

Hawai'i Island's WELL PLACES TO WORK

INAUGURAL EVENT HONORS

employers WHO ARE
leading the way.

By Danielle Douglass | Photography by Earl Yoshii

*H*awai'i Island employers are transforming their workplaces. Last September, the Hawai'i County Mayor's Active Living Advisory Council hosted the inaugural Employer Wellness Recognition Event. Twenty-two employers participated in the program and were evaluated on criteria such as leadership and support, a wellness budget, and having wellness champions identified.

The four employers recognized for their employee well-being programs were Four Seasons Resort Hualālai, Hawaii National Bank, Dr. Monica Scheel Dermatology, and Club Rehab.

Three of Hawai'i's health insurance companies — HMSA, Kaiser Permanente, and University Health Alliance — sponsored the event. Mayor Billy Kenoi acknowledged that although they may be competitors in the business arena, the competition isn't against each other in the well-being world. Instead, the real competitor is the current state of health.

“What we've learned is that worksite wellness goes beyond cost, beyond morale in the workplace. It strengthens our families, our communities, and makes it easy for all of us to have a thriving, vibrant Hawai'i Island community,” says Kenoi. “We all know it starts at home, but it also starts at work. And since so many of our community are in the workforce, if we can get the employees to participate, we'll have a greater opportunity to implement meaningful change.”



At Four Seasons Resort Hualālai, Wellness Manager Dr. Cheri Wood and Regional Director of Human Resources Mitch Sipiala are wellness ambassadors.”

A decade in the making

Hawaii National Bank has been working on wellness for the past decade. The bank’s wellness program, Healthy for Life, was created to introduce and educate employees about living a healthy lifestyle. It strives to engage employees, bring fun into the workplace, and reduce health care spending.

There’s an abundance of activities and programs for employee well-being, including biometric screening with professional coaching, health risk assessments, a financial wellness program, flu shots, lunch and learn sessions, fitness center discounts, and online wellness challenges.

“We believe that having a well-being program sends a strong message to our employees and their family members that we genuinely care about them both at work and at home,” says Derek Kanehira, vice president and director of Human Resources. “Woven into one of our core values is a statement that encourages employees to lead healthy lifestyles.”

Many employees have changed their lifestyles and incorporated physical activity and healthy eating into their lives. Some have lost weight and kept it off, while others have reduced the number of prescription medications they take. Others have reported that they feel generally happier in life.

Kanehira, like many other wellness ambassadors, says that leadership and fun are key elements to a successful program. “Asking the employees what they want to address as well as tapping into community resources to build and sustain your program are also essential components,” he adds.

A culture change

At the Four Seasons Hualālai, there’s been a change in company culture. Cheri Wood, N.D., was hired in January 2014 to create the company’s wellness center. The center, named Kahua Malama Ola, was opened a year later and has become a safe and inviting environment for employees.

“When you consider the fact that most people spend at least half their waking hours at work, creating a healthy work environment should be a priority for all employers,” says Wood. “A healthy work environment improves morale and increases productivity, allowing employees to operate at their optimal level both at work and home.”

Employees have access to a 24-hour gym, fitness classes, 15-minute massages, wellness education classes, private lifestyle and medical counseling, an injury prevention program, and individual and group ergonomic assessments. Wood says that since the center opened, there’s been a reduction in sick days and workers’ compensation costs, increased employee satisfaction with health and wellness options at work, and a change in company culture.

Take a stroll on property and you’ll see examples of employees engaged in their well-being. Energy drinks and sugary snacks have been replaced with coconut water and snacks with natural ingredients. Employees can pick up local and organic produce weekly at work. The cafeteria, where employees enjoy a complimentary meal daily, has undergone a makeover. It features healthier fare with fresh, local ingredients and notes potential allergens.



An active environment

The employees at Dr. Monica Scheel Dermatology are an active bunch. Scheel believes that her patients' wellness has a direct impact on the quality of their skin and she extends that philosophy to her staff. These days, her employees are more willing to discuss their health and wellness challenges with each other. They support each other in fitness and nutrition and use an online program called Officevibe, which assesses components of wellness and health and compiles data.

"Healthy employees are happy employees. They have more energy, deal with stress better, think better, and share their wellness plans with our patients," she says. "When my employees are healthy, they enjoy their work more and can counsel patients on how to achieve wellness."

Scheel has entered her staff into walks and runs, which benefit both their health and Hawai'i Island nonprofits, such as Peoples Advocacy for Trails Hawaii. The men and women who work at the dermatologist's office have paddled, walked, biked, ran, belly danced, and practiced yoga together. They've also taken nutrition classes and participated in book clubs.

Not only are these activities fun for the employees, they build camaraderie. "You wouldn't want to work alongside someone you haven't also laughed with," says Scheel.

Rehabbing well-being

Club Rehab has been working on restoring more than its patients' ailments. For over 20 years, the company has offered a wellness program to employees at its three Hawai'i Island locations.

Some examples of the company supporting employee well-being include sponsorship of various races, an annual spa day to rejuvenate for the coming year, and membership to a fitness center. Employees also get discounts on healthy food choices and physical therapy for conditions that could be hindering their health.

"We've noticed a significant increase in participation in events and athletic events overall," says Gordon Dong, president of Club Rehab. "There's improved morale and team building and more consistent exercise performance and staff participation." 

If you're an employer who's working on well-being with your employees, you can participate in the Second Annual Employer Wellness Recognition Event. Email Tina Clothier at tina@pathhawaii.org for more information.



From left: Derek Kanehira of Hawaii National Bank, Barbie Nakamura of Club Rehab, Hawai'i Island Mayor Billy Kenoi, Dr. Monica Scheel of Dr. Monica Scheel Dermatology, and Dr. Cheri Wood of Four Seasons Resort Hualālai.

WORKSITE WELLNESS AWARD RECIPIENTS

1st place, large business:
Four Seasons Resort Hualālai
(1,300 employees)

1st place, small business:
Hawaii National Bank
(11 Hawai'i Island employees)

2nd place, small business:
Dr. Monica Scheel Dermatology
(23 employees)

Honorable mention: Club Rehab
(30 employees)