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emails from a YMCA running coach.

In addition to a vast array of programs focusing on building healthy lifestyles, Well-U offers free fitness classes at eight locations, massage days twice a month at various sites and Weight Watchers at four locations. Therapy dogs visit university locations once or twice each month to mingle with animal lovers.

Incentives reward initiative, including \$125 for receiving a biometric screening and completing an online personal health assessment annually. Fitbits, café gift certificates and two-week memberships to the fitness center are among perks.

UR, the region's largest employer, fielded the most employees—505—in last year's JPMorgan Chase Corporate Challenge.

Verizon Wireless Inc.

Participation in Verizon Wireless' fitness program has grown, and company leaders are getting a good deal of the credit—particularly those so on board with the program that they're dressing up as fruits and vegetables.

Several associate directors in customer service have donned costumes to promote different events. Most recently, one dressed up as a watermelon slice and another as a pea pod to promote Heart Health week and kick off Verizon's American Heart Walk sign-up. This earned Verizon a Wealth of Health Special Recognition Award for Fun.

"Our employees love to see their leaders dressed up and encouraging healthy activities," says health and wellness coordinator Sarah Morgan. "Their support has been pivotal in our employee engagement success this year."

Overall wellness participation increased from 57.6 percent in 2012 to 61.2 percent in 2014, Morgan says.

"Getting our leadership to forward emails or mention a program during a morning meeting goes very far around here," she says.

At Verizon's call center and regional headquarters in Henrietta, Morgan heads a five-person health and wellness team that coordinates events and manages the fitness center, where staffers provide training and group exercise classes.

The company has invested in personnel with a minimum B.S. degree in exercise science or related field to staff its wellness efforts. The team includes a full-time employee, a full- and two part-time contractors and an intern. Most are certified personal trainers, exercise physiolo-

gists, and strength and conditioning specialists, and all are trained in ergonomics.

Three quarterly fitness challenges are held each year. Employees come to the office dressed in workout gear and earn points for every exercise they perform throughout the day. The employee and team with the highest point totals win a prize and a trophy.

Members of the staff at the Henrietta office also participate each year in Verizon's national fitness challenge. This year, a goal is to encourage Verizon's nearly 90,000 employees to go out of their way to do something nice for someone. So far, 2,816 Verizon employees nationally have logged 3,678 random acts of kindness. Verizon uses an online tracker to gather participation statistics in national fitness challenges and to award top participants with prizes such as fitness accessories and companywide recognition.

Prizes and incentives are the primary method of increasing participation in wellness programs and events. Public pats on the back also are liberally applied; the health and wellness team applauds employees' accomplishments through mass emails, closed-circuit TV, online and fliers.

"We're showcasing our employees' successes regularly," Morgan says. "It's nice to see employees congratulating each other and encouraging them as much as we do. This is part of the healthy culture we're trying to create."



Three companies will receive special recognition for efforts to promote wellness on the job. Jewish Senior Life, below, is being cited for creativity. The other two are finalists for Wealth of Health Awards: Verizon Wireless, left, earning kudos for fun, and Terphane Inc./Tredegar Corp., page 17, demonstrating innovation.

Jewish Senior Life

A fair number of the 1,100 people who work at Jewish Senior Life came to Rochester from non-English-speaking countries. So, as a part of its employee wellness program, the agency is lending extra support with English language classes and tutoring to help them adjust to life in a different country.

Since 2006, BOCES adult education instructor Ray Marks has been teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages at the Jewish Senior Life campus in



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

English-language and GED classes are part of wellness at Jewish Senior Life, where many employees are from non-English-speaking countries. Other offerings include exercise classes and healthy choices in the cafeteria.

Brighton. He has worked with nearly 70 employees in English, science and mathematics, preparing some for the GED exam. A quarter of the students have attained their educational goals, from passing the GED to completing requirements that lead to health career programs.

The program earns marks in creativity for using resources to help employees assimilate into a new culture, learn a new language and better care for the agency's population.

Jewish Senior Life offers other support services such as employee counseling, health coaching, smoking cessation coaching, wellness sessions, exercise classes and healthy choices on its employee cafeteria menu. A weekly farmers market on campus last summer was a huge hit, says Emy Giacalone, senior

vice president for human resources.

A concern for employee health is not only the right thing to do but also a strategic investment, she says.

"Health is our business, but even more it takes healthy individuals with a vast amount of stamina, enthusiasm and love to care for individuals in long-term care," she says. "Every day, our people see the results of healthy lives and unhealthy lives in the faces and bodies of our residents. We know firsthand about the long-term dangers of unhealthy choices or neglect of health issues over time."

"Our work can be physically and emotionally stressful. Taking the best possible care of ourselves is the only way we can continue to provide the best care to others."

Richard Zitirin is a Rochester-area freelance writer.



Photo by Kimberly McKinzie

Leadership support for wellness is evident at Verizon Wireless. Managers promote activities by mentioning them in meetings, sending emails—even donning fruit and vegetable costumes.

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