



## Community Engagement

3 Ways to Expand Employee Wellness into Your Community

**VOLUNTEER  
OPPORTUNITIES**

**COMMUNITY  
EVENTS**

**CHARITABLE  
DONATIONS**

## BENEFITING YOUR EMPLOYEES AND YOUR COMMUNITY

You've made employee wellness a priority. You've taken steps to increase physical activity during the workday, support healthy eating choices, and promote healthy habits that employees can share with their families.

Now you can strategically align employee volunteer opportunities, community events, and charitable giving priorities to maximize impact. This guide is chocked full of ideas to inspire your company to take its wellness initiatives into the community.



### Why does community engagement matter?

When you chose to make workplace wellness a priority, you likely did so, at least in part, because of some anticipated returns on investment—reduced absenteeism, increased productivity, improved retention, and lower healthcare costs. But if your company or your employees reside in unhealthy communities, your investments may be compromised.

Your company's position as a healthcare purchaser and respected leader puts you in a unique and powerful position to affect community health. Look beyond the work site into the community where your company and its workers live.

Employees who feel connected to their community are healthier, happier, and more productive. Opportunities such as those described in this guide help companies boost job satisfaction and morale, improve employee retention, create opportunities for team development, and improve the bottom line.

### Benefits include:

- Increased employee productivity because of improved health of current and future workforces.
- Stronger company brand recognition due to increased, repeated exposure among potential clients.
- Improved community relations, goodwill, and branding.
- Stronger relationships and processes to support community-based problem solving around other issues affecting your company (e.g., economic development, education).



## EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

As interest in healthy nutrition and physical activity gains momentum among employees participating in your workplace wellness program, you can create volunteer opportunities that encourage staff to support schools, child care centers, youth organizations, neighborhoods, and places of worship in their unique wellness initiatives. Engaging employees in community partnerships such as these improves employee retention, boosts morale, and creates opportunities for team development.

### Nonprofit Board Service

Central Indiana boasts a wide variety of nonprofit programs that address an array of health and wellness issues. Encourage both established and emerging leaders to pursue service opportunities on boards or committees that fit their interests. Help facilitate a match by connecting employees with board recruitment events such as [Get on Board](#). Or find board and other volunteer opportunities through [VolunteerMatch.org](#).

Keep in mind that high level board positions often come with a financial commitment—will you underwrite or match a portion of your employee’s obligation? Perhaps allocate a specific percentage of your total philanthropy budget to charitable organizations where your employees serve. In this way, your employees carry what they know about workplace wellness into the community and assist in the stewardship of your financial gift.



### School Wellness Committees

All schools that receive federal funding for free and reduced-price meals are required to have a school wellness committee that includes parents and representatives of the community. You can encourage employees who have children or grandchildren to consider volunteering on their school wellness committees. If your company has offices near a school, or if you’ve already “adopted” a school that you’ve supported in other ways, you can reach out and let the school know that you’re interested in providing a representative of your company to serve on their wellness committee.



## Safe Routes to School

Employees can serve as volunteers in a nearby school's Safe Routes to School effort, encouraging students to walk or bike to school by addressing challenges that make it difficult to do so (lack of sidewalks, dangerous intersections, speed control, etc.) Safe Routes to School committees may plan, prioritize, raise funds, and maintain solutions to obstacles in the built environment. They also host "Walk to School Day" and "Bike to School Day" events, organize walking school buses and bike trains that allow kids to walk and bike with adult volunteers, and provide contests, mileage clubs, or other incentives to encourage walking and biking.

Get more information from the [Indiana Safe Routes to School Partnership](#).



## FitnessGram

FitnessGram is the most widely used tool nationwide to assess students' health-related fitness (not sports-related skills) in grades 4-12, but it can take weeks for physical education teachers to cycle students through the robust set of assessments. Jump IN for Healthy Kids has developed a toolkit to help schools using FitnessGram engage community partners as trained volunteers. Volunteers enable teachers to complete FitnessGram testing in hours instead of days or weeks. [Learn more.](#)

## Group volunteer opportunities

Short-term and group volunteer opportunities are also plentiful. You can brainstorm possibilities directly with a potential partner such as a school or child care center, or contact your local community foundation or United Way of Central Indiana for suggestions.

### Here are a few ideas to inspire you:

- Help plant a school garden or tend to an established one when school is not in session.
- Paint a gym, install or repair play equipment, beautify play spaces, or paint murals, mazes, hopscotch, and four-square courts on playgrounds to encourage physical play.
- Host and staff a children's fitness clinic or one-time exercise class at a Boys & Girls Club or other youth organization that serves children during their out-of-school hours.
- Staff hydration stations or serve as course marshals during a community 5K.
- Assemble healthy meal kits or snacks to be distributed at a local homeless or domestic violence shelter, after-school program, food pantry, or school.
- Assemble ["family activity kits"](#) that libraries, schools, or community centers can distribute to encourage families to reduce screen time and be active together.



