



**HEALTHY KANSAS HOSPITALS**

HEALTHY OPTIONS ARE THE ROUTINE, EASY CHOICE.



## Centers of Excellence Award Winner

### *Atchison Hospital 'Walks the Wellness Talk'*

Atchison Hospital really “walks the talk” when it comes to health and wellness. From creating awareness and incentives for employees to practice healthy habits to taking a leadership role in improving the community’s health status, Atchison Hospital has invested in wellness, and that commitment is showing results.

Since 2010, the hospital has built a strong internal culture focused on wellness. Hospital policies form the foundation, and changes in the internal environment support individuals making healthy choices. Financial incentives

link good health and healthy lifestyles to discounts on employer-provided health insurance. Externally, the hospital played a leadership role in creating and growing the “Live Well, Live Atchison” program, which has evolved into a separate nonprofit organization focused on community health in which the hospital continues to participate.

In recognition of its innovation and achievements, Atchison Hospital has been named one of three recipients of the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence* awards for 2017.



Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation President Melissa Hungerford, left, presented a \$1,000 check to **John Jacobson**, chief executive officer of Atchison Hospital, and **Jennifer Brockhoff**, director of Advanced Health Services.

***“As a hospital, we are trying to be a leader in health and wellness, and a role model for the community.”***

— Jennifer Brockhoff, Director of Advanced Health Services

### **Healthy Kansas Hospitals**

Hospital leaders and staff embraced joining the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative, a project led by the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation. The program informs and supports local initiatives to promote healthy food and beverage environments in hospitals.

A 2009 Kansas Health Institute report of Kansas health rankings provided the impetus for action. “Atchison County had **the** worst health behaviors of all 105 counties in Kansas,” said Kallie Finley, RN, wellness coordinator for the hospital. “Atchison Hospital decided it was time for change,” she added.

### **Wellness Program for Employees**

“One of the initiatives the hospital has taken on is to offer a wellness program to all employees, as well as to their spouses who are enrolled in Atchison Hospital’s health insurance plan,” Finley said. From nutrition education to encourage healthier choices and discounted gym memberships to monitoring health biometrics and offering resources and coaching assistance to improve health status, Atchison has taken dramatic steps to help its employees achieve better health.

The hospital began by looking at things it could change on its campus, such as becoming smoke-free and offering employees the ability to use the cardiac

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rehabilitation department's equipment for physical activity. "One of the biggest obstacles we faced was providing proper nutritional education for the food and beverage choices available in our facility. A particular area in which we struggled is with the vending machines," Finley said. Staff members attended a Healthy Kansas Hospitals conference and learned about what other hospitals and groups are doing to improve vending machine merchandise.

## Addressing Vending Machine Merchandise

"The first thing we did with vending machines was to remove regular soda pop," said Jennifer Brockhoff, director of Advance Health Services which provides occupational and sports medicine to local businesses. "For the first few months, it was quite a challenge and an adjustment period," she recalled. "As a hospital we are trying to be a leader in health and wellness and as an organization, we choose not to serve full calorie beverages in our vending machines to our employees or guests," Brockhoff explained.



"We wanted to make people more knowledgeable about what they are purchasing in vending machines," Finley explained. "Our wellness team, in conjunction with our machines' suppliers, set up nutritional standards for both our food and beverage machines," Finley explained. Using the standards, the hospital has developed a color coding system for all food products found in the vending machines. Each item is coded as green, yellow or red. Green items indicate the snack is of the healthiest offered and should be consumed more frequently than items with other colors. Yellow indicates the snack is not as healthy as the green items, but is healthier than red items. Yellow items should be consumed less frequently. Red items do not meet the health standards for the vending machine, and should be consumed rarely, if at all.

"People were surprised by the color codes certain foods received," Finley said. "Some things they thought were unhealthy weren't as unhealthy as they thought, and other things they thought were healthy aren't," she added. For example, many people think granola bars are healthy, but may be high in sugar. Baked chips actually may be healthier than granola bars. "The color coding was really eye-opening for many people, and the hospital received lots of positive feedback," Finley said. Having the information – which is based on serving size – helps an individual choose something green instead of the red item he/she initially may have wanted.

"With a color coding system, our employees and patrons are being educated on their choices prior to selecting them. Our hope is that this education will help people make healthy choices on a regular basis," Finley said.

The wellness duo said that 60 percent of the hospital's vending machine merchandise is coded green, and 20-25 percent is yellow. Red options are still there, but the unhealthy foods are not as plentiful.

## Nutritional Criteria for Assigning Food Color Designation

### Green Food Items

Food items are designated green as they are the most nutritious items in the vending machine. Nutritional content for these items, per serving, will meet the following criteria:

- <200 calories per serving
- <7 grams of fat per serving, except items which are 100% nuts, fruits and/or vegetables
- 0 grams of trans fat per serving
- <10 grams of sugar per serving, except items which are 100% nuts, fruits and/or vegetables
- <200 milligrams sodium per serving

### Yellow Food Items

Food items designated yellow are not considered to be as nutritious as the green items in the vending machine. These items should be eaten in moderation. Nutritional content for these items, per serving, will meet the following criteria:

- <250 calories per serving
- <9 grams fat per serving, except items which are 100% nuts, fruits and/or vegetables
- 0 grams trans fat per serving
- <13 grams sugars per serving, except items which are 100% nuts, fruits and/or vegetables
- <250 milligrams sodium per serving

### Red Food Items

These food items are designated red as they do not fall into either the green or yellow categories. These items should be eaten in extreme moderation or avoided all together.

