

Based in rural Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, Highsmith Inc. is a distributor of supplies, furniture and equipment to public, academic and special libraries, as well as schools and school libraries throughout the U.S. and abroad. Since 1956, it's been our mission to provide unique ideas, services and products to help our customers create inviting, functional learning environments.

Wellness Department

Wellness is part of our culture at Highsmith and is as "everyday" as turning on an employee's computer. We see wellness in a holistic manner and take an approach that encompasses all six dimensions of wellness looking at intellectual, spiritual, social, physical, emotional and environmental wellness of the employee. Each of these areas has a domino effect on one another.

As part of our culture our Wellness Department focuses on both primary prevention and disease management to employees, spouses and dependents. We do this through educational courses offered in our course catalog, information provided in our monthly newsletter, awareness campaigns and one on one consultation. We use these items as the vehicles to providing information on chronic and acute diseases to individuals and their families.

TAG Program

The Highsmith wellness initiative was created in 1990 after we faced a 53% increase in our health insurance premiums. In 2001, the original "Well Power" program was renamed "TAG."

- T**otal commitment to developing human potential
- A**ccess to learning opportunities
- G**rowth as an Individual and as a company

Our TAG program focuses on five areas of employee development — job/career development, work/life enrichment, personal well-being, self-care and physical well-being. On-site classes in each category allow employees to grow and educate themselves as individuals and in turn as a company. Job/career development courses are mandatory for new employees and can be revisited by seasoned employees looking for a refresher. Several courses are also open to spouses and dependents.

Annual Health Screening and Health Checks

Highsmith takes a creative approach to rewarding employees for healthy lifestyle changes and behaviors. In order to receive a monetary incentive toward their insurance premiums, employees must meet four criteria. First, they must carry our health insurance. Second, they must be completely free of all tobacco products. Third, they must visit their doctor annually for an age- and gender-appropriate physical exam. Finally, they must participate in our annual health screening performed by our health insurance provider, Unity Health Insurance. Along with a brief cardio respiratory fitness test on a treadmill, the health screening checks cholesterol, glucose, BMI, waist circumference, blood pressure and weight. After the screening, employees meet with a health education specialist to review their results and discuss goals for the future. The health screening also gives employees a chance to talk to staff from our Employee Assistance Program, NEAS, to learn about their wide range of services, from mental health assistance and choosing a daycare provider to financial planning and legal advice.

With childhood obesity becoming more and more prevalent, the risk for type II diabetes, high blood pressure and orthopedic conditions is on the rise for children and young adults. As a company, we need to try to foresee where some of our health claims may come from in order to design adequate initiatives for dependents. For the first time, Highsmith will be opening our Health Check to dependents of employees at no cost. This Health Check will consist of a cholesterol testing, glucose testing, BMI, waist circumference blood pressure and weight. Immediate feedback will be provided. In the coming year Highsmith will be implementing a free dependent health screening similar to the annual health screening currently offered to employees.

Wellness Challenges

Our participation rate is regularly over 50% for our wellness challenges. Throughout the year these challenges help motivate employees to get active and make healthy lifestyle choices. Participants earn points for a variety of things such as exercising, attending relaxation classes, drinking eight glasses of water a day, completing wellness questionnaires and volunteering for nonprofit organizations. At the end of the challenge, participants are entered into a drawing for prizes. An example of prizes employees have earned include: lunch with our CEO, 8 hours of free-time, donated MP3 players and DVD players and Chamber Bucks.

Exercise Classes

Four days a week we clear the tables and chairs out of our Commons area for after-work exercise classes. Floor steps, physio balls, free weights, jump ropes, hula hoops, thera-bands, floor slides and an excellent sound system help make the classes effective and energetic — and our instructors are fellow Highsmith employees. To cut costs on our most current class, BOSU, we offered employees the option to purchase the equipment at a discounted rate and pay for it through a payroll deduction program. Current classes include, BOSU training, Boot Camp, Circuit Training and Strength Training. All classes are free for employees, spouses and dependents age 16 and older.

Along with our classes, health screening, challenges, monthly wellness newsletters and optional one-on-one consultations other benefits that we offer to our employees include flex time, free time, three walking paths, lactation room, smoke free campus and Lifetime Learning.

Awards and Accolades

The success of our innovative approach to employee wellness and development has brought Highsmith attention, accolades and awards, including the *2004 Secretary's Innovation in Prevention Award* from the Department of Health & Human Services and gold and platinum *Well Workplace Awards* from the Wellness Councils of America. Highsmith has also been featured on the NBC Nightly News with Tom Brokaw, MSN.com and in *The New York Times* and *Business & Health* magazine.