

## **Owning Your Own Health Committee**

**November 19, 2014**

Old Jail Conference Room

9:30 a.m.

Approved

Present: Mack Cook, Brooke Jobin (excused at 10:32 a.m.), Ken Foresti, Jackie Kippola, Don Barber Leslie Moscovitz (arrived at 9:38 a.m.), Bev Chin, Deanna Hoey, Public Health Educator for Cayuga County (via conference call)

### **Call to Order**

Mr. Cook called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m.

### **Cayuga County Wellness Program**

Mr. Foresti said he works with the Cayuga County Consortium and has invited Ms. Hoey to participate in the meeting via conference call to talk about that Consortium and its wellness initiatives. Ms. Hoey provided a brief overview of Cayuga County's Consortium which is made up of the County government, the Soil and Water Conservation District, and Cayuga Community College. She stated their wellness committee targets 800 employees between the County government and the S&WCD with its wellness activities and the College has its own group.

Ms. Hoey said she has chaired the Wellness Committee for the past three years. During the first year the Consortium funded the Committee with \$1,000 and they offered monthly health topics and tailored workshops and activities around those topics. Every year they have core topics that are covered every month and they have a guest speaker come in to give a presentation and they try to offer healthy lunches so employees can attend on their lunch time and it is not something they would need to do outside of work. They then started offering activities such as boot camp and Zumba, healthy cooking classes through Cooperative Extension, and have partnered with different fitness instructors in the area. They initially offered participation to employees at no charge and had a good response in terms of sign-ups; however, actual participation was not that great. It was concluded that if employees have a little financial investment in the activity they are more likely to participate. They now offer stipends to the fitness center and the center provides discounts based on volume. In year two they were able to expand the budget to \$5,000 and in the third year they expanded it to \$20,000. She said most of her time is provided as an in-kind service by the County; therefore, most of the funds go towards paying for providing lunches, paying the stipends for instructors to come in, and covering the costs of incentives to employees. It was noted that most of the employees are located in the within the same general area.

Ms. Moscovitz arrived at this time.

Mr. Barber asked if there has been success in getting highway department personnel to participate in the activities. Ms. Hoey spoke of the frustration they have had with regard to the recruitment of men in wellness activities. She said they have a very high percentage of female employees versus a very low percentage of male employees who participate. She said some of the issues relate to shift hours and a lack of interest. They are hoping to have more luck with the Blue4U program and where there would be an incentive-based plan where they could reward people for maintaining or improving their health. They just rolled-out their health screening program (includes a fasting blood draw) in November and they are continuing through the end of the month at different offices. She does not have any numbers yet on this program.

Ms. Hoey said they are offering a small incentive to get people to be screened. Their Consortium is offering a \$25 gift card for those who participate in the screening.

Ms. Moscovitz asked if there had been any pushback from unions about the Blue4U program. Ms. Hoey did not have information on this, however, Mr. Foresti said the Consortium presented it to the unions and it was viewed as an option with incentives attached and it didn't have any penalties and was received without any resistance to his knowledge. *He will follow-up and check on this further.*

Mr. Barber said since the College already had a wellness program he would be interested in hearing how the Consortium brought the other two entities to come to speed with the College. Ms. Hoey said she thinks the Consortium looked at how much was being paid out in claims for chronic diseases and the College has been able to sustain its program through its budget. Since she started in her position after the program began she couldn't answer with certainty but was told that Consortium's investment in wellness was a very small fraction of what was being paid out in claims. They are also looking at insurance claims and possible areas where there can be some intervention. For example, there was a lot of funds paid out for emergency room visits for back injuries and they are now focusing on assessing work stations for risk of repetitive strain injuries.

Mr. Barber asked what other venues to you use to connect with highway or Sheriff's Department employees. Ms. Hoey said annually they host an employee health fair that employees can attend throughout the workday on work time and are welcome to spend as much time as they would like. They do blood drives, flu clinics, and offer programs such as Weight Watchers. Through two sessions they have seen a total weight loss of over 2,000 pounds and offer a stipend for each employee to participate in the program as well as to attend the weekly weigh-ins. It is difficult for highway employees to attend activities because of their work schedules. Fitness activities always take place after hours. She said their Director of Human Resources is a member of the Wellness Committee and has been very supportive of the efforts. Their County Administrator is also very supportive and participates in some of the wellness activities. She has spoken to department heads and has educated them on the return on investment of wellness as employees will be more productive and will be using less sick days and has received good cooperation from department heads. They have had employees who have not been able to attend activities due to the need for office coverage so they now offer two sessions in the same day to accommodate those who have staggered lunch schedules.