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"All beverages in our vending machines have to be less than 40 calories per 8-ounce serving unless they are 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice, and no beverage can contain trans fats," Finley said. Additionally, no energy drinks are stocked. Most of the offerings are water or flavored water, diet soda pops and juices such as V-8 and orange juice.

## Incentives to Reach Health Goals

Through the wellness program, Atchison establishes various health goals which the organization strives to meet. Human Resources is involved in setting the goals and metrics, and both the Human Resources director and assistant are members of the wellness committee. Goals are based on nationally accepted standards of health, such as waist circumference and Body Mass Index.

"Internally, we see the backing of our leadership through the many financial investments that are being made for the wellness program," Brockhoff said. For example, for the past 10 years, the hospital has funded annual wellness screenings for all employees which include blood work testing and biometric measurements. The screening tests are determined by the wellness committee. For the past five years, the hospital has purchased access to an online wellness portal which is available free of charge to all employees/spouses participating in the program. Completion of an online lifestyle assessment is part of the annual screening process.

Perhaps the most significant investment and commitment to good health is the discount on health insurance premiums available to employees and their spouses who participate in the wellness program. Based on the results of the biometric measurements and blood work, employees are assigned to one of three color-coded categories. The green assignment indicates that the

individual meets the hospital's goals. The yellow and red categories indicate the degree to which an individual does not meet the goals.

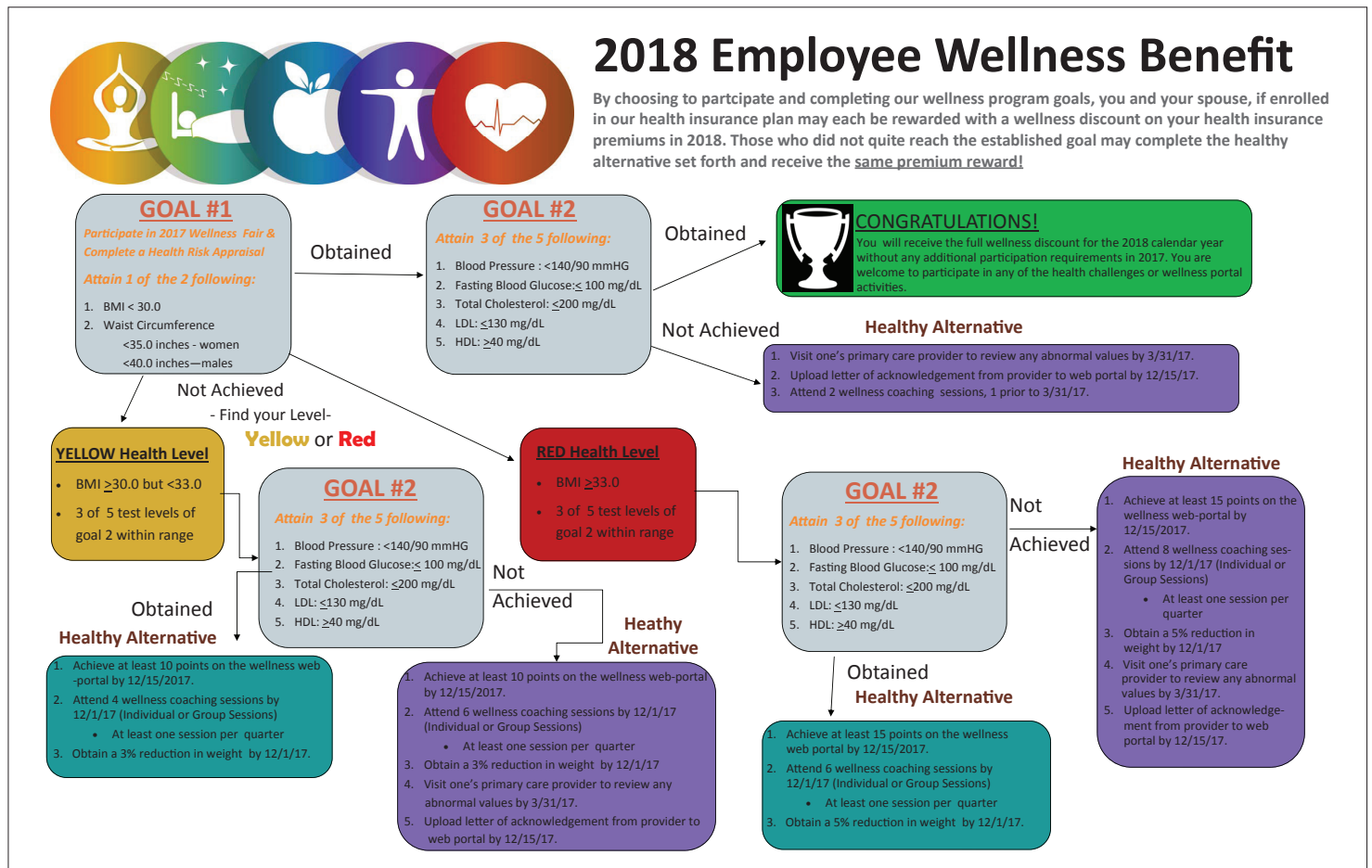
"If an individual currently is not at the goal level, then he/she is provided a healthy alternative which allows him/her to make progress toward the goal," Finley explained. The healthy alternative includes free health coaching sessions to help participants understand what areas to target for improvement. Resources are available through the online portal and within the hospital.

