

## **ARKANSAS WORKERS SQUARE OFF TO GET FIT**

*The Arkansas Fitness Challenge becomes a nation-wide event to benefit a wider audience*

### **Public Health Problem**

- Many Arkansas adults get little daily physical activity and over half are obese or overweight.
- Most adults spend a large percentage of their day at work and their fitness affects productivity, absenteeism, employee satisfaction and employer health care costs.
- Programs to increase worker's physical activity can help prevent the onset of chronic diseases that result from obesity and lack of activity.

### **Program**

- The Arkansas Department of Health and Arkansas Blue Cross created the Arkansas Fitness Challenge as a competition for employee teams from the two agencies who participated in specific exercises along a virtual route through 92 checkpoints. Participants must satisfy a daily exercise requirement in order to advance one checkpoint and must advance at least three times a week for most of the weeks in the three month challenge to meet the program goal of 30 checkpoints. The winning team is the one with the most accumulated points.
- The Challenge encourages employees to work toward the public health recommendation of thirty minutes of physical activity, most days of the week.
- Over four years of Challenges, thousands of employees from the two originators were joined by many thousands more from companies and groups starting their own challenge teams using a free kit.

### **Impact**

- Arkansas Fitness Challenge participants report that due to the contest:
  - they increased the number of days they exercised
  - their health had somewhat or greatly improved
  - they lowered their blood pressure, blood cholesterol, and weight
- Arkansas Blue Cross employees won the contest more often than health department teams, but all participants were winners in improved health and fitness.
- Paul Halverson, DrPH, director of the Arkansas Department of Health says, "The Fitness Challenge provides a great opportunity for our employees to become healthier individuals by implementing regular physical activity into their daily lives."
- The success of the Challenge led to its expansion as the national Blue and You Fitness Challenge.

### **Contact**

Becky Adams  
Arkansas Department of Health  
501-661-2334  
becky.adams2@arkansas.gov

