

Good Eats for Every Body

Rochester's Mark!t and Eastwood Bank use Statewide Health Improvement Program for exercise and nutrition changes.

"Nutrition applies to everyone," says **Jacque Hahn. She and the other 10 employees at Mark!t in Rochester do not smoke and quite a few people already regularly exercise—but everybody eats.** So eating better became the main focus for the marketing firm's wellness efforts. For its wellness program, Rochester-based Eastwood Bank, which has long hosted weight-loss programs, emphasized healthy eating and added increasing activity among employees.

These two businesses are among 11 in Olmsted County that received worksite wellness grants from the Statewide Health Improvement Program. SHIP encourages healthier habits at worksites throughout Minnesota—and among more than 2,700 people in Olmsted County alone.

Improvements advocated by SHIP are important because, in the United States, preventable chronic diseases account for about 75 cents of every dollar spent on health care, according to a *Kaiser Health News* piece by Kenneth Thorpe, executive director of the Partnership to Fight Chronic Disease, and Jonathan Lever, vice president for health strategy and innovation at the YMCA of the USA. Moreover, about 80 percent of heart disease and type-2 diabetes and 40 percent of cancers could be prevented by doing three things: exercising more, eating better and avoiding tobacco, say Centers for Disease Control and Prevention experts.

As employees at Mark!t and Eastwood Bank have found, preventing chronic disease can be tasty, tailored

to individuals, and even fun. Healthy potluck contests, with rules about allowable amounts of fat, sodium and carbohydrates, were held at each of Eastwood Bank's 11 locations. Favorite recipes were forwarded to the wellness committee for a taste test—and the winning taco soup maker received a \$100 gift card. "Because people became so excited about this," says Joleen Mittelstadt, human resource officer, "we're taking the recipes and making a cookbook."

Mark!t switched to healthy snacks in the office and using SHIP funds matched by employee contributions, hired a licensed dietitian to advise individuals. The meal plan the dietitian created for a man concerned he's too thin differs from how she advised Tammy Hester, who wanted to avoid that starving feeling before dinnertime. Hester says that, given all the claims on grocery items, "I really wondered what a healthy snack was." Now she knows how to read nutrition labels. And Hahn, following the dietitian's guidance, ate better and saw results: her cholesterol dipped below 200 for the first time in years.

Moving more is key to health, too. At Eastwood, some employees have been doing yoga at work for about three years. With help from SHIP, they've extended that fitness commitment to other activities that interest employees, such as body sculpting. Through the local health club, the wellness committee tried a dance-based fitness routine, too.

"We have some guys on our wellness committee," Mittelstadt says, "and to see them do Zumba was so much fun." ●



Eastwood Bank Wellness Committee members pose for a picture in their yoga space.