"Over the past year, 60 percent of our insurance-eligible employees and their spouses met the specified health goal level and were able to receive a discount off their health insurance premiums," Brockhoff said. "Of those who didn't meet the goal and chose to participate in the healthy alternative, 69 percent achieved success and qualified for the insurance discount."

The hospital began offering health insurance premium discounts four years ago to encourage employees to participate in the wellness program. The first year, the discount was \$40 per month, and has increased each subsequent year. For 2018, the discount is projected to be about \$120 per month combined for employees and their spouses.

## Community Initiative/Outreach

In addition to an internal focus, the hospital provided leadership in the community. Atchison Hospital partnered with community leaders and businesses to form "Live Well, Live Atchison." In 2010, the hospital charged the Social Services Manager, Aggie Asher, with forming a



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community coalition for wellness. With the hospital playing a major role in the beginning, some 30 to 40 community leaders were engaged and met monthly, working on specific projects through action teams. Over time, a formal organization developed and now is an independent 501(c)3 entity. The "Live Well, Live Atchison" organization has formed partnerships ranging from local and state governmental bodies to schools and religious organizations.

"Seven years down the road, this initiative has taken on a life of its own," said Brockhoff. Several hospital representatives, including two physicians, are part of the general committees/action teams. Currently, "Live Well, Live Atchison" is working with the city to create a walking/jogging trail. Other healthy initiatives include providing a community garden and hosting a farmers' market twice a week. The organization recently held a public forum to get community input on where additional biking/hiking trails are needed.

The hospital's internal wellness program is very community-minded, and the hospital partners with many community members and businesses to bring community health and wellness experts into the hospital to share their knowledge. "For example, we have offered on-site wellness classes for employees, using trained professionals within the community as facilitators," Finley said. "We have offered lunch-and-learn sessions for employees that feature expert speakers, such as chiropractors, dental workers, YMCA personnel, dieticians and nutritionists," she explained. The hospital also partners with local gyms to provide membership discounts to all employees.

### Tips/Lessons Learned

**Start slowly and take a measured approach.** "Change is hard for people," Brockhoff stated. "You have a goal of where you want to get, but know that this is not a sprint, but more a marathon. Make small changes. It's easier to bring people on-board slowly. We started small and evolved to where we are today."

**Take baby steps.** "If we had started from nothing and went directly to what we have today, we would have gotten lots of push-back," Brockhoff said. Instead, address one item, such as vending machine food or beverages, and build on success.

**Demonstrate commitment.** "Make sure employees know wellness is not a fad or phase the hospital is going through," Brockhoff advised. "Atchison employees know that wellness is not something we're going to let go away." That commitment is reflected in an environment where employees think about what they eat, and take walks at lunch.

**Wellness is a long-term adventure.** "The people in charge must be resilient," Finley said. "We're constantly framing incentives to achieve optimal health outcomes in a positive light. We think about how we communicate to employees, and we try to communicate well in advance."

**Share the plan and welcome comments/questions.** "It's important that policies and processes are communicated clearly and in advance," Finley advises. "For example, our employees knew in February 2017 what is coming in February 2018 in regard to insurance discounts. This gives them lots of time to ask questions and think about the plan."

***"Wellness is really an environmental change. Moreover, it's a lifestyle change."***

*— Kallie Finley, RN, Wellness Coordinator*

#### About Atchison Hospital

Atchison Hospital is a community-owned and locally governed 25-bed Critical Access Hospital. It has been the leading health care provider in the Atchison community and surrounding area since 1912. In 2010, the hospital moved into a new 85,000-square foot single story building. The design allows all departments to be in close proximity, increasing efficiency that is entirely patient focused. Atchison Hospital provides a full range of acute-care services, including cardiac rehabilitation, emergency, obstetric, out-patient, physical therapy and surgical services.

#### About Healthy Kansas Hospitals

*Healthy Kansas Hospitals* is a project of the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation to encourage Kansas hospital to improve food and beverage policies and become community role models; the program also provides resources and information. The KHERF was created in 1969 by the Kansas Hospital Association to facilitate collaboration and innovation to improve health delivery for Kansas communities. The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization that is the leading advocate and resource for Kansas hospitals. For more information, visit [www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org](http://www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org).

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