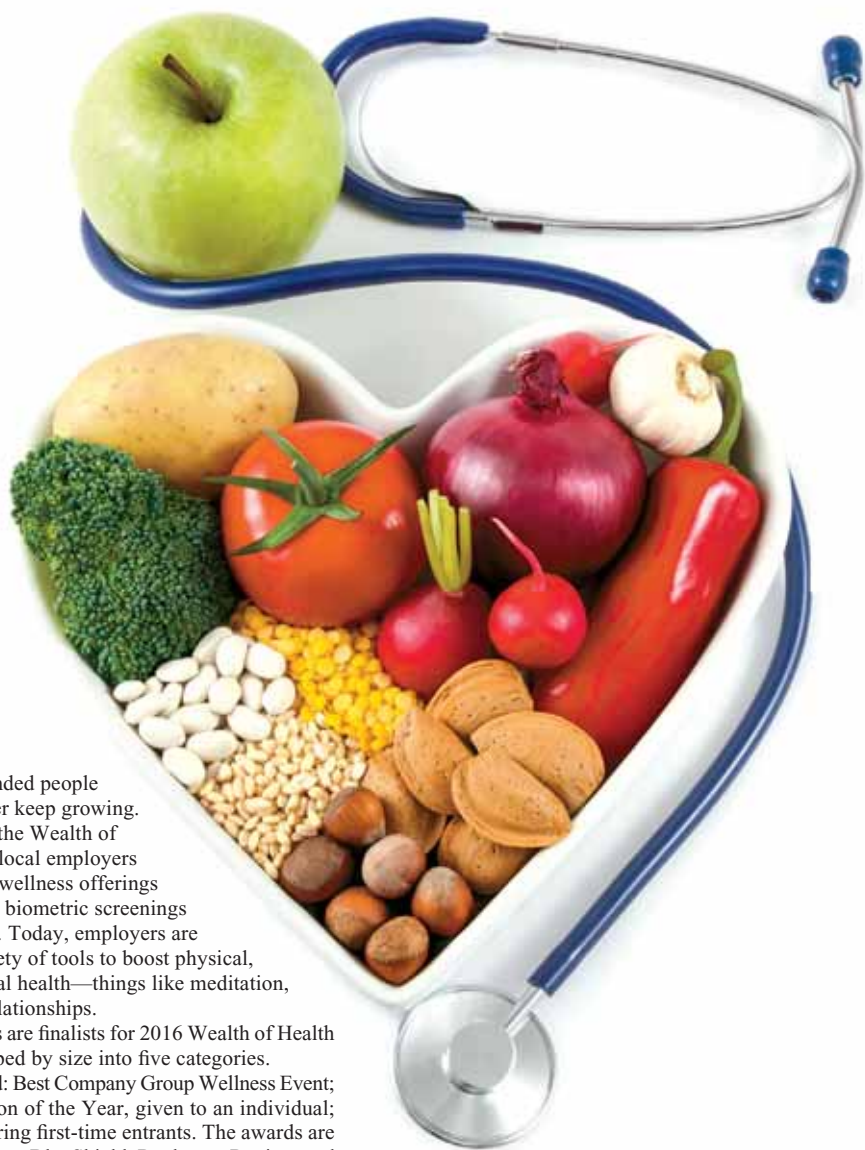




# —Growing **strong**—



**T**he ranks of health-minded people who work in Rochester keep growing.

Since the launch of the Wealth of Health Awards 11 years ago, local employers have greatly enhanced onsite wellness offerings for staff members. Back then, biometric screenings and pedometers were the rule. Today, employers are more creative, offering a variety of tools to boost physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health—things like meditation, financial management, and relationships.

Twenty-one local employers are finalists for 2016 Wealth of Health Awards. Companies are grouped by size into five categories.

New awards have been added: Best Company Group Wellness Event; Health and Wellness Champion of the Year, given to an individual; and Rookie of the Year, honoring first-time entrants. The awards are presented by Excellus BlueCross BlueShield, Rochester Region, and the Rochester Business Journal.

Finalists were judged on employee involvement in health initiatives, the creativity of these activities to reach specific targets, sustainability of programs and measurable outcomes.

Winners will be announced at a luncheon June 8, from noon to 1:30 p.m., at the Joseph A. Floreano Rochester Riverside Convention Center. A free seminar discussion, Building and Enhancing Your Wellness Program, will be held from 11 to 11:45 a.m. Leading the discussion will be workplace wellness experts Lisa McLaughlin, ESL Federal Credit Union; Nikki Reynolds, SMP; and Janette Westman, Excellus Blue Cross Blue Shield.

**Inside is a closer look at  
—each honoree's commitment—  
to fostering health.**

# Infusing the workplace with good energy



## Butler/Till

Reducing stress is a key component of the Butler/Till strategy for a healthier, happier workforce.

"While we do intentionally have a focus on physical health, we also focus on overall well-being, especially stress, knowing that office environments are prone to higher stress levels," says Pauline Marsh, a senior digital planner/buyer who led the Butler/Till health and wellness committee until leaving recently for a job with Excellus BlueCross BlueShield.

Employees at the Henrietta-based advertising and marketing agency have the option of working while sitting on a yoga ball or standing. Everybody gets 15 minutes of paid time each day for a mental-health walk. If they're looking for a little something to nosh, Butler/Till's vending machine has healthy options and a chart showing which options are healthiest.

Butler/Till relieves stress in other ways, with biweekly chiropractor visits and on-site yoga classes. In December, the most stressful time of the year, the company arranged for free 10-minute chair massages.

Dogs have an important job at Butler/Till: Employees post photos of their dogs in the lobby and are encouraged to bring their pets to work once a week.

"Having employees bring their dogs into the office every Friday is a cornerstone of our agency culture," Marsh says. "Dog Day Fridays is a huge stress reliever."

One of the topics covered during annual performance reviews is how employees made room for work-life balance over the year.

The agency's wellness committee has focused more over the past year on longer-term programs instead of one-day events. From April to August, for example, the focus was on increasing exercise and improving nutrition. The goal for September through December was preparing for winter, with a strong emphasis on staying off germs and eating properly to bolster immunity. Butler/Till distributed winter wellness kits that included packets of vitamin C, organic green tea and hand sanitizer.

The committee also has begun bringing in speakers for lunch-and-learn events instead of streaming webinars



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

First-year participation in wellness programs at KJT Group was tremendous, with many employees suggesting ideas.

or showing movies. Participation has grown appreciably, from 10 to 20 in attendance at each event in 2014 to a high of 30 last year for a talk on preparing for winter by Lesley James M.D.

"Having live speakers made a huge difference for us," Marsh says.

—Richard Zitrin

## KJT Group

Since its inception nine years ago, KJT Group has sponsored and participated in community activities and has had a budget line item dedicated to team-building.

This year, the health-care research firm was inspired to take its game to another level. After working on a research project on corporate wellness programs, it launched one of its own.

Lynn Clement, global research president, says first-year participation was tremendous.

"Overall, the work culture continues to evolve with many employees providing input and suggestions into how to build on the program," Clement says.

Company leaders help lead the way by taking groups on walks throughout the day. Managers also use walking meetings when a conference room is not required.

An indoor basketball machine and golf-putting area are popular with employees year-round, particularly in winter. When the weather is nice, announcements are made to meet in the main lobby for group walks, pickup basketball, tennis or to hit golf balls at a nearby driving range.

"It is also not uncommon to randomly see employees taking a short break to perform a few ad hoc downward dog and other yoga poses during the day," says Tom Richardson, senior vice president of strategic planning.

