



North Ottawa  
Wellness Foundation



# Real Fuel: Using Food to Improve Well-Being

## Build a Winning Team Through Nutrition

Professional race drivers have sponsors who help cover costs. The sponsors hope that racing fans will be influenced to purchase their brands after seeing them on a winning car. They're looking for a return on investment.

Employers and employees are, together, a team. They each have a vested interest in wellness, and they can work together to achieve it.



### Wellness comes from a series of small choices.

The more people who make good choices, the better the outcome will be for everyone.  
Employees will feel supported, invested and have a better quality of life.  
Employers will retain quality staff and eliminate distractions that can reduce productivity.  
And when all these things happen, health care costs will be better controlled for employees as well as employers.



**At Shape, we know that if we support employees in their efforts to improve health and wellbeing, we will improve our workforce and also improve quality of life for our employees. Why wouldn't we do this?**

• (HOLLY SEVERANCE, HEALTH & WELLBEING MANAGER, SHAPE FAMILY WELLNESS) •

# What Can Employers Do?

Here are some simple ideas from local employers about how to start building a wellness culture in your company. Most of these ideas don't require much of an investment. They just require you to consciously make different choices.



**Ask for input.** This is probably the most important step. You want to invest time and energy doing things that employees will participate in and value. So ask your employees about the ideas you're considering, or what areas are most impactful to them. See what they have to say, and then try the ideas that have the most support.



**Connect to existing resources.** The lakeshore community has a host of resources to help people aim for wellness goals. You don't need to recreate those resources...just have a simple way to help people find them!



**Adapt meeting & event food.** You can use meetings to reinforce healthy food choices. Instead of serving juice and donuts or muffins, offer bottled water with yogurt and fresh fruit. Instead of buying pizza, consider sandwiches with lean meats and whole grain bread, accompanied by fresh veggies. It won't cost you any more, and everyone will get more nutritional value from these choices.



**Change your prizes.** Do you give away gifts or have contests? Why not offer the winner some choices that encourage good nutrition? Your list might include a voucher for the Farmers Market, a bag of apples from a local apple orchard, or a gift card to the health food store, for example.



**Modify vending machine choices.** Work with your vending machine supplier to adjust prices and/or adapt what's available. A cold bottle of water that's \$.75 may be more appealing than a cold soda that's \$2.00. A protein bar could add more staying power than a granola bar for about the same price. Weed out some of the more popular candy bars and replace them with trail mix. Mix better options with a targeted pricing strategy, and the good choices will prevail.



**Leverage your insurance provider.** Large insurers want to help you decrease costs. Ask them about educational opportunities that they can provide based on employee interests. Most of them will pull something together at no cost to you!



**Book clubs and documentaries.** There are a surprising number of excellent books and films about the impact of nutrition on wellbeing. Bring some healthy snacks and facilitate a book club/watch party discussion.



**Bring the Farmers Market onsite.** If your business is large enough, or you can get a few neighboring businesses to participate, bring a Farmers Market to your parking lot on occasion. Invite employees to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables without leaving work. This removes barriers and allows people to try new things.

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## Resources

Here are just a few of the many resources available to you through the North Ottawa Wellness Foundation partners and connected organizations.

- [realfoodcan.org](http://realfoodcan.org): recipes, ideas, techniques and more.
- [nochgetbetter.com](http://nochgetbetter.com): sign up for newsletter, learn about classes and public seminars.
- [tcfymca.org](http://tcfymca.org): nutrition consultation and training classes.
- [northottawawellnessfoundation.org](http://northottawawellnessfoundation.org): articles, links and more.

