

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2014 Achievement Awards

Call for Entries



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**

Program Information

Locality Stafford County, VA

Program Title Stafford County's Employee Wellness Fair

Program Category Health and Human Services

Contact Information

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Signature 

Summary - “Stafford County’s Employee Wellness Fair”

The health and wellbeing of Stafford’s more than 800 employees is a priority for the Stafford County Government. Stafford traditionally held a wellness fair for its employees but it was discontinued after the downturn in the economy. Two years ago, enterprising employees resurrected the program at a minimum cost by partnering with a local hospital and the County’s own public safety staff to provide immunizations, screenings and other services. Local businesses providing health and fitness services were invited to be vendors. The event grew from year to year, was well attended and is planned to be even bigger in 2014. The Wellness Fair has two goals: to improve the health of employees so that they can continue to be happy and productive contributors to the organization and the community; and to help reduce the number of visits employees have to make to their doctors for illnesses and injuries, which could help limit future health insurance increases. Employee response was overwhelmingly positive and both the 2012 and 2013 fairs were packed. The Wellness Fair has grown in size and an even bigger event is planned for 2014. In addition, staff is beginning to see a decrease in the amount of health insurance claims which we attribute to the efforts of the Wellness Committee to encourage healthier lifestyles for our employees.

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The Employee Wellness Fair is a comprehensive health fair held yearly by Stafford County for its more than 800 employees. The health and wellbeing of employees is a priority for the County and an active Wellness Committee has developed a program that raises awareness of healthy living through various programs and activities. The short-term goal of the Wellness program is to help improve the health of employees so that they can continue to be happy and productive contributors to the organization and the community. The long-term goal of the Wellness program is to help reduce the number of visits employees have to make to their doctors for illnesses and injuries, which could help limit future health insurance increases.

Programs including free health seminars and activities such as walking challenges are offered to employees throughout the year. However, the most popular event is the Employee Wellness Fair held in October. In previous years, the Wellness Fair was a huge undertaking that was held at one of Stafford’s high schools. Both County government and Stafford County School employees were invited to the daylong affair and numerous vendors set up booths at the school site with many activities and prizes. However, the downturn in the economy caused the Wellness Committee to rethink its approach to employees from an organization-sponsored program to a program that depended more on individual employees becoming more responsible for their wellness. While this individual approach can work, having a team of other employees supporting their co-workers in their quest for a healthier lifestyles and also being able to participate in employer-sponsored programs – many of which employees might not have access to otherwise - can help motivate employees and serve as incentives to successfully complete the Wellness Program.

In 2012, enterprising employees on the Wellness Committee decided to bring back the Wellness Fair, albeit on a smaller, more cost efficient scale. Health professionals, such as representatives from Anthem and the Stafford Hospital, wellness vendors, including staff from various gymnasiums in the area, and public safety personnel set up booths at a conference room at Stafford's Ford T. Humphrey Public Safety Building. Employees were able to receive flu shots, win door prizes (that were donated by vendors) and learn about different health and exercise opportunities in the area. There were also dancing, karate and yoga demonstrations. The cost to the County was minimal, mainly involving staff time. The 2012 event was such a hit with employees that in 2013, the Wellness Committee partnered with a local hospital to hold the Wellness Fair. Hospital staff offered space in which to hold the fair and staff to help provide services. Stafford employees could get mammograms, flu shots, blood pressure checks and other health screenings. Health information was available and vendors from fitness services had booths. More than 250 employees visited the fair in 2013. It is now an annual event with plans for an even bigger fair in 2014.

Problem/Need for the Program

Stafford approaches employee health by looking at the whole person and applying our B.E.S.T. values to the equation. B.E.S.T. stands for Balance, Empowerment, Service and Teamwork. Wellness is part of the "balance" in our B.E.S.T. values. Physical and mental wellbeing enhances productivity and ultimately, the service we provide to our citizens. If we have a healthy and happy employee, then the citizen will only benefit from the positive and timely service provided by that employee. Healthier employees also help keep the rising costs of healthcare in check. While Stafford's leadership knew it valued employee health, keeping employees engaged in a wellness dialogue was a challenge without an annual push. Stafford had a wellness program

because of budget limitations, it was low key with a few hikes planned for employees throughout the year. The Wellness Committee knew the Leadership Team and employees valued health and wellness, and that they appreciated the way the Wellness Fair used to bring representatives from the health industry together at one time to educate employees about living a healthy lifestyle. They also appreciate the camaraderie the fair offered to employees who were at various points of their wellness journey and the inspiration and encouragement they received from other attendees of the health fair as well as the vendors. The group set out on a mission to bring back the Wellness Fair with all the benefits for employees, but without the cost.

Description of the Program

Planning for the 2012 Wellness Fair took place over the course of a month. Members of the Wellness Committee called vendors and asked them to participate. They were surprised by the overwhelmingly positive response of the vendors, many of whom said they were looking for a way to reach out to County employees. Planning for the 2013 fair started around two months before the event with the same kind of activities on a slightly larger scale.