A community standing desk and exercise ball chairs are available as work-station alternatives. Chair massages, group lunches, green thumb sessions to take care of office plants, and yoga classes are part of the KJT strategy for attacking stress and enhancing mental well-being.

The office coffee corner is now known as the wellness corner, with news articles and posters about healthy living. Employees can add activities to a community wellness calendar.

Participation in three companywide wellness challenges last year ranged from 51 to 66 percent. Incentives for reaching goals included custom T-shirts, water bottles and gift cards to local cafes with healthy lunch options.

Company research found that employees' overall mean satisfaction with the wellness program is 5.06 out of 7. The survey also showed that off-site employees need to be more included, so plans for additional activities are in the works.

"I think the first year was fantastic in so many ways," a KJT employee commented in a company survey. "It really seems to have created a common bond between so many folks at work and is a big part of our discussions. It also shows that KJT cares about our health and well-being. This is really something that is an employee benefit and positive aspect of our culture, which will attract others with similar goals and beliefs."

—Richard Zitrin

## Martino Flynn

Martino Flynn partner Kevin Flynn was working out alone at the office gym during lunch hour one day when he decided he could use some company. He began leading a weekly workout session for employees—20 minutes of cardio and 20 minutes of weight exercises—that has evolved into a healthy ritual for starting off the workweek.

On Mondays, nine Martino Flynn employees regularly show up for Flynn's workouts (another seven join in when their schedules allow).

Flynn, a fitness enthusiast who has climbed to the top of the highest mountains on all seven continents, also has coordinated free boxing classes for

employees at ROC Boxing and Fitness Center on Atlantic Avenue.

Aside from the traditional focus of physical health, the advertising and marketing agency puts a high priority on work-life balance.

"We pride ourselves for having a family-oriented culture," partner Chris Flynn says. "Although we have strong connections to one another here in the workplace, we respect employee lives outside of the office and do everything in our control to make sure work doesn't spill over into personal lives."

Martino Flynn promotes healthy nutrition by making fruit available to employees and visitors. The agency's gym at its office in Pittsford is available for employees to use whenever they choose. It has two treadmills, two StairMaster machines, weights, kettlebells, a punching bag and a pull-up bar. Workout routines posted on the gym wall are refreshed periodically to encourage employees to try new exercises.

The wellness program is under the purview of the culture committee, five employees who coordinate events and programs.

A marquee monthly event is movies over lunch on Mondays and Tuesdays. The movies are picked at random from titles suggested by employees. On Wednesdays, a group of coworkers takes walks on nearby trails.

The company also holds food and

Continued on next page



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Butler/Till's wellness committee plans activities that help employees reduce stress.



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

The gym at Martino Flynn is available for staff to use any time.





Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

### SMP employees get outside for midday breathers.

Continued from previous page

clothing drives throughout the year for local organizations, including Lollypop Farm, Canandaigua Veterans Affairs Medical Center and the Small Business Council of Rochester.

"Thanks to the healthy initiatives introduced by the culture committee, the wellness of employees is a priority and the necessary steps to maintain it have been put in place," Chris Flynn says. "In fact, activities to improve and promote wellness have become a normal part of the workday."

—Richard Zitrin

### SMP

Employees at SMP planted the seeds last fall to grow the company's fairly young formalized wellness program by building three raised-bed gardens at the IT firm's Henrietta office.

"Though there is naturally a physical and nutritional component to the garden, the presence of the garden and related activities also fosters a sense of connectedness to the environment and provides employees with green space," SMP wellness director Nikki Reynolds says.

The garden is a great place to walk and unwind. SMP employees also can take 20-minute guided imagery relaxation sessions that Reynolds leads twice a week, and chair massages are offered once a month.

Community service is an important part of SMP's wellness program. Employees have volunteered for projects with Foodlink and the Ronald McDonald House. This year they're adding Dimitri House, which helps homeless and poor people.

Staff receive emailed weekly wellness updates, monthly newsletters and messages about programs and volunteer opportunities. "Being a small company with

a dedicated wellness director also helps to enhance visibility," Reynolds says.

Participation is consistently high for challenges and health programs. SMP's signature wellness program, the Fake Out Food Challenge, helps employees cut down on processed food over two months. It involves education, personal goal setting and a book club studying "We the Eaters" by Ellen Gustafson.

Slightly more than one-quarter of SMP employees took part in the Fake Out Food Challenge. Monday morning emails spelled out weekly objectives and reading assignments. A group meeting on Friday morning spurred discussion about experiences during the week and the book. The Fake Out Food Challenge is a finalist this year for a Wealth of Health Best Company Group Wellness Event.

Reynolds says she has been pleased with participation since developing the wellness program in late 2012. "Rather than trying to have the wellness program fit into our company culture, the wellness program has helped to define our company culture," she says. "It is an integral component of what we say and do as a company. The wellness program helps to shape the work environment for our employees and is also a consistent part of our messaging to the community."

—Richard Zitrin



### Dixon Schwabl

For more than a decade, clients leaving the Dixon Schwabl office in Victor have been encouraged to ring a bell located inside the front door to signal they received outstanding service during their visit.

Continued on page 16



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Staff members at Dixon Schwabl get their birthdays off, plus other perks, to increase mental well-being.

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# Rookie of the Year finalists step it up



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

**Coordinated Care Services, a first-time participant, offers a stress-reduction course, FitBits, lunch seminars—and a fitness-friendly culture.**

## WEALTH OF HEALTH

Continued from page 15

ing their visit. In addition to providing a mental boost each time it rings, the bell serves as an everyday reminder of the organization's desire to reinforce the health and well-being of more than 100 staff members.

In that respect, Dixon Schwabl has been a regional leader for years. This is the business that instituted a birthdays-off policy years ago, ensuring that employees receive vacation time on their special day. Staff members also receive a paid day off to volunteer at the nonprofit of their choice.

Each year, Dixon Schwabl expands the ways it meets the wellness needs of a multi-generational workforce. The company includes a line item in the annual budget for wellness activities that support personal and professional interests.

That money comes in handy. All Dixon Schwabl employees are encouraged to suggest, organize or lead an aspect of the wellness program. For example: Workplace Wow, a group brainstorming initiative to boost activity. Company leaders "listen to employees and act on their suggestions," says Karen Sims, vice president of people and development.

Based on employee feedback, a registered nurse and fitness instructor are on site one day every other week, and the agency covers the cost of weekday workout classes for everyone.

Company leaders set the tone. Whether running in the J.P. Morgan Chase Corporate Challenge or the American Heart Association Heart Walk and Run, they lead by example.

—Travis Anderson

## Klein Steel Service

Klein Steel Service follows a formula for evaluating the company's wellness program. The checklist includes participation in activities, number of sick days taken, survey feedback, and insurance claims and premium costs.

Based on the healthy dip in Klein Steel's employee health care costs this year, wellness efforts appear to be paying off. Excellus BlueCross BlueShield reduced the firm's health care premiums 8.1 percent due, to a large extent, to Klein's 2015 wellness programming results, says Patrick DiLaura, chief talent officer.

"This is an unprecedented reduction seldom seen in any organization," he says.

Health fairs held once or twice a year have spurred a significant increase in interest and involvement in wellness activities. Employees receive health screenings and explore the range of offerings in Klein Steel's wellness program, including lunch-and-learn events, Zumba classes, weight loss clinics, blood drives and flu shot clinics.

Klein Steel, a Wealth of Health Rookie of the Year finalist, finds ways for employees to stay sharp and have fun. It holds truck rodeos for company tractor-trailer drivers to test their skills around traffic cones on a private drive. Employees volunteer to tutor in Rochester city schools and hold clothing drives. The company pays for summer events, such as picnics or amusement park outings. Klein Steel executives are the chefs at cookouts for employees in the summer and fall.

