



## CaroMont Health – Gastonia, NC Culture of Wellness: By the Numbers

### Organization Background

CaroMont Health is a health care system based in Gastonia, North Carolina. Its primary facility is CaroMont Regional Medical Center, a 435-bed, not-for-profit general and acute care facility. Across the system, CaroMont Health has approximately 3,800 employees, including 452 medical professionals.

### Wellness Components

CaroMont Health received a Gold Star from Prevention Partners for its tobacco-free workplace initiatives in April 2011. The organization continued to work with Prevention Partners on developing its workplace policy and environment to support wellness, earning a Gold Apple for nutrition in 2012 and a Gold Medal for physical activity in 2013. Prevention Partners recognized CaroMont Health with an Excellence Award in 2014 for meeting the highest standard of its comprehensive employee wellness programs. Some highlights of CaroMont Health’s initiatives include:

- Annual employee wellness goals in corporate strategic plan since 2011, including goals for developing employee incentives for healthy behaviors, improving health benefits, offering clinical health risk assessment, and redesigning food services
- Annual \$50 deposit to health insurance incentive account for attestation of tobacco-free status or completion of quit program
- Cardiovascular equipment, strength-training stations, and group fitness classes at CaroMont Health and Fitness Center, open to both employees and the community
- “15 to Fit” exercise stations within each department with stability ball, exercise tubes, and instructional posters for physical activity breaks
- “30 Days to Sanity” self-guided stress reduction program
- 8-week Safety Revolution classes and Healthy Back program
- Hospital cafeteria with salad bar, vegan corner, seasonal fruits and vegetables, and hot lines featuring items that are baked or grilled, not fried
- Combined efforts with community programs, including the Gaston County Obesity Initiative

#### SNAPSHOT: 2014 Program Participation

**17** employee wellness programs with **1749** participants

**11** department-specific wellness programs with **141** participants

**11** lunch and learns with **107** participants

**28** wellness talks + fit breaks with **107** participants



Above: CaroMont Health representatives accept the organization’s Excellence Award at Prevention Partners’ annual meeting in June 2014.



**Results**

Many employers are facing the challenge of sustaining health care costs, but CaroMont Health has been able to bend the cost curve of its health care plan since it began placing greater focus on employee wellness programs in 2010.

**Health care cost per employee**



CaroMont Health’s Director of Wellness Programs, Debbie Bellenger, reports that CaroMont Health’s health care cost per employee is 15% below the book of business for the organization’s third party vendor that tracks its health care claims data. “Most other employer groups are seeing a 20-30% increase,” Debbie reported. “The health care sector also typically has less healthy employees than other industries.”

CaroMont Health has also seen improvements in employee health behaviors and biometrics as measured by a clinical health risk appraisal since the organization began including wellness targets related to regular physical activity and healthy BMI in its overall corporate goals in 2012.

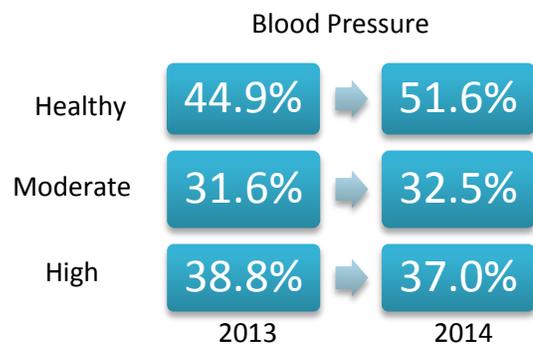
**Goal: Increase the number of employees participating in physical activity 3x/week**



**Goal: Increase the number of employees at a healthy BMI**



**Goal: Improve employee hypertension management**



CaroMont Health continues to build success by sustaining support for previous goals and choosing an additional area of focus each year. “This makes employee wellness top-of-mind for the entire workforce,” Debbie said. “Everybody knows what we are trying to accomplish in wellness.” Over the past year, CaroMont Health worked toward improving employees’ management of diabetes and hypertension, which were identified as high cost drivers using medical claims data. During this time the number of employees with high-risk health conditions decreased from 5.6% to 4.4%. The human resources team also reported lower workers compensation claims over FY2014, which Debbie identifies as a direct result of implementing the Healthy Back program, aimed at reducing the high number of back-related, avoidable workers compensation claims by training employees on proper lifting techniques.

CaroMont Health has covered the costs of its comprehensive employee wellness programs with net savings to the health care plan. “My ROI to my senior leadership is to break even,” Debbie said. In 2013, wellness division costs—four full-time health promotion staff, operational costs of the fitness center and an interactive learning center, and programmatic costs of employee wellness and occupational medicine initiatives—were balanced by \$3 million savings to the health care plan.

Using data to drive wellness program development has helped CaroMont Health see targeted improvement, and the organization is seeing continuous progress across employee health metrics each year, which translates into fewer costs to employees. “We’re saving everybody money, which is really a win-win.”