

555 Towner St., Ypsilanti, MI 48198 Phone: (734) 544-6700 http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org

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Contact: Kathy Fellabaum Health Educator

734-544-2969

fellabaumk@ewashtenaw.org

Washtenaw County Public Health Presents Healthy Workplace Awards Local Winners Share Successful Strategies for Improving Employee Health

YPSILANTI, Mich., April 1, 2014 – In conjunction with National Public Health week, Washtenaw County Public Health is honoring five local businesses with Healthy Workplace Awards. Each honoree has taken strides to promote healthy behaviors in the workplace. The 2014 winners include the National Kidney Foundation of Michigan, the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority, Manchester Community Schools, Manpower, Inc. of Southeast Michigan and the City of Ann Arbor. The Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners will present the awards at the Board of Commissioner's public meeting on April 2, 2014.

"We applaud these businesses for helping their employees to stay healthy. By investing in their workforce, they are also investing in the health of our community," says Alice Penrose, MD, MPH, Medical Director for Washtenaw County Public Health.

National Public Health Week is observed annually during the first week of April. This year's theme is "Public Health: Start Here" and focuses on the evolving public health system. The Affordable Care Act, for instance, signals a shift from a system that focuses on treating the sick to one that is committed to keeping people and their communities healthy and safe.

This commitment to supporting health is evident among organizations recognized with 2014 Healthy Workplace Awards. Gail Roose, Wellness Coordinator for the Ann Arbor Area Transportation Authority (The Ride), is pleased to report that several employees who participated in a smoking cessation program offered at work have remained smoke free. Similarly, through Weight Watchers at work, several employees have lost significant amounts of weight. In addition, one of The Ride's managers organized a running club for employees.

En route to achieving these successes, Roose notes: "We learned that it is important to maintain confidentiality of employee information for people to have confidence in your program; offer workshops and programs at multiple times to accommodate as many as possible; celebrate individual and group victories in a public way."

Jessica Bueker, Employee Benefits Coordinator for the City of Ann Arbor advises: "Keep the program voluntary, offer variety and plenty of incentives." She adds that the City's worksite wellness program, which was also recognized in 2013, "is growing and gaining more support year to year."

This year's Healthy Workplace Award winners include both large and small organizations, indicating that workplace wellness strategies can be adapted to a variety of settings.

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Visit us online at http://www.publichealth.ewashtenaw.org.

National Public Health week takes place April 7-13, 2014. For more information, please visit http://www.nphw.org/.

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