



## Creating a Workplace Wellness Program Desert Oasis Healthcare shares their success

By Kristi Vaughn and Megan Guerra

Desert Oasis Healthcare, two-time winners at HARC's Workplace Wellness Awards, shared their company's success with attendees at this year's event in June. We asked them to also share with *Desert Health* readers in an effort to inspire other valley businesses to follow suit.

Desert Oasis Healthcare (DOHC) serves the residents of the greater Coachella Valley and surrounding desert communities of Riverside and San Bernardino counties. We have 1,100 employees who proudly serve 70,000 members. Our Workplace Wellness and Engagement Program is fondly referred to as our Employee Success Program. In sharing some highlights of our program, we hope to inspire others to also create healthier, more engaged employees.

A very important early step in creating a workplace wellness program is to establish support from senior leadership. Fortunately, our senior management team, including those directly involved in our program - Dr. Teresa Hodgkins, Dr. Brian Hodgkins, and Dr. Edith Jones-Poland - understand the value of happy, healthy employees. Instrumental in our program's success are these concepts:

**Make a plan.** We were able to make our case for a workplace wellness program (WWP) by developing a written plan with actionable items to meet our goals.

**Always remember your employees are the foundation of your program.** Your employees are one of your greatest assets and they should always be the driving force for your WWP. Take care of your team and they will take care of your customers. It's a mutual commitment between the organization and its employees. A healthier, more engaged workforce leads to service excellence.

**Celebrate and promote your success!** When your team has worked hard to create change, let them know where they succeeded - and keep striving for improvement.

We use multiple methods to communicate including employee intranet posts, emails, and surveys. A banner hangs in the courtyard of our main campus in Palm Springs: "Treat employees like they make a difference and they will." This banner lets our employees see and KNOW that they are essential to our success. Satisfaction our employees feel in serving our members and our community has earned us our most recent recognition, the "Great Place to Work" Award, which is a direct result of employee surveys and feedback. 91 percent of our employees agreed with the statement: "When I look at what we accomplish, I feel a sense of pride." And 94 percent agreed with the statement: "I feel good about the ways we contribute to our community." More results can be accessed here: <http://reviews.greatplacetowork.com/desert-oasis-healthcare>.

**Listen to your team.** Our initiatives are directly linked to what is important to them. We also did extensive research about what has worked in other organizations; we did not reinvent the wheel. Our programs are evidence-based as we used data and research to develop them.

**Create education and action.** Our ongoing employee education includes flyers on topics like stress management, parenting support, healthy eating, smoking cessation, financial and life planning, and more. Some of our other programs that make a difference in our employees' lives are our walking groups, hiking club, yoga, and massage on-campus, and our Weight Watchers at Work program, for which DOHC funds 50% of the cost. Weight Watchers at Work was our very first Employee Success Program initiative, and because of that it is near and dear to our hearts. Our employees have collectively lost over 2,600 pounds in two and a half years!

**Encourage community engagement.** Our employees are encouraged to contribute time and donations to our community partners. Past drives have benefited local food banks, animal shelters, senior centers, and shelters for victims of domestic violence. We have sponsored special events like bringing Guide Dogs of the Desert to our campuses, giving employees an opportunity to meet the dogs and their trainers. Our senior management team raffled off employee spots at the recent "Dog Day Afternoon" fundraiser for guide dogs, so employees could represent us and network with other community partners because health and wellness is not just about physical fitness, it's also about mental well-being.

Our employees also enjoyed a lunchtime karaoke contest, our first annual "DOHC IDOL." The winning singer performed at our employee appreciation banquet and also sang the National Anthem at Palm Springs Stadium for our DOHC-sponsored community event, "Dads and Grads at the Park."

**Be creative and remember that sometimes "no" is not the only answer.** When you encounter a challenge, don't let that stop you. You may get some no's and run into some non-believers along the way, but don't lose sight of your goal to create a better workplace for your employees.

**Last but not least: Start small and dream big!** We worked with a tight budget and a small team of very passionate and driven volunteers. We have accomplished many goals, but we have a lot more we want to achieve.

As Platinum Sponsor of the 3rd Annual Coachella Valley Workplace Wellness Awards from HARC, Desert Oasis congratulates the applicants for this year's awards and wishes everyone success in their own efforts to bring workplace wellness to your employees. It truly has the potential to make a profound difference in their professional - and personal - lives.

Kristi Vaughn is director of research for Desert Oasis Healthcare and Megan Guerra is a service excellence specialist. For questions, email [DOHC-EmployeeSuccessProgram@mydohc.com](mailto:DOHC-EmployeeSuccessProgram@mydohc.com).

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#### Large Organizations

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