Walking paths around the Klein Steel warehouse are being mapped to promote team competitions; Fitbits will be provided. Chair massages were offered twice this spring and will become a quarterly event.

A major annual event on the wellness calendar is Klein Steel Memorial Day.



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

**At Klein Steel Service, wellness includes an employee memorial, in background.**

Four organizations have been named finalists for Rookie of the Year honors.

This is the first year of participation for these employers. Three of the finalists—Klein Steel Service Inc., St. John's and Trillium Health—were named finalists in other categories as well, and their profiles appear elsewhere in this section.

The fourth, Coordinated Care Services Inc., employs 309 people, 155 of them in Rochester. It provides management services and technical assistance to behavioral health, social and human service departments, state agencies and community organizations across the state.

In 2015, CCSI launched an eight-week mindfulness-based stress reduction course for employees. Participants received two hours of work time per week for professional development. Tests of perceived stress and mindfulness—given at the last session and six months after the course's completion—

showed stress declined an average of six points and mindfulness increased three points. Eighty-three percent of the eight participants continued the practice at home, and all of the participants indicated they would recommend the course. Twelve employees participated in a second session in March.

CCSI's three-year strategic plan includes an objective to support staff health and wellness; a core operating principle is individualized work/life integration. An employee engagement committee made up of managers and staff creates wellness activities based on staff suggestions.

The company also gives each new employee a FitBit with goals for tracking steps, miles and calories burned. Lunch seminars, health articles on the company intranet and Chase Corporate Challenge participation round out the company's offerings.

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In June, employees gather to remember and celebrate the lives of deceased Klein Steel co-workers. The ceremony takes place at a memorial built by Klein Steel employees and dedicated in 2010 after an employee died in a boating accident.

"This project helped us all heal as a family by working together to recognize and memorialize our lost team member," DiLaura says. "But it also helped us establish a new tradition that allows us to recognize the importance of every team member."

—Richard Zitron

## Lawley Insurance

Those who work at Lawley Insurance don't view health and wellness opportunities as a fleeting fad but as an expectation that has a permanent position in the workplace.

Lawley Insurance employees are always looking forward to new wellness campaigns and challenges. That's good news for company leaders, who make it a goal for staff members to learn about their health and possible health risks using survey data and biometric screenings. The ultimate goal is to reduce health risks.

The emphasis on health and wellness is evident to anyone who walks through the office of the Rochester-based firm. From fruit-infused water dispensers to employees balancing on fitness balls rather than sitting in desk chairs, the healthful attitude is pervasive. In fact, during an event called Lawley Olympics, employees played Wii Olympics in the midst of the workday.

"The idea of work wellness isn't new to our associates," says Carly Kennedy, wellness and health management specialist. "We are able to take time out of our day to participate in a wellness challenge or initiative."

Every year, Lawley Insurance offers a comprehensive 36-panel biometric screening and health assessment to employees. Biometric data is used to tailor wellness initiatives and campaigns to meet the needs of staff members.

"Our associates and their spouses look forward to this event each year, and we have turned it into a fun occasion," Kennedy says. "We order a healthy breakfast for participants and give out Lawley Strong towels, mugs, lunch bags and T-shirts. If we get 80 percent participation in the screenings, we close early one day in the summer."

In addition to these screenings, the company launched Rally, a virtual wellness portal where employees take a health survey and receive a number that estimates their health age. Fitbits are given as an incentive to complete the survey.

The Rally system provides missions and challenges, including personalized tasks or mini-challenges, such as walking 5,000 steps each day, practicing gratefulness and getting eight hours of sleep each night.

"The Fitbits have encouraged and motivated people to walk a lot more," Kennedy says.

Once programs or campaigns end, many associates still make time to participate on their own. For example, after Lawley's 60-day weight loss challenge concluded, a group of motivated employees remained active in Weight Watchers together. Likewise, dedicated team members continued to take walks during lunch after a walking challenge wrapped up.

One of the keys to Lawley's success: the full support of the executive team.

"The owners and senior leaders believe in the wellness program and sincerely care about our associates' health and well-being," Kennedy says, "and our associates know that."

—Travis Anderson



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

**Healthy living is an expectation, not a fad, at Lawley Insurance.**



## Trillium Health

Trillium Health employees have been quick to embrace a new healthy-lifestyle program created through a partnership with UR Medicine's Center for Employee Wellness.

"Engagement and participation is excellent," says Vicki Charles, Trillium Health's vice president for human resources. "We have exceeded participation goals in one intervention program and have interest in the others that lead us to believe that we are on track to reaching or exceeding most if not all of our other intervention program goals. We believe this is a testament to the commitment of senior leaders, as well as the ongoing promotion and support that we provide internally."

A UR team of doctors, nurse practitioners, social workers, registered nurses, dietitians, counselors and fitness coaches developed a broad range of group and individual intervention programs that address lifestyle changes and chronic health issues.

Trillium Health, a Wealth of Health Rookie of the Year finalist, uses gift cards for healthy food as an incentive for employees to take biometric and personal health assessments. Those who complete two assessments also are eligible for a drawing for a health-related prize, typically a Fitbit. Demand for the screenings has been so high that additional sessions have had to be scheduled.

If they want, employees can work at standup desks located in several areas of Trillium's offices on Monroe Avenue in the city, as well as in the agency's Finger Lakes locations in Geneva and Bath. Wrist and mousepad gel supports are available to reduce the risk of repetitive movement injuries from regular computer use. Water coolers and hand sanitizers are located throughout the building.

A 10-week yoga program brought six to 12 participants to each class, while two lunchtime sessions on simple stretches to stave off repetitive motion injuries drew 10 or more employees each time. A dedicated group of employees regularly works out with weights and exercise balls during lunch hour.

Participation in a weekly step challenge has grown from six employees to more than 20. The person with the most steps each week receives \$1 scratch-off lottery tickets. "This has built camaraderie and has encouraged several staff to purchase step trackers as they hear about and see the fun people are having—with no pressure to do more than each person

can do," Charles says.

Trillium Health's roots go back nearly 30 years. A 2010 merger of AIDS Rochester and AIDS Community Health Center, it became Trillium Health in 2013 when the organization expanded services to include people not living with HIV/AIDS.

—Richard Zitrin



## Canandaigua National Bank & Trust

The numbers told the story: When the Canandaigua National Bank & Trust Co. wellness committee reviewed results of employee biometric screenings, it was clear that too many employees were

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Yoga is an essential part of the wellness program at Trillium Health.



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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Canandaigua National Bank & Trust staff are becoming more active.

## WEALTH OF HEALTH

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struggling with too much weight.

Bank officials are taking steps to address the poundage problem, including partnering with the YMCA to offer membership discounts.

Sixty-nine Canandaigua National employees participated last year in the bank's initial Beat the Holiday Blues Challenge, shedding a collective 450 pounds over an eight-week period from late October to late December. Participants paid \$20 entry fees, which were given to challenge winners. The top five winners also received gift cards.

"The best thing about this event wasn't the actual competition, but the sharing of non-scale victories and the relationship building," says Michelle Pedzich, Canandaigua National senior vice president for human resources.

Thirty-eight employees also took on the 12 Weeks of Health Fitness Challenge. Together they dropped 115 pounds. Two-thirds lost body fat, while 59 percent gained muscle mass.

Canandaigua National's wellness committee also partially subsidized two on-site Weight Watchers programs that helped participants lose nearly 300 pounds.

