefully, and based on sound program design, significant improvements can be realized in the health of the employee population, while at the same time reducing employer liability.”

Over an eight-month period, employees at Augustana College and Nichols Aluminum viewed the wellness advertisements through posters hung in the workplace, enclosures with their payroll mailers, and emails. These materials supplemented the worksite wellness programs that were tailored and implemented by Genesis Occupational Health and Trinity Work Fitness.

Across the two employers, 331 employees participated in the Choose Health. Live Well. message test and 177 completed the worksite wellness programs offered, with very encouraging results. The survey data collected indicates that employees showed a positive shift in their attitudes towards wellness (see Table 1 below). For many individuals this positive shift in attitude translated into positive shifts in behaviors and improvements in health status (see Table 2 below). And, individuals took note of the Choose Health. Live Well. advertisements thus demonstrating that the messages were an influential part of the wellness programs. An impressive sixty-four (64%) of survey respondents recalled the “Choose Health. Live Well.” campaign and recall of the individual advertisements ranged from 45%-62% (recall survey n=107).

**Table 1: Attitudes Towards Wellness**

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Feb/March 2005 (n=331) Strongly Agree and Agree</b>	<b>October 2005 (n=177) Strongly Agree and Agree</b>
Managing my weight is a high priority in my life.	82%	88%
I plan to have my blood pressure checked in the next 12 months.	84%	91%
An annual cholesterol check is part of my health program.	67%	80%
I usually exercise at least two times per week.	71%	84%

**Table 2: Health Status Indicators**

<b>Health Status Indicator (N=177)</b>	<b>% Improved by at least one risk level during the wellness program</b>	<b>% Maintained healthy level throughout the wellness program</b>
Blood Pressure	21%	55%
Total Cholesterol	36%	44%
Triglycerides	16%	58%
Body Fat	12%	31%

"Worksite wellness just makes sense", says Tom McGovern, Co-Chair for the Wellness Warriors team and Co-President of Cleaveland Insurance Group. "The number one concern of small and medium-sized business owners is the rising cost of health insurance. Helping employees to develop healthier lifestyles and habits can have a major impact on their physical health which translates into higher employee productivity, lower absenteeism and ultimately lower health care insurance costs."

"People spend the majority of their waking hours at work so it makes sense to build awareness about living healthy lifestyles in that environment," adds Deni McCarter, Executive Director, Genesis Occupational Health. "Comprehensive employee wellness programs offer a win/win situation where the employees learn how to take better care of themselves and the employer can achieve improved workplace morale while reducing healthcare costs for the company. Our own employee wellness program has improved the comradery among co-workers. I see them encouraging each other in a competitive yet positive way to eat better foods, reduce unhealthy snacking, quit smoking and exercise more."

The Wellness Champions are currently seeking partners in promoting the Choose Health. Live Well. campaign. Potential business, organization or media partners should contact the QCHI office at 563-421-2815.

In QCHI's 2002 Community Health Assessment, obesity, high blood pressure and high cholesterol (all risk factors for cardiovascular disease) emerged as critical issues for the health of our region. Since December 2002, the Wellness Champions team has been working to reverse these trends by promoting daily exercise, nutrition and regular screenings for health risk factors. The Wellness Champions team includes about 75

individual representatives from 52 organizations across the Quad City community. The Wellness Champions were previously known as the Wellness Warriors.

The Quad City Health Initiative (QCHI) is a community partnership in active pursuit of a healthier community. The Initiative seeks to be a catalyst for improving the health and overall quality of life within the Quad City community. The Initiative raises awareness of health issues, encourages or creates projects to address gaps in health services and fosters community collaboration in all aspects of health. Major financial sponsors of the Initiative are Trinity Regional Health System and Genesis Health System. For more information or to join the efforts of the Quad City Health Initiative, please call 563-421-2815 or visit our website at [www.qchealthinitiative.org](http://www.qchealthinitiative.org).

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