The Employee Wellness Fair takes place in October. Summer vacation is over by then and staff is re-establishing a routine. The fair is aimed at Stafford County employees and meeting their wellness needs.

Logistics are important when holding an event for 800 employees who work on many different sites. The location of the fair is important; it has to be close enough for employees to get to and back without taking too much time out of their busy day. In 2012, the fair was held at one of the County Government's buildings, the Ford T. Humphrey Public Safety Building, which houses Stafford's Fire and Rescue Department and the Sheriff's Office. In 2013, the Wellness

Committee partnered with the Stafford Hospital and held the fair in one of the hospital's large conference rooms. It is held on a Friday, when many employees have a little more flexibility in their schedule to step away from their offices, and takes place from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., when most employees have time off for lunch. Shuttles were provided for employees from the main parking lot at Stafford's Government Center to Stafford Hospital and back. Additionally, employees were given lunch discounts at the hospital cafeteria by virtue of their identification badges and entered into a drawing for a prize from the hospital gift shop.

As October was National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, employees were offered the option of making appointments ahead of time for mammograms. Free flu shots were also provided. This has been tremendously effective in vaccinating the majority of County employees. There have been no major flu outbreaks among County employees the last two years. Additionally, hospital staff gave free glucose and cholesterol screenings and blood pressure checks. Busy employees are more apt to undergo free screenings during the work day than go to doctor's appointments with lengthy wait times away from the office.

Different vendors staffed booths to showcase their services. Employees could learn more about fitness memberships, yoga, nutrition, massage, life coaching, and athletic training.

Representatives from the County's health insurer, Anthem, also attended to advise employees on various health topics.

Prizes always draw more visitors to an event, and the Wellness Committee worked with all of the vendors, who were very generous with prize donations. The committee also spent a small amount of money on healthy snacks, such as fruit, yogurt and granola bars. Drawings were held for the various items that vendors donated. These ranged from free sports bottles to guest memberships

to gyms. All Stafford employees who ate in the cafeteria were automatically entered into the drawing for a free gift shop prize. With a large work force, it can be challenging to gather everyone together in one spot very often. The Wellness Fair brings employees together for an educational and fun event.

The Wellness Committee had two partnerships that were integral to the success of the Wellness Fair. One was the partnership with the Stafford Hospital, which provided invaluable support with their personnel, services and location.

Effects of the Economic Downturn

Stafford County trimmed its budget when the economic downturn hit. “Doing more with less” became a familiar phrase, and employees learned how to be even more innovative to respond to service demand, both in the community and in the workforce. When the Wellness Committee resurrect the Wellness Fair, they didn’t look at what they could not do because of budget limitations, they approached it from a perspective of what they could do with what they already had: creative employees and enthusiastic community partners. In 2012, they used County facilities for the Wellness Fair and Stafford Fire and Rescue staff gave flu shots. Vendors were invited and they brought samples and items to give to employees. The inclusion of the vendors was helpful on two fronts: one, it exposed employees to the different fitness options; and two, it promoted local businesses. In 2013, Stafford again used existing resources but partnered with the Stafford Hospital for the location and with its staff to offer additional health screenings to employees. The economic challenges did not stop the Wellness Committee from providing a valuable health and wellness event to employees.

The Cost of the Program

The first fair cost less than \$150 and the second fair cost \$155 for healthy snacks such as fruit, yogurt, and granola bars. Again, staff used existing resources, the generosity of vendors and the public-private partnership with the hospital to defray costs.

The Results/Success of the Program

Both the 2012 and 2013 Wellness Fairs were well attended by employees with the rooms being packed for the duration of the event. Many employees expressed their appreciation of being made aware of healthier lifestyles and their own health information through the screenings. The hospital was pleased with their part in the fair and has signed on for the 2014 Wellness Fair. Vendors also expressed interest in participating in the 2014 fair. Additionally, the Wellness Fair seems to have helped boost employee interest in other wellness activities with more employees participating in County recreational activities and outside events such as local 5Ks. In fact, the Stafford Hospital held a 5K run on April 12, and at least 25 County employees participated. One County employee from the Public Works Department placed second in the race overall and two others were second in their age group. This type of participation (and high performance) among County employees was unheard of before in a single wellness event, especially one not sponsored by the County. The County also sponsored a wellness basketball tournament and one department, who rarely gets the spotlight because of their nature of their work, won first place.

Conclusion

One of the Board of Supervisors priorities for the County is being fiscally responsible and reducing the tax burden on the citizens. Stafford's leadership keeps this priority in mind with every decision that is made. County staff knows how important it is to maximize existing

resources. In Stafford, there is no problem that does not have a solution. The same goes for the Wellness Fair. It was an important, informative and entertaining event that employees looked forward to. Instead of completely doing away with it because of budget limitations, Stafford found a way to offer it using existing resources and public-private partnerships. This resulted in empowering employees by giving them useful health information and boosting the overall health of employees in general. In the last two years, employee participation in County-sponsored recreational activities and outside athletic endeavors has risen steadily. Instead of looking what it could *not do* because of budget limitations, Stafford County focused on what it *could do* to take care of employees and help them become more health conscious and fit through its Employee Wellness Fair.