

## **WELL @ WORK: A PILOT PROJECT TO INTRODUCE WORKSITE WELLNESS PROGRAMS TO THE GREATER LOUISVILLE AREA**

*Developed and Conducted by the Kentuckiana Health Alliance Fitness & Hypertension Taskforce, under the Auspices of the Community Healthcare Initiative in the Louisville Metropolitan Area, and sponsored by United Auto Workers (UAW) and Ford Motor Co.*

### **Executive Summary**

Americans currently spend 16% of their Gross National Product on health care. Experts predict this to rise to 20% in 2015, less than 10 years from now.

Chronic diseases account for an estimated 75% of spending on health care. Five chronic diseases cause the majority of deaths both nationwide and in Kentucky: They are heart disease, cancers, stroke, chronic lower respiratory diseases, including asthma, and diabetes. Mounting evidence demonstrates that these diseases can be prevented or reduced by changes in personal behavioral and/or clinical interventions.

Employers struggle to meet health care costs from two fronts: the direct cost of employee health insurance based in part on annual medical claims and indirect costs due to absenteeism, low productivity and other related problems.

Over the past fifteen years, employer-based worksite wellness programs, specifically designed to improve personal health habits and the cost-effective use of health care services, have been shown to lower costs and raise employee productivity.

In 2004, the Kentuckiana Health Alliance Fitness & Hypertension Taskforce developed the *Well@Work* pilot project. The year-long project, initiated in 2005, had two goals: 1) to engage and assist local businesses in developing intensive, worksite-based, employee wellness programs; and 2) to determine whether these programs produced positive results for participating employers and their employees.

Seven employers in the Greater Louisville Metropolitan Area joined the project, identified their priorities, and selected the activities that would best address their needs. Two worksite wellness vendors provided employee health risk assessments (HRAs) and other services at a special cost to the project. Participants' personal data was maintained in strict confidence. No personal data was provided to employers; all data was reported in aggregate form. The Taskforce provided support to the employers from start to finish.

*Well@Work* met both goals. It successfully engaged and assisted seven area businesses in developing and implementing individual worksite wellness programs. And, despite the short time frame, positive changes were recorded in improved diet, decreased cancer risk, and increased fitness levels. Further improvement and greater benefits for both employers and employees would be expected over time.

The Taskforce encourages your interest in worksite wellness. See the Washington Business Group on Health for further information: <http://businessgrouphealth.org/services/4PartGuide.pdf>. Visit The Health Project at Stanford University for details on award-winning programs: <http://healthproject.stanford.edu/koop>.

To learn more about the Kentuckiana Health Alliance, visit [www.kentuckianahealthalliance.org](http://www.kentuckianahealthalliance.org). A full report describing the *Well@Work* project will be available at the October 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 "Well@Work" conference. Conference details are available at the above website under the "Obesity Chronic Disease Taskforce" tab.