Ms. Moscovitz asked if they have tried any e-health or webinar strategies. Ms. Hoey said the Wellness Committee has but they have not offered this type of thing to employees as a whole.

Mr. Barber asked if they have considered allowing dependents to participate in these programs. Ms. Hoey said they have not yet because the biggest issue would be related to management of that. She noted that participation in the wellness activities is not limited to only those employees who have Consortium insurance.

Ms. Chin asked how they have communicated with employees. Ms. Hoey said she was using paycheck stuffers but received negative feedback because people thought it was a waste of paper so they began doing e-mail blasts that goes to every County employee who has a County e-mail account but not every employee has an e-mail. She thinks it has to be a multi-faceted approach that would include e-mail, flyers, and a reliable staff person who can

disseminate information to the employees in their department who do not have e-mail. She offered to share copies of those e-mails if there is interest.

Ms. Hoey said she was recently informed they must now have signed waivers for employees who are participating in physical fitness activities. Ms. Kippola asked if they have had anyone injured during the fitness activities which led to a Worker's Compensation claims. Ms. Hoey said they have not had any injuries and this is why the attorneys wanted a signed waiver from each participant. Ms. Kippola said she isn't sure that a waiver would release the County from a Worker's Compensation claim. She spoke of a self-defense class that was held in Tompkins County years ago that resulted in a back injury that ended up as an expensive claim.

Ms. Hoey extended an offer for members to attend their wellness fair that will be held in May. She suggested the Committee to be creative and to reach out to the community and utilize assets such as interns, health and hospital staff, who would be willing to sessions at little or no charge.

Following the phone call, members made the following comments about the information Ms. Hoey presented:

- Ms. Hoey has a coordinating role in the organization;
- The culture at the top is very supportive of wellness activities;
- The Cayuga County program primarily includes Cayuga County and the GTCMHIC includes the County which already has many of the same programs but has many municipalities that are not geographically co-located;
- They appear to be moving towards an incentive-based program;
- Waivers discourage people from suing but rights for Worker's Compensation cannot be waived and there are rules regarding arriving and leaving work locations.

Mr. Foresti agreed to follow-up on the following items:

- Check on union response to screening program in Cayuga County;
- Provide Committee with information on what is involved with the different types of blood draws;
- Provide information on participation levels in biometric screening programs in Cayuga County;
- Provide information on how many members there are in the Cayuga County Consortium;
- Get language Cayuga County used to get buy in from the top; and
- Provide statistics on the number of people who participated in Cayuga County classes and whether they are the same people participating in programs

Ms. Moscovitz said in looking at statistics about chronic health disease in the United States there are some obvious strategies that work globally such as weight loss, smoking cessations, back injury prevention, and diabetes prevention. She thinks the bigger challenges are getting people to them, how to host them, and communication and infrastructure strategies. Mr. Cook said his conclusion from hearing the information is that it is not easy but it is possible to do this as it is being done by a fellow governmental entity and although they are not being

overly aggressive they are making progress. Mr. Barber said it is a long term plan and in order to get the return on investment you have to continue making the investment year after year.

### **Approval of Minutes of October 15, 2014**

It was MOVED by Ms. Chin, seconded by Ms. Jobin, and unanimously adopted by voice vote by members present, to approve the minutes of the October 15, 2014 meeting as submitted. MINUTES APPROVED.

### **Executive Director's Report**

Mr. Barber reported he is working with Ms. Masucci on putting together a report on the recent flu clinics and will present the information at the next meeting. He reported on the recertification process and said there has been at least one union that has requested the process cease and decist for their union members. Those employers that have been given that notice are working with their labor unions on this; the Consortium Board of Directors will likely be asked to consider an extension of the timeline. Other municipalities are continuing to move forward on the process and one has completed the process. Mr. Barber said there has also be interested expressed by several municipalities within Cortland County and the Village of Homer has indicated a willingness to join.

Ms. Jobin was excused at this time.

### **2015 Meeting Schedule**

The Committee will continue to meet the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of each month at 9:30 a.m. in the Old Jail Conference Room. Mr. Barber said members may need to stay flexible as he is working on getting attendance from other municipalities.

### **Next Agenda Items**

The following items were suggested for inclusion on the next agenda:

- Discussion of wellness programs - gaining support from the top and the return on investment which is relevant to municipalities and the Consortium;
- Biometric screening program and developing a process for responding to the two companies that conducted the pilot programs;
- Discussion of the role of the Consortium versus the role of the different employers with regard to wellness

Mr. Barber provided information on a program by Virgin Pulse on how to sustain healthy changes in employee behavior. He noted he is not advocating for the company but there is useful information in the document.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by Michelle Pottorff, Administrative Clerk

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October 15, 2014