Six yoga sessions held at the bank's Canandaigua and Bushnell's Basin locations each drew 12 to 16 employees. Thirty people attended classes that use rubber balls to relieve tension, joint pain and stress.

Blood pressure machines and scales are now in place at the Canandaigua and Bushnell's Basin offices. Blood pressure machine readings total 220 per month.

CNB's wellness efforts range widely: classes on personal finances and CPR,

nutritional events such as the Souper Bowl soup and chili exchange, a Facebook page, screensaver messaging on workplace computers, monthly news blasts and wellness reports at CNB's annual employee meeting.

The company honors a Wellness Warrior each quarter with a gift card and a pair of "golden sneakers" until the next quarter's honoree is selected.

CNB has increased its wellness budget by more than 50 percent. Roughly 75 percent of employees participated in some wellness-related activities last year, up from 50 percent the year before.

"We have seen participation in our wellness activities increase and our employees become healthier and more satisfied on the job," Pedzich says.

—Richard Zitrin

## ESL Federal Credit Union

The painstaking efforts by ESL Federal Credit Union to be more responsive to the health and well-being of its employees are paying off in easily quantifiable ways. Among the evidence: The number of emergency room visits by employees plummeted from 216 in 2010 to 87 in 2014.

Excellus supports ESL by providing the aggregate data it needs to implement thoughtful wellness program initiatives. "We regularly analyze claims and utilization data and have measured significant positive trends during recent years," says Lisa McLaughlin, ESL's Total Rewards manager. "It is clear that the communication and education efforts from the wellness program team and Excellus on (topics such as) urgent care options and being better health consumers has helped to reduce the number of emergency room visits and helped employees make better decisions as to whether



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Fitness classes are popular at ESL Federal Credit Union.

they need to visit the emergency room."

ESL's main wellness goals include educating employees about important health care issues in an effort to minimize double-digit medical premium hikes, increase employee productivity and job satisfaction, and achieve high rates of engagement and participation.

"We have been able to increase and analyze employee participation levels on our annual events and newly targeted programs over the last several years," McLaughlin says. "It is important to know that our efforts are making a difference. We are very proud that we have maintained the employee medical cost share for three years now—zero percent increase!"

For three years, ESL has paid for biometric screening for all employees through

Optum Health. Employees complete a 36-panel fasting blood draw and health risk assessment and receive a comprehensive report with resources. More than 75 percent of ESL employees take part in this program, and the credit union has expanded it to employees' partners as well. ESL receives an annual aggregate report, which establishes a comprehensive baseline for analysis and comparisons in the future. By participating, staff members receive a discount on health care premiums.

ESL offers dozens of wellness activities for employees and their families. A hydration challenge increased awareness of the health benefits of water consumption by encouraging employees to drink eight to 10 glasses of water each day. More than 450 employees participated in the two-week challenge.

In addition to Healthy Rewards through Excellus, ESL offers creative giveaways and prizes to participants.

"We are committed to minimizing employee health risks and managing group health care costs by continually offering opportunities like these," McLaughlin says.

—Travis Anderson

## Goodwill of the Finger Lakes &amp; ABVI

Given the escalating cost of health insurance, it's easy to understand the excitement at Goodwill of the Finger Lakes & ABVI, where monthly health insurance plan costs per contract have decreased by more than 48 percent over five years.

By encouraging employees to pay attention to their health choices, Goodwill/ABVI has seen a dramatic change in many of the significant health statistics the organization closely follows, says Carrie Abbott, learning manager.

In 2010, for example, employees filled 75 percent of prescriptions with generic drugs. In 2015, that number had increased to 90 percent.

Efforts to boost wellness are paying off in other respects too. Since 2010, the average body-mass index of employees participating in biometric screenings has dropped from 30.9 to 29.3, the number of tobacco users plummeted from 17 percent to 5 percent, and the ranks of employees deemed at risk for a heart attack during the next decade fell from 27 percent to 17 percent. Emergency-room use also has fallen.

Agency officials credit the Good Health wellness program for these success stories. Lunch-and-learns offer ad-

Continued on next page

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Employee biometrics have improved greatly at Goodwill of the Finger Lakes/ABVI.





Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

**Wellness leaders at Regional Transit Service focus on bringing fun into healthy activities for employees.**

Continued from previous page

vice about reducing debt and planning for retirement, inspirational speakers are invited in and time allotted for art therapy.

Like a growing number of employers, Goodwill/ABVI seeks to bolster mental well-being. During its annual Gratitude Challenge, employees document what they are thankful for five days a week for a month. Participants write what they are thankful for on sticky notes placed on gratitude trees throughout the workplace.

Wellness participants are eligible for a \$600 contribution toward their employer-provided health insurance and earn an additional paid day off from work. Participation in the Good Health program is on the rise. From 2012 to 2015, the number of employees who completed the program and received a monetary incentive grew 38 percent. From 2013 to 2015, the number of employees earning a paid day off increased 50 percent.

Goodwill/ABVI educates employees about healthy choices in a fun and engaging way, Abbott says. "Most importantly, there is a concerted effort being made to support employee efforts to live longer, happier lives."

—Travis Anderson

## Regional Transit Service

Socialization and friendly, healthy competition fuel the drive for healthy lifestyles at Regional Transit Service.

"We focus on finding the fun in things," RTS wellness and benefits manager Renee Elwood says. "Our goal is to move the focus from making healthy choices something you have to work at to being part of your normal life."

Wellness Wednesdays at RTS revolve around fun with activities such as bean bag toss, ladderball and the flying disc game KanJam. Group fitness classes in the RTS gym at the company's offices and garage on East Main Street average around 100 exercisers a month, an increase over the previous year. Walks down the street to the Rochester Public Market in the summer draw an average of 20 employees each trip.

RTS has invested more in its wellness program by recently hiring a part-time wellness and fitness specialist. Participation and fitness center memberships have increased in the last year. "Having an additional wellness position is allowing us to offer more programming and support to our regional properties in the surrounding counties," Elwood says.

Vending machines all offer healthy options, as do catered events and meetings.

"It's become normal to always have a salad at a pizza party or fruit to go with the bagels in the morning," Elwood says. "Employees incorporate the healthy offering into meetings or events without it being a requirement. That is a huge improvement to workplace culture."

The wellness program and healthy lifestyle choices are promoted through posters and flyers, email blasts, paycheck attachments and occasional home mailings. A dedicated wellness page on the RTS intranet features recipes and activities.

The RTS employee survey consistently reflects engaged support of the Healthy U Wellness Program, Elwood says. When participation began to dwindle for Weight Watchers at Work, the wellness team worked with employees to create their own version of a weight management program with a strong support network component. The team evaluated a program and found a free alternative for employees that they have been happy with, she says.

"The wellness program has fostered a sense of community at RTS," Elwood says. "Employees support one another with whatever health-related journey someone is on, from smoking cessation to training for a first half-marathon to learning to eat vegetables. It's become more organic—you see people reach out to one another on their own."

—Richard Zitrin



## Monroe County

Monroe in Motion, the wellness program for Monroe County employees, focuses on four things: mental, physical and financial awareness and being prepared, Janice Toland says.

Toland is the county's former wellness coordinator and chairwoman of the Monroe in Motion committee, which directs the wellness program.

The county is no newcomer to wellness programming. Monroe in Motion was a 2008 and 2012 Wealth of Health honoree. Education is an essential component of its efforts.

"Each quarter a different theme is highlighted, using newsletters, flyers and activities to bring about awareness," Toland says.

A quarterly newsletter suggests exercise programs and other health-boosting activities.

"The county has focused on stress re-

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Photo by Kimberly McKinzie  
Monroe County's employee wellness committee reaches out with activities, promotions and health fairs.

