

The Times Herald

HealthEase boosting employees' health for 25 years

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Posted: 11/16/12 06:59 pm

Updated: 11/16/12 07:29 pm



COLLEGEVILLE — If your company encourages you to release some lunchtime stress with a couple of 50-pound dumbbells or get your heart pumping on a treadmill in a fitness center built just for you, you probably have HealthEase to thank.

Even if that company isn't necessarily a client of the longest running corporate fitness service in the area, chances are somewhere along the line they came on board with the wellness idea because of HealthEase president and founder Armand Tecco's pioneering work.

When the King of Prussia native launched HealthEase 25 years ago there were very few health clubs around, he recalled.

“I was the fitness director of Club La Maison in Wayne, one of the first health clubs in the region. It occurred to me that companies could benefit from offering programs to their employees to get fit and stay healthy ... but they would need someone to provide that service. Twenty five years ago it was kind of a novel concept. Now it’s become much more mainstream. because employers have realized that it’s a great benefit to employees and amenities are important to attract good, productive employees. Their health care costs may be less, they’re absent less.”

The first company that warmed up to the HealthEase concept was Hartstrings, a children’s clothing shop in Wayne, not far from where Tecco established his home base — he now also works from a home office in Collegeville — followed by longtime client Pepper Hamilton in Philadelphia.

Since then HealthEase’s reach has expanded dramatically throughout the region.

“More companies are aware of it now and corporate America people get it. They probably know somebody who works at a company that has a fitness center,” Tecco said. “A lot of times the decisions will come from the top and if the owner believes in it they’ll get behind it. If a CEO comes to me and says we want to do some things for our employees’ health to get them feeling better about the company and also to help them be healthier, we’ll sit down with them and map out a plan for a fitness program and a center, if they have the space.”

Whether the facility is a lavish, state-of-the-art fitness center or an elliptical machine stuck in a corner of a small room, Tecco will design the space for the client.

“I’ll work with an architect and developer, and based on the company’s population, I can tell them how big it needs to be, what type of equipment they need, and help them procure the equipment through vendors out in the field.”

He’ll also hire trainers, yoga instructors and other fitness pros, while managing the program and providing coaching seminars and exercise classes on wellness and fitness.

“We’re like a one-stop shop,” said Tecco. “Every company is different ... employees are different, the size of the company is different and the budgets are different. So everything is a la carte; I can bring them anything that is appropriate for their needs. My big thing is customer service,” added Tecco, who has one sales associate out in the field. “All of our staff have the certifications, but they have to have exceptional people skills because we have to engage the employees and inspire them to participate.”

Tecco generally explains to bottom-line-oriented decision makers that, while the ROI (return on investment) can be roughly \$3 to \$7 per every dollar spent — “It’s hard to quantify the return, but a lot of times it’s just common sense” — the VOI (value of investment) is pretty much incalculable.

“If an employee senses that an employer cares about him, even though he may not partake in the program, it creates a good will feeling that ‘hey, the company actually cares about its employees and their well being. They don’t look at us as just another number.’ That’s kind of a recent phenomenon with companies,” Tecco said. “They’re realizing that to attract and retain good employees they need to provide these kinds of amenities.”

Studies have shown that comprehensive work site fitness and wellness programs pay off in the long run for everybody, he noted.

“Once these programs are integrated into the culture of the corporation they result in less health insurance costs, less absenteeism and happier employees.”

For more information, contact HealthEase at 610-688-2040 or visit www.healtheasefitness.com.