

Healthy living

Botsford leads with wellness program

BY DIANE GALE ANDREASBI
SPECIAL WRITER

Lu Stockton has walked 500 miles and lost 12 pounds and 10 inches since last year when Botsford Hospital initiated the Fast Trackers, part of an employee health program.

The Canton resident credits Botsford's Employee Wellness Program incentives for improving her health in general. "I've always been up and down with my weight and my cholesterol sometimes runs high," explained Stockton, Botsford Rehabilitation assistant program coordinator. Physical activity is the only way she can control her cholesterol level, which has dropped 40 points in six months.

Every six months the hospital also offers Stockton and other employees a health screening and risk appraisal, as well as free programs and discounts on health clubs and fitness classes outside the hospital.

"It has encouraged me to keep up with exercising and try different programs," said Stockton, 45. She also recently joined the Canton Summit on the Park community center's fitness program and is reimbursed by Botsford for some of these costs.

Hospital employees are also paid portions of membership costs in weight loss programs, like Weight Watchers.

Stockton is encouraged, too, by other people in the program who have been successful. For instance, Sue Brownell, hospital pharmaceutical supervisor, has walked 1,200 miles, which is the equivalent of traveling the perimeter of Michigan's lower peninsula.

"I'm definitely more fit and firmer," Brownell said. "I'm taking up weight lifting and I'm definitely stronger. You've got more energy and more resilience. I'm hardly ever sick and I very seldom get a cold. It improves the quality of life."

Each time the Fast Trackers reach a milestone, they're awarded gifts from Botsford like T-shirts, flashlights and walking

tapes. Employees who reach the 1,200 mile mark are given a \$25 gift certificate to a store that sells athletic shoes. Stockton's goal is to reach 1,200 miles.

Stockton and Brownell are among more than 1,000 Botsford employees who have gotten involved in Botsford's Employee Health and Wellness Programs that was initiated in January 1998. Botsford has 2,500 employees.

In fact, Botsford was recently awarded the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness Health and Sports rookie of the year, which was launched to honor work places that make an effort to get residents statewide moving and physically fit.

The goal is to combat statistics that show adults in Michigan are among the most obese and inactive in the country.

"The companies that have put on these programs are successful," according to Debby Orloff-Davidson, Botsford facilitator for the employee wellness committee. "For every dollar they spend on the program, the health care costs go down by \$3 over time if the programs are well developed."

Botsford has been involved since the early '80s in developing programs focusing on helping people stay healthy in the community and going to work sites.

The Employee Wellness Program is made up of representatives from all hospital departments.

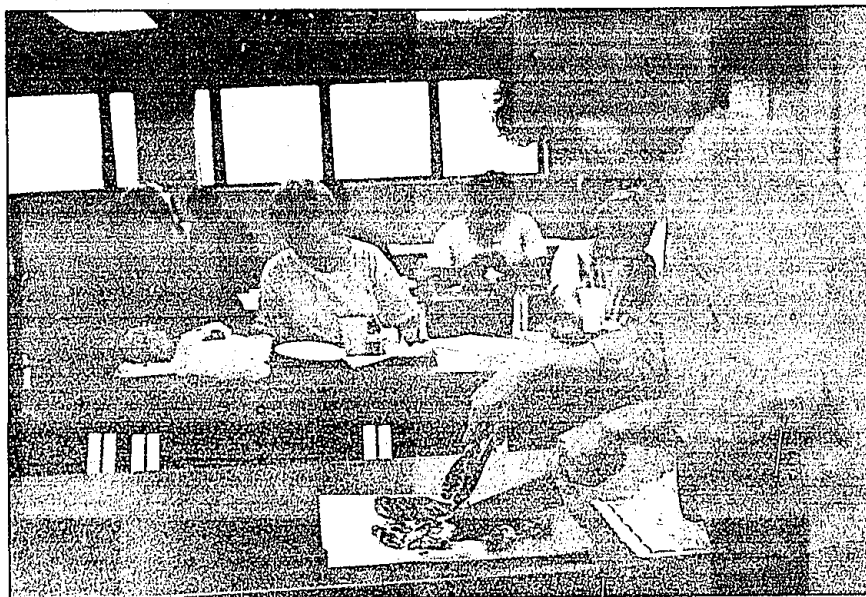
"It's an employee-owned program," Orloff-Davidson said, adding that some departments are also teaming up to lose weight together and starting their own walking clubs.

In addition to the free health screenings, Botsford also offers employees a twice-monthly free healthy cooking demonstration; free stress management and positive living programs; and a large selection of exercise classes such as kick boxing, weight lifting and aerobics that are discounted for employees.

Another incentive is money off on home exercise equipment from local merchants; as well as discounts at the Farmington YMCA and other area health clubs. Even massages are available to employees at 20 percent off.

"We're rapidly expanding our employee wellness program even as we speak," Orloff-Davidson said. "We want people to be healthy and reduce their health risks."

"If you make people healthier the premise is health care costs will go down," she added. "There's reduced absenteeism and we're trying to keep the healthy people healthy. It's a big boost for employee morale. We're having a ball with it and the staff loves it. They're enthused about health."



STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRESLER

Learning: Botsford Hospital employees are learning to cook with health in mind. The hospital's employee wellness program was recently honored with an award.

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Wellness: Employees listen to information on diet and exercise. The idea is that if people are healthier, health care costs will go down.

Mercy hosts outing

Mercy High School will hold its 9th Annual Meg Mallon Golf Outing Monday, Aug. 30 at the Walnut Creek Country Club in South Lyon.

Meg Mallon, Mercy High School alumna, LPGA Champion and recent winner of the Sara Lee Foundation Tournament, takes time each year to participate in this fundraiser. All proceeds benefit the 900-plus young women who attend Mercy High School.

This event is open to the pub-

lic and two sponsorships are available. Activities for the day include afternoon tea times, refreshments and an evening dinner reception with Meg. Individual tickets are available for the evening reception. Induction of Robert Roosevelt, Carol and Steve Garagiola and Marilyn Corbett into Mercy High School's Hall of Fame will occur following dinner.

For reservations and sponsorship information contact the Development Office at Mercy High School at 476-5922.