## WEALTH OF HEALTH

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duction and encouraged the use of our employee assistance program to help employees during difficult times of their lives," Toland says.

Monroe in Motion also helps staff prepare for what she calls "life in general."

"We're supplying them information based on topics that employees might request information on," Toland says. "That may be smoking cessation programs or weight loss programs, things of that nature."

In addition, the financial services company that provides the county's retirement plans writes articles on financial subjects for the county newsletter and is available to help employees.

"A financial planner visits many of our worksites on a monthly basis to

meet with employees individually or in groups," Toland says.

County employees can also enjoy a bit of fun while learning about or engaging in healthy pursuits. Recharge Your Life was held for the first time at three county worksites last October. Spanning several days, the event included free flu shots, healthy food samples, exercise demos, chair massages, financial planning and other activities. About 400 employees attended, and organizers are planning to make it annual.

Rochester WellFest, another annual Monroe in Motion health-oriented event, is open to the public. The festival drew 879 employees downtown last September, Toland says. County employees vied for prizes at both events.

Wellness measures seem to be helping. A 2014 study of employees who have coronary artery disease found that 59 percent had lowered their LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, levels—a 28 percent increase over the previous year.

—Mike Costanza

## Rochester Institute of Technology

Rochester Institute of Technology's Better Me program steps far away from traditional paths to employee wellness.

"We take a personalized approach to helping folks facilitate behavior change, creating healthy behaviors that lead to a work/life balance," says Michael Stojkovic, the university's director of wellness.

RIT highlights the importance of employee wellness right off the bat with new hires, who receive information on Better Me during their orientations. Both new employees and those long on the payroll can sit down with program staff to explore health goals.

"I have three full-time wellness coaches and two part-time health fitness specialists," Stojkovic says. "They provide that personalized coaching and guidance for faculty and staff across the university."

While other wellness programs might involve batteries of tests and boiler-plate solutions, Better Me helps its charges develop goals that better fit their personal needs.

"The process really needs to focus on helping the person make behavior change," Stojkovic says.

The goals also need to be practical. Instead of encouraging an employee to spend an hour on a treadmill every evening, a coach might suggest that the person reach his or her goal by walking 250 steps an hour.

At the same time, Better Me's staff

Continued on next page

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**ROCHESTER  
REGIONAL HEALTH**



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie  
People who work at Rochester Institute of Technology can check biometric data at health kiosks around campus.



Continued from previous page

guides employees toward taking responsibility for their own health—and toward measures that could save them from chronic medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease and type II diabetes. An overweight janitor who wants to shed pounds but gets plenty of exercise by working two jobs might be encouraged to make changes in his eating.

"I'm going to encourage them to try to get more sleep, to eat a cleaner diet—more fruits and vegetables, water, those types of things—really focusing on the person and what they're involved with each day," Stojkovic explains.

"Better Me includes fun events, like wellness challenges, mindfulness training, cooking classes, as well as employee support groups to focus on the whole person," he says.

To that end, anyone who works for the university can check blood pressure, heart rate, body mass index and numbers at health kiosks on campus.

"We have these available ... so people can manage what they monitor and monitor what they manage," he says.

In keeping with a focus on personal responsibility, Better Me does not reward employees for health improvements but does give some incentives for taking part. Staff members seem to be responding.

"More than 1,000 employees regularly exercise on campus each month in one of our facilities, and employee tobacco use continues to trend down," Stojkovic says.

—Mike Costanza

## St. John's

St. John's gives employee wellness its own special touch.

"We are unique in that we are very proactive, rather than reactive," says employee wellness nurse Linda Double R.N., who heads St. John's program. "We are tracking people according to their health risks."

Tracking starts with regular biometric screenings for employees. Those who take part in screenings reduce their health insurance costs.

"We are able to see what the top needs are. Oftentimes it's hypertension, diabetes, and so those are the areas that we tend to focus on," Double says.

With that information in hand, Double and her co-workers talk to employees about steps they can take to address the health issues that have surfaced.

"It might be dietary, it might be exercise, it might be follow-up with their physician," she says. "It might be medication."

Those on the payroll who want to ex-

ercise can head to St. John's Home on Highland Avenue. The employee fitness center features spaces for group exercise classes and a room full of treadmills, exercise bikes and free weights.

"For every hour and a half that an employee works out, we give them one St. John's Buck, which is basically money they can use within the facility," Double says. "They may use it for the cafeteria, ... for the gift shop."

Those who prefer other forms of exercise can swim in the pool or walk the trails at St. John's Meadows, a sister senior living community on Elmwood Avenue.

Employees who are experiencing emotional difficulties can turn to the wellness program at St. John's for assistance. Double and her co-workers provide limited one-on-one counseling.

"If you have somebody who needs to have some direction as far as anxiety, or things like that, we talk about breathing, we talk about step-by-step getting through the process that causes anxiety, we talk about medication, we talk about dietary," Double says.

They also refer individuals to the institution's employee assistance program.

The home's human resources department offers brief courses on financial topics. "Insurance 101," for example, covers health plans.

The St. John's wellness program seems to be catching on with staff members. Roughly 80 of them use the fitness center, up from 50 at the end of 2015. In part for that reason, St. John's was named a finalist in Wealth of Health's new Rookie of the Year category.

—Mike Costanza



## CooperVision

Fresh on the heels of last year's successful eight-week Mission Slimpossible event, CooperVision is offering employees a chance to maintain their momentum by participating in this year's version, Mission Stillpossible.

"The response to last year's program was overwhelming," says Leanne Fisher, global wellness manager for CooperVision. "We had 33 percent of our workforce—353 employees—take part. More than 600 pounds were lost with an average body fat percentage drop of 3.2 percent. We shared our success with Cooper locations around the globe at our annual wellness summit in Napa Valley in May and some of our colleagues around the world will be deploying this program



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

CooperVision encourages staffers to get healthy with activities and coaches who inspire.

with their employees."

With high enthusiasm and inspiring results, it's easy to see why CooperVision is offering another version of the program this summer. Still, the program is just one of the company's successful health and wellness initiatives. The company also puts a significant emphasis on mental well-being, offering a stress-management initiative.

The idea came about after health screenings the previous year revealed that a large percentage of locally based CooperVision employees were pre-hypertensive.

"Doing activities that help manage stress can make a long-term difference in lowering blood pressure," Fisher says. "Between the three Rochester-area sites, a representative from MVP delivered over 20 stress management classes during July, reaching more than 200 employees."

Employees also received chair mas-

sages to help relieve stress and a stress management tool kit. Each kit offered information about important topics related to managing stress. The following month, Fisher says, "we created 'stress blurbs' from this toolkit to share with employees. These stress-management reminders were intended to help our employees keep an eye on their stress levels and maintain a healthy work-life balance."

Last fall, CooperVision implemented its first stress management challenge to put newly learned practices into action. For nearly a month, a company fitness trainer led a Time-for-Me Stress Management Challenge, encouraging employees by sending weekly e-mails and asking participants to write on posters what activities they were enjoying with their newly discovered Time-for-Me. The challenge provided CooperVision

Continued on page 22



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Employees have added a kick to their step, thanks to a healthy focus at St. John's.



# R·I·T

## Better Me @ RIT

Finalist—Employer of the Year  
Wealth of Health Award

Rochester Institute of Technology promotes the health and well-being of faculty and staff through the Better Me wellness initiative. Better Me has evolved into a comprehensive array of programs and services that inspires individuals to obtain optimal health.