## COMMUNITY EVENTS

Collaborating with a partner to plan and host wellness events—big or small—means reaching more people. It also helps overcome common challenges such as finding adequate space, locating and engaging appropriate content experts, or recruiting volunteers to staff a larger event.

Maybe your own workplace wellness program already includes nutrition education workshops for staff or an early morning walking club—how can you extend these opportunities to others? Perhaps you could reach out by creating flyers and sharing with a child care center to invite staff or parents to join your employees.



### Nutrition and Physical Activity Fair

Provide opportunities for families to learn about healthy nutrition practices and be active together by hosting a themed fair. Ask a nearby church to host your event and encourage them to invite their members to attend as well. Get a school, child care center, apartment complex, or other organizations involved to reach more families. [Learn more.](#)

### Family Fitness Day

Encourage employees with children to be active by hosting a Family Olympics or Family Fitness Day and open it up to other families in the community. [Learn more.](#)

### Cooking Demonstration

Help families learn to cook simple, affordable, and healthy meals at home by hosting a cooking class. You might engage a local restaurant, culinary school, farmers market, supermarket, dietitian, or other community resources to provide expertise. Emulate popular cooking shows to help garner interest, or keep it simple by prepping, cooking, and eating a meal together. [Learn more.](#)



## CHARITABLE DONATIONS

### Food and Beverages

Sometimes employers—especially retailers—are asked to donate food or supplies for special events in the community. Juice boxes and cookies or snack crackers are a simple choice, but these aren't in the best interest of children. Consider providing mini water bottles, fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains, or low-fat dairy instead.

#### Healthy Snacks

Apples	Whole grain crackers
Bananas	Pretzels
Clementines	Trail mix without chocolate
Raisins	or yogurt coatings
Fruit cups in water	Popcorn (unbuttered)
100% fruit juice	String cheese
Baby carrots	Whole grain granola/fruit bars
Unsweetened applesauce	



Find more foods and beverage suggestions in the [Products section of the Alliance for a Healthier Generation Smart Food Planner](#).

### Fitness Equipment

Consider donating supplies that encourage children to get physically active. Schools, child care providers, after-school clubs, places of worship, community centers, parks departments, and apartment complexes are all places that may be in need of equipment or games.



#### Supplies

Resistance bands	Throw-down bases
Twister™	Foam footballs
Jump ropes	Beach balls
Hula hoops	Laundry baskets
Cones	Extra shoe laces
Stopwatches	Socks
Playground balls	

Supply needs vary. You might also include items like brightly colored paper, small dry erase boards with markers, dice, or other items that help leaders mark stations or facilitate activities. Collaborate with your partner to ensure your gift is meaningful.



## Contribution Drives

If your employees enjoy seeing collection bins fill up in your offices during holiday toy drives or back-to-school supply drives, consider expanding the idea to wellness-themed drives. Collect age-appropriate physical education equipment, or collect spare change to help a nearby food pantry purchase refrigeration equipment for fresh produce, for example.

Make supply drives a competition—which department can stuff more gym bags full of supplies by Friday? Add appropriate visual elements to help “advertise” the drive and encourage participation—fill a grocery cart with healthy foods from the [Alliance for a Healthier Generation Smart Food Planner](#).

Not sure what food donations would be considered healthy? FeedingAmerica offers a list of healthy food donation items [here](#).

## Financial Gifts

Make health and wellness a priority in your traditional philanthropic giving plans. What percentage of your annual giving budget will go to health and wellness initiatives? Establish a goal at the start of each fiscal year as part of a comprehensive business strategy. You might then break this percentage down further, deciding how much of this support will be tied to board service (as discussed on page 2).



## READY FOR MORE?

Jump IN for Healthy Kids works to create healthy environments so that children and families have real opportunities to make healthy choices. Check out our other workplace wellness resources:

### [3 Steps to a Healthy Workplace](#)

Get the overview on how and why to increase healthy eating and physical activity at the workplace, and how to teach healthy habits that employees can take home to their families.

### [4 Strategies to Increase Healthy Eating at Work](#)

Get sample menus, tips for working with caterers, and other ideas for replacing unhealthy meals and snacks with more meaningful rewards.

### [5 Simple Steps to Increase Physical Activity at Work](#)

Get in-depth tips and resources to encourage physical activity at the workplace.

### [5 Ways to Promote Healthy Habits to Employees and their Families](#)

Learn how to create a comprehensive communications plan to share wellness resources with employees and their families.

**Jump IN for Healthy Kids**

[www.jumpinforhealthykids.org](http://www.jumpinforhealthykids.org)

[info@jumpinhealth.org](mailto:info@jumpinhealth.org)

