

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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A Panhandle business has received a state award for excellence in wellness. Panhandle Public Health District was named for the Sower Award for planting the seed of wellness for their employees. PPHD has offices in Hemingford and Bridgeport, serving 10 of 11 Panhandle counties.

Because prevention and wellness efforts in the workplace are shown to lead to higher productivity, better employee satisfaction and lower health care costs, Governor Heineman created the Governor's Excellence in Wellness Award in 2008.

Factors considered for the awards include the level of support for the program by company leaders, assessment of employee needs, design of a wellness plan, outcomes and benefits and policies supporting healthy behaviors. Wellness programs empower employees to make good decisions about the health risk factors in their lives and to take action to avoid chronic illnesses that can adversely impact their health and affect their quality of life.

Panhandle Public Health District maintains strong support for employee wellness through wellness policies for paid breaks to promote physical activity, a breastfeeding policy and environmental supports for nursing mothers. PPHD also maintains an employee kitchen on site, healthy meeting guidelines at all events, individual ergonomic assessments and ongoing health information to staff. They provide health screenings and risk appraisals for employees and their families on an annual basis. Flu shots are also provided annually at no cost to the employee.

South Platte Natural Resource District out of Sidney was also awarded the Sower Award and the City of Gering was an award winner in 2009.

Jessica Davies is the wellness coordinator at PPHD. She offers one-on-one technical assistance to businesses developing wellness programs. A Worksite Wellness Council is currently being established within the Panhandle region. In addition, fall worksite wellness gatherings "Promoting a Physical Active Lifestyle to Your Employees" are planned for Sidney and Alliance next month. The gathering in Sidney will be November 2 from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Sidney campus of WNCC, Room 116. The Alliance gathering will be November 12, also from 9 to 11 a.m. at the Alliance Library, meeting room A.

For additional information about worksite wellness, visit www.pphd.org. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.

Photo ID: Governor Heineman presents the Sower's Award to Panhandle Public Health for excellence in worksite wellness. Pictured above: Becky Dorn, WELCOM Wellness Councils of the Midlands; Jessica Davies, PPHD, Governor Heineman; Kim Engel, PPHD; Dr. Joann Schaefer, Chief Medical Officer, Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.