"Just a quick note to let you know that I have accomplished another of my goals and to thank you all for your help in getting there. I completed the Rochester Half Marathon this weekend! I can't believe where I was two years ago and where I am today. It took dropping 75 pounds, lots of personal training, hours of spinning and a great start to my running program."

—Staff Member

"...Thank you for your help and support for me to meet my goal. I appreciate everything you do to help our RIT family become stronger and healthier."

—Staff Member

[www.rit.edu/betterme](http://www.rit.edu/betterme)



# Finalists for best wellness event get creative



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie  
Since tobacco was banned on Monroe Community College's campus in 2014, other wellness initiatives have taken root and spread with the support of senior leaders.

Four organizations have been named finalists for Best Company Group Wellness Event honors.

Three of the finalists were named finalists in other categories as well:

**CooperVision's Mission Slimpossible** – Led by wellness champions, the eight-week challenge involved exercise, meditation and relaxation, a book club, nutrition activities and a focus on humor.

**SMP's Fakeout Food Challenge** – To reduce processed food consumption, the event combined health education, personal goal-setting and a book club.

**The University of Rochester's Farmers Market** – Now in its third season, the market connects university employees and local farmers. Staff dietitians offer recipes and healthy samples.

Details about their events appear in their profiles elsewhere in this section.

The fourth finalist, Monroe Community College, became a tobacco-free campus in 2014. Last year, MCC was recognized with the highest levels of distinction by the U.S. surgeon general and the state.

More than 200 faculty, staff and students participated in the development of the tobacco-free policy. Involvement in wellness promotion continues through employee and student orientation, divisional events, flu shot clinics and a variety of fairs and expos.

The campaign's success spurred greater resources and support from college leaders. The president's assistant for strategic initiatives is now the wellness council chair. With a higher profile and the support of senior administration, the council is partnering with more campus groups and outside organizations to promote employee health.

## WEALTH OF HEALTH

Continued from page 21

management with a new way to help employees manage stress by asking participants to take 15 minutes of time for themselves every day for four weeks.

"When going about their busy days, employees often forget to take care of themselves," Fisher says. "By carving out 15 minutes of time a day devoted to themselves, employees found that their days became a little more settled and provided a reprieve from the busyness of life."

At the end of the challenge, successful finishers reported they enjoyed their days more and could feel their stress dissipate.

—Travis Anderson

## Rochester Regional Health

While other local businesses offer incentives or disincentives to help encourage employees to change their health and wellness behaviors, Rochester Regional Health is taking a markedly different approach.

"We are beginning to move away from incentives and penalties because we feel that neither are helping employees sustain healthy behavior," says Bridget Hallman, employee wellness specialist. "Rather, we plan to engage our employees through implementing health theories and models that give employ-



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie  
The University of Rochester offers employees many ways to become and stay fit, including facilities and classes.

ees autonomy, social opportunities and a higher purpose so that we can build a culture of health at Rochester Regional."

Besides improving employee health, Rochester Regional leaders want to improve productivity and curb the costs of employee health insurance, worker replacement, disability and absenteeism. And they want the wellness program to be a successful model for other health care institutions.

"We take a holistic approach to employee well-being by addressing the importance of culture in the workplace and its influence on employees' health," Hallman says. She is joined on staff by an employee fitness center director and a staff of exercise physiologists.

One example of this holistic approach is last spring's first Rochester Regional Health Eat Well, Live Well Challenge. More than 1,100 employees took part; nearly 10 percent of them served in leadership roles, providing advice and encouragement to their colleagues. During this challenge, an incredible 450 million steps were taken and 200,000 cups of fruits and vegetables were consumed.

Rochester Regional Health, the region's second-largest employer, provides care in 150 locations, including five hospitals and more than 100 primary and specialty practices, rehabilitation centers and ambulatory campuses. Changing the culture in such a large organization is no small task.

"Our wellness visibility is not consis-

tent throughout the system," Hallman says. To remedy the problem, the health care system is expanding walking maps and healthy vending options at all of its locations, as well as take-the-stairs campaigns. It also plans to use one of its cafeterias as a pilot program for a comprehensive healthy eating campaign.

"Our ultimate goal is to address employee wellness through creating a culture of health from within," Hallman says. "We feel that delivering worksite wellness programs is not the only answer. It is also the transformation of attitudes among employees that aids the behavioral change needed to be healthy."

—Travis Anderson

## University of Rochester

New health and wellness initiatives come and go like the seasons, but one—the University of Rochester farmers market—appears to be here for good.

The market is one of many offerings from the university's Well-U program for UR's 27,000 employees.

Entering its third season, the market connects UR employees to fresh foods from local farmers. Each Wednesday afternoon from March to October, nearly 20 vendors gather in the Flaum Atrium at the medical center to offer seasonal produce, baked goods, spices and meats. Customers meet the vendors, sample their goods and receive nutrition and cooking tips. UR dietitians also serve

samples of healthy dishes and provide recipes to take home.

The amount of positive feedback Well-U has received about the farmers market has been impressive. "Each year, a survey has been given to the vendors who participate and the results have been extremely positive," says Rachel Carmen, who works in UR's human resources benefits office and manages the Well-U program. "The vendors' participation is profitable, and employees are visiting and purchasing local products. Well-U also receives positive feedback from employees who express their gratitude to have an on-site farmers market at work."

The enthusiasm for the farmers market has been tremendous. During its first season, the market was open for several months, but the level of support afforded by employees caused the second season to last even longer. "As we strive to be able to provide healthy choices for employees on a daily basis, the farmers market has given our employees the opportunity to make healthy choices in a convenient manner," Carmen says. "It has become a weekly ritual for employees, offering opportunities to purchase and learn about fresh, local foods."

The overwhelming success of the farmers market has allowed for other positive wellness behaviors to be highlighted on campus. For example, the market has increased visibility of University Food & Nutrition Services; its staffers attend on a weekly basis with samples and provide information about what they do. This, in turn, connects employees to healthy options in the medical center cafeteria.

Well-U has launched other lifestyle management programs for employees. These offerings include Physically Active You, an eight-week program that boosts cardiovascular and muscular fitness, strength and flexibility; a nine-week Become a Runner program, which became an immediate success in teaching participants how to train safely for a 5K; and Basics for Building a Healthy Lifestyle, a four-week program on monitoring diet and exercise and making health goals a priority.

—Travis Anderson

## Verizon Wireless

It's no accident that the number of Verizon Wireless employees taking part in at least one company-sponsored health

Continued on next page



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie  
Self-driven care is central to the wellness program at Rochester Regional Health.



# Supporters vie for Champion of the Year

Individuals selected as finalists for the new Health and Wellness Champion of the Year Award lead by example and, in some cases, see to it that wellness has a secure place in the company budget. Read on for raves by co-workers who nominated them.

## Kathy Roos

*Consumer lending specialist and member of the Health Sense wellness committee, Canandaigua National Bank*

Kathy Roos is a true warrior of wellness! She has committed to healthier eating habits and to a vigorous exercise program. These changes in her lifestyle have resulted in significant weight loss and a passion for exercising, and she has inspired many of her co-workers and her entire department to make healthier choices.

Kathy shares many of her morning smoothies and even brings in healthy lunches for co-workers. She eagerly shares her menu ideas with teammates and has made everyone more conscientious about eating healthier foods (and removing some of the many temptations from the department).

She gets employees to walk at lunch and holds one-minute exercise sessions for her department. It is not unusual to hear that they are doing wall sits or planks! Kathy participates in many of the local walks/runs such as the Chase Corporate Challenge and the Women's Foundation 5K Race and Walk. Further, she has gathered seven co-workers to participate in a fundraising bowling tournament and also organized a BubbleBall team.

