



**CASE STUDY:
Redstone Highlands gets a healthier work force, lower health care costs
and lots of accolades with Highmark's help**

Wellness is a lifelong journey. Jim Hodge, vice president of human resources at Redstone Highlands headquartered in Greensburg, Pa., understands that well. For the past 14 years, he has been helping employees at Redstone Highlands, a provider of housing, services and medical care for seniors, along the wellness journey.

Rising costs provide challenges

Rising health care costs challenged Redstone Highlands' commitment to a healthy work force. "In 2002, we were faced with a staggering 44 percent increase in our health insurance premiums," said Jim. Redstone Highlands met with representatives from Highmark to discuss ways to continue to provide quality health coverage and services to employees while containing costs. "At that moment, our relationship with Highmark changed," Jim explains. "Highmark went from being our health insurance provider to a strategic partner in improving health while reducing costs." Highmark encouraged Redstone Highlands to re-examine the design of its health plan and encourage employees to take an active role in their own wellness.

Leading the way in employee wellness

With Highmark's help, Redstone Highlands launched a coordinated effort to improve wellness and contain costs in January 2003 with one of the best practice first steps – creating a Wellness Committee. At its inception, the committee offered one wellness program each quarter. The company began its own program in 2006 called Health Tracks Rewards Program, which incentivized employees to take advantage of preventive services and make healthier lifestyle choices. Then in 2009, Redstone Highlands took an innovative step towards wellness and worked with Highmark's Blues On Call Plus program to give its employees and their families the opportunity to meet one-on-one with a trained Highmark wellness coach right in the workplace. The wellness coach is available to employees 25 hours each week and has offices at all of the company's campuses.

Participants who meet with the wellness coach complete an online assessment, a biometric screening and a detailed health and wellness questionnaire. The wellness coach uses these tools to help employees and their families create customized wellness plans and is also available to address specific individual needs such as nutrition, fitness, managing chronic conditions and smoking cessation.

"Highmark went from being our health insurance provider to a strategic partner in improving health while reducing costs."

Jim Hodge, Vice President of Human Resources, Redstone Highlands



(more)

Motivating employees to participate

Although participation in these wellness programs isn't mandatory for Redstone Highlands employees, the company does offer great incentives to make the commitment. The Healthy Tracks Rewards Program offers employees points for taking advantage of preventive services or participating in fitness and nutrition programs. Employees can redeem their points for gift cards, fitness equipment, trips, electronics or lower insurance premiums. Employees have a good reason to utilize Blues On Call, too. Meeting with the wellness coach a minimum of four times each year can dramatically reduce the employee's health insurance deductible.

The company's dynamic wellness programs, however, aren't exclusively for those covered by the group insurance plan. "We encourage all of our employees to participate in wellness programs," said Jim. "It doesn't matter if they have our insurance coverage or not." Currently, 90 percent of all employees participate in the Health Tracks Rewards Program, and 99 percent of those insured regularly visit their Blues On Call wellness coach.

The reward

Since the company began initiating wellness programs, Redstone Highlands has seen its annual increase in premiums shrink to an average of 3.1 percent. The company has been able to harness health care costs at a time when double-digit increases are common. "We estimate our health care savings to be nearly \$500,000 in the last four years," Jim boasts. Jim is also proud of the local and national accolades that his wellness programs are garnering. The company's wellness program is rated in the top 5 percent statewide, and the American Heart Association has named Redstone Highlands the first "Fit Friendly Company" in Westmoreland County.