Kathy has been the catalyst for increasing participation in our Weight Watchers program at our main office. Many of her co-workers and family members have also been inspired by her successes and have lost weight and

started exercising because of Kathy's known results. Employees have stated that they are less likely to bring in unhealthy snacks and are more focused on fruits and vegetables because of Kathy. We applaud her dedication to wellness!

## Brian Quinn

*Fitness trainer, CooperVision*

Brian Quinn is the heart and soul of the wellness program at CooperVision in Rochester. Employees from all three of the locations—Henrietta, Scottsville and Victor—know him and know that he will go out of his way to help individuals feel better and get healthier.

Brian organizes events and enthusiastically supports everything wellness related at CooperVision. With his personal training background and expertise, he excels at getting the most out of people in the gym or any area that is designated for exercise. However, Brian's passion for helping people extends far beyond the gym. He is a people magnet.

Employees are drawn to him because of his approachability, his openness and his nonjudgmental way of dealing with people and helping them to solve their problems. He recommends books, articles and videos and shares stories from his own life to help people better understand what they may be going through. His goal is always to help people help themselves, and he has an incredible way of connecting with people so that they find it within themselves to make behavioral changes.

The quality of our program has steadily increased due to Brian's commitment. He is keenly aware of how we need to change our program to keep it fresh and exciting for employees. He continuously engages people to participate in the overall program and, more impressively, strives to engage people who have not participated



Brian Quinn

in any wellness initiative in the past. In this way, our program is always gaining new members, and the reach that we have is constantly expanding.

It's an honor and privilege to be able to nominate this amazing person.

## James Watters

*Senior vice president of finance and administration and treasurer, Rochester Institute of Technology*

Jim is a prominent senior leader on campus. He is the reason that RIT has a successful, highly recognized employee wellness program that is truly making a difference in keeping our faculty and staff healthy.

Our program began in 2007. We approached Jim for a special budget to help with purchasing pedometers and having some related celebratory events. At the time he approved the budget, he indicated that this was not in itself a wellness strategy and that we ought to have one. Thus, RIT's Better Me program was born.

Over the years, Jim has approved adding significant resources to focus on employee wellness. We now have a professional wellness director, four full-time staff and several part-time instructors and credentialed fitness trainers supporting the employee wellness program, distinct from the resources that RIT already had in place for student wellness.

Jim has thrown his support behind adding biometric screenings with cash incentives, building a second campus fitness facility popular with faculty and staff, and arranging for an RIT institutional research professional to work with wellness staff to develop a metrics dashboard to measure the effectiveness of the Better Me program.

Jim is committed to technology and innovation, and Better Me staff explore

ways to use technology to encourage wellness. One example is our use of the high wellness platform and tracking stations, where participants monitor biometrics and earn points for wellness activities. With Jim's encouragement, we are developing a video series that provides quick, informative wellness topics to faculty and staff on the Better Me website.

Jim has increased funding so we can reduce or eliminate fees for fitness classes. He proves over and over that he deeply believes in the value that a robust worksite wellness program can deliver.

## Eric Rorapough

*Founder and president, SMP Corp.*

Eric is responsible for bringing the SMP Wellness Program to life. He invested in a full-time, dedicated wellness director as the 48th employee of SMP. This is a testament to the care he takes in treating employees well.

Prior to that, Eric had already laid the foundation for a healthy company. Lunchtime bike rides, Zumba classes and sponsorship of and participation in community-based fitness events and races were already traditions at SMP. With this healthy atmosphere already in place, the SMP wellness program was able to formalize and quickly become pivotal in the identity of SMP.

Eric continues to be essential in encouraging a healthy lifestyle and program participation. He sets an example through his midday workouts and by participating in SMP fitness challenges and community fitness events and races. Eric loves to see employees in the gym for a midday workout or heading out for a lunchtime run. He is a quiet voice that continually encourages employees to take care of themselves and engage in the program. Eric is the living example of SMP's identity as healthy organization.



James Watters



Eric Rorapough

Continued from previous page

and wellness activity has increased in the last four years from 58 to 83 percent.

"We work hard to form relationships with as many employees as we can," says Sarah Morgan, a health and well-

ness coordinator at the company's Henrietta location. "When the time comes for employees to make changes in their personal lives, they know they have access to someone they trust will help."

An employee whose job involves taking phone calls now has the opportunity to use the Flex2Fit program to alter his or her schedule and extend lunch to use the fitness center. Those taking advantage of Flex2Fit or who walk during breaks receive Calkins Coins, which can be used to buy a variety of items, including time to receive a chair massage.

In addition, a one-day fitness challenge has employees wearing workout clothes and competing for prizes by exercising throughout the day. An employee lounge is transformed into a miniature fitness center, and exercise equipment—including 10 spin bikes—is placed throughout the building. Twenty percent of employees participated in the annual event in 2015, and the event shows such promise that it is now held every month.

"We understand how daunting exercise can be, especially at work," Morgan says. "We strive to create a lighthearted atmosphere centered around trust, encouragement, camaraderie and fun."

Further plans include a quiet room that will offer aromatherapy, dim lights

and headsets with guided meditation. An onsite 5K is in the works, and employees will be encouraged to participate during a paid workday. They won't be on their own while preparing, as the company will offer Couch-to-5K training programs, group walks and runs and advice about proper footwear.

Verizon Wireless has done this work without a huge investment in additional staff. Its wellness team consists of one


full-time employee and a full-time contractor. The Rochester-area team works closely with 45 similar teams at Verizon Wireless locations throughout the country to share ideas and success stories. Positivity remains key to the efforts.

"We never make someone feel bad or guilty about the choices they make, but point out what they're doing right instead," Morgan says.

—Travis Anderson



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie  
Spin bikes are placed throughout Verizon Wireless' Henrietta building for fitness breaks.



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## DEL LAGO CASINO

Continued from page 1

"It's a beautiful resort that will bring people to the region," he said.

The project is creating 1,800 construction jobs and 1,800 permanent jobs. Developers estimate it will generate more than \$90 million annually for state and local governments.

Del Lago, which means "of the lake" in Italian, is being developed by Scottsville firm Wilmorite Management Group LLC and Peninsula Pacific, a Los Angeles-based investment manager.

Babinski was hired in May. He has more than 25 years of industry experience. Babinski, who now lives in Canandaigua, most recently managed all gaming and non-gaming departments for Tropicana Entertainment Inc.'s Lumiere Place Casino & Hotels in St. Louis. Prior to that, he was general manager and director of marketing at Boomtown Casino & Hotel in Reno, Nev.

A half-dozen other employees have been hired, including Juris Basens, senior vice president and assistant general manager. Key personnel roles will continue to be filled, followed by the hiring of some 480 people who will be trained to run the table games. Successful training will be required and should begin this fall, Babinski said.

Additional hiring to staff other parts of the casino and resort will take place from November through January, he said.

Among the offerings at del Lago will be 2,000 slot machines and 85 gaming tables, including 10 poker tables.

Among its food offerings will be Portico, an upscale Italian restaurant, and the Farmer's Market Buffet, featuring locally sourced produce, fruits, dairy products and meats.

An entertainment venue, the Vine, will serve as a separate bar area as well as a location for regional and national entertainment acts. Centrifugo is a bar/lounge area on the gaming floor.



Rendering courtesy of del Lago Resort & Casino  
The \$440 million del Lago Resort & Casino will boast a 425,000-square-foot building with a hotel, gaming operations, restaurants and bars, and a 2,500-seat entertainment venue.

The site also will feature Savor New York, a retail outlet where local vendors will bring the Finger Lakes region to del Lago patrons with local fruits, cheeses, baked goods, wines and beers, and other area specialties.

The resort was awarded a state casino license in December after a roughly two-year process for the developer that included seeking project approvals and facing litigation delays.

Del Lago was one of three casinos

granted licenses across the state—along with Rivers in Schenectady and Montreign Resort Casino in the Catskills. Since then, Tioga Downs in the Southern Tier has received preliminary approval from the state gaming commission for an expansion project that includes full gaming there.

State legislation passed in July 2013 called for up to four casinos in Upstate New York, with at least one—and no more than two—in the eastern Southern Tier, the Capital District and the

## Two dozen contractors on the job

The following contractors are working on the \$440 million del Lago Resort & Casino in Tyre, Seneca County:

Accurate Acoustical Inc., East Rochester; Ajay Glass Co., Canandaigua; Billitier Electric Inc., Rochester; BME Associates, Fairport; Buffalo Hotel Supply Co., Buffalo; Cives Steel Co., Gouverneur, St. Lawrence County; Crosby Brownlie Inc., Rochester; Davis-Ulmer Sprinkler Co. Inc., Rochester; E.G. Sackett Co. Inc., Rochester; Fisher Associates P.E. L.S. L.A. DPC, Henrietta; Foundation Design P.C., Rochester; GP Land & Carpet Corp., Brockport; Insley-McEnlee Equipment Co. Inc., Rochester; John W. Danforth Co., Tonawanda, Erie County; LeChase Construction Services LLC, Rochester; Manning Squires Hennig Co. Inc., Batavia, Genesee County; Martin Zombeck Construction Services LLC, Syracuse; McFarland Johnson, Binghamton; O'Connell Electric Co. Inc., Victor, Ontario County; Otis Elevator Co., Rochester; Pike Cos. Ltd., Rochester; Ramsey Constructors Inc., Lakeville, Livingston County; Titan Steel Corp., Kirkville, Onondaga County; and Welliver McGuire Inc., Montour Falls, Schuyler County.

## SSRN

Continued from page 1

worked out beautifully," CEO Gregg Gordon said. "We have an incredibly strong position in the social sciences that is one of the positions and the communities that they're looking to build. We have proven that we're a community, not just a depository of papers."

SSRN employs 70 people, including roughly 20 people in New York with the others spread across the country. All employees of SSRN will remain with the firm.

Financial details of the deal, which closed last month, were not disclosed.

SSRN was founded by Michael Jensen, Wayne Marr and a third individual in 1994. Gordon was involved with the company at the time, starting as its chief financial officer before investing in the firm. Jensen, SSRN's chairman, is one of the founding editors of the *Journal of Financial Economics*, which specializes in aggregating scholarly studies on a variety of aspects of the field.

Jensen is a professor of business administration emeritus at Harvard Business School. He joined the school in 1985. He was at the University of Rochester's Simon Business School from 1967 through 1988. Jensen played a key role in development of the use of stock options as compensation.

SSRN officials considered many firms before making the deal with Elsevier.

The deal had been in the works for a year.

"I began to realize I'm probably not going to be here forever, so it came upon me that I really needed to pay attention to find a long-term home status for SSRN to ensure its continued growth and survival," Jensen said. "Elsevier—they've always been terrific. They're changing their business model in some parts of the organization and (for) what they're doing there, SSRN is a perfect fit."

A major requirement of the deal was keeping SSRN's model—free content to submit and download—intact.

"The risk would be that some organization buys it and decides to charge a fortune for (what) we now give away for free; that would destroy the firm," Jensen said.

SSRN earns revenue from the more than 400 institutions that outsource the distribution of their research papers to SSRN through SSRN's Research Paper Series; subscription fees for SSRN's subject matter abstracting eJournals; fees received for professional and job announcements; conference fees for SSRN's Conference Management System; and from fees shared with SSRN by publishers who distribute their papers through SSRN on a pay-per-download basis.

Elsevier acquired Mendeley Inc. three years ago. Based in London, Mendeley is a free reference manager and a scholarly collaboration network, officials said. SSRN will be further developed alongside Mendeley.

"SSRN has established a solid network in social science domains, sharing working papers and showcasing researchers and institutions," said Jan Reichelt, co-founder and managing director of Mendeley, in a statement. "Together we can provide greater access to a growing user-generated content base on which we can build new tools and increase engagement between researchers and their papers. We intend to scale and maximize SSRN in ways that benefit authors, institutions and the entire scientific ecosystem."

Mendeley served as an ample case study for leaders at SSRN.

In three years, Mendeley's users have grown from 2.5 million to 5 million and its employee base has ballooned from 50 to 200 developers under Elsevier's watch.

The hope is that such growth will happen for SSRN in the next few years, its leaders said.

"It impacts Rochester in the sense that SSRN is now going to be way more important than it's been in the past," Jensen said. "I'm not saying it was unimportant—it was the leading organization of its type—but now it's going to be turbocharged, and Elsevier and Mendeley have the resources to invest in it. My own belief is it's going to strengthen the Rochester office."

"We've got lots of things to do and we're now going to have the resources to do them sooner."

Gordon said the industry has shifted,

Catskills/Hudson Valley area.

Selections were based in part on the number of jobs to be created, the amount of capital investment, revenue generated, and development and integration with regional tourism, state officials said.

Del Lago has faced opposition and litigation, largely from a citizens' group called Casino Free Tyre that has questioned the impact the project will have on the rural community. There have been roughly a half-dozen lawsuits related to the project since 2014 and one still pending.

Additional opposition has come from Turning Stone Casino Resort in Verona, Oneida County, run by the Oneida Indian Nation and from Delaware North Co. Inc., the owners of Finger Lakes Gaming & Racetrack in Farmington, Ontario County.

Proponents believe del Lago will bring thousands of jobs and millions of dollars to an economically depressed area and help jump-start additional development there. Town and county officials have shown support for the project.

Among the benefits of del Lago, they say, is a tax reduction for county residents. Tyre and Seneca County will each receive annual payments of \$6.5 million. In addition, an estimated \$30 million will be spent to market the Finger Lakes region and an estimated 34,000 annual visitors are projected to visit the region.

The opponents' concerns include increased traffic, noise and pollution and the effect the casino/resort would have on the rural community.

In addition to the on-site work, the developers are widening the portion of Route 414 that leads to the resort and are making additional infrastructure improvements on nearby roads, Babinski said. Plans are in the works to add another toll station at the Thruway interchange, he added.

Despite the opposition, Babinski said his focus is on getting del Lago off the ground.

"Our focus is on creating a venue that gives the best upstate has to offer," he said.

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heightening the need for a progressive company outlook.

With a larger focus on sharing their work, the community of researchers now can comment on papers and collaborate much more efficiently than in the past when authors often worked independently of their peers, he said. Today's industry allows for more data and more flexibility around its transfer.

"It's very easy for a company who is successful to rest on your laurels," he said. "It's very easy to say the world is not going to change; we've certainly seen examples of that around town. And here's a company (Elsevier) that is focused on 'what does it look like tomorrow?' It's a company that gets that it's changing."

"The more that we can make the scholar and the scientist successful, the more we can shorten the research life-cycle," he added.

The deal is a win for Monroe County as much as it is for global giant Elsevier, Gordon said.

"I think that we should all feel great about Rochester," he said. "This isn't SSRN or a little office on Monroe Avenue, this is about Rochester. Our staff is from Rochester, we've been here in Rochester, (and) we have the support of the community in so many different ways and forms."

"This to me is about Rochester being successful on a global stage. I think it's a great Rochester story," he added.

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