

# Joining the push

## ACT initiatives

Several government agencies are reaping the benefits of the 2003 Corporate Health and Fitness Challenge and other programs

THERE are a number of ACT workplaces that promote healthy work environments. The Department of Urban Services has been recognised for its Promoting a Healthy Workplace program which encourages employees to participate in health-promoting strategies during working hours. Activities include walking groups, health-information seminars and sport competitions, to name a few. This has strong support from the organisation's management.

The Australian Tax Office launched its Fit-n-Well initiative, a program for its ATO Technology (ATEC) staff to become more health-aware, and improve their own health. Another proposed benefit of the program is to create a happy, healthy and more productive workplace.

A number of health and well-being groups from the community were invited, including Healthy Worksites, Integrated Natural Therapies, Athletes Foot and Pedal Power, to increase the awareness of the Cycle to Work initiative.

In a brief presentation to the group, Peter Wilson, First Assistant Commissioner for ATEC, noted how important a balance between work and recreation was to our overall health.

Gavin Freeman, senior psychologist at the Australian Institute of Sport, spoke of ways to make goals more achievable, for example, by writing them down, telling a friend, getting a gym buddy.

Other ACT organisations that have been promoting health and fitness in the workplace have been those involved in this year's Corporate Health and Fitness Challenge. More than 300 people took part in this year's program, with teams from the Department of Health and

Ageing, ACT WorkCover, ACTION, Department of Urban Services, Chief Minister's Department, and Office of Adult Training and Education, to name a few.

The four-week program included fitness appraisals, exercise activities, massage and health seminars. The findings indicate the benefits of this team-building program included not only physical health but an increase in overall well-being and a decrease in stress.

This year's Most Active Company award went to the Department of Health and Ageing, which had had about 180 staff in the program.

One final initiative that I encourage all of ACT workplaces to become involved in is Health and Safety Month in May. Promoted by ACT WorkCover, the aim is to raise awareness by encouraging workers and employers to organise an activity with a safety focus in their workplace, or to participate in events or activities conducted by others.

ACT WorkCover has produced a kit with some great suggestions on programs to offer including exercise sessions, in-house health expos, first-aid training, and "OHS good ideas" competitions. ACT WorkCover will also promote your organisation and your activity when it publicly launches the program at the end of this month.

ACT WorkCover has also created a new award category for the best initiative or activity organised during Health and Safety Month as part of the 2003 Occupational Health and Safety Awards.

These local initiatives can influence what happens to workplace well-being nationally. With large government departments such as the ATO and Health and Ageing implementing such programs with support from senior management, it helps to create a best practice for corporate health and well-being which has the spillover effect of reduced health-care costs and increased productivity for the organisation and country as a whole.

Dr Dion Klein is director of Healthy Worksites.  
drdion@bigpond.com



Up and over: Sue Green, second from left, takes Corporate Health Challenge participants through their exercises.

## USEFUL SITES

ACT WorkCover ACT Health and Safety Month

[www.workcover.act.gov.au](http://www.workcover.act.gov.au)

Department of Health and Ageing

[www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

ACT Health

[www.health.act.gov.au](http://www.health.act.gov.au)

Fitness ACT

[www.fitnessact.com.au](http://www.fitnessact.com.au)

Healthy Worksites

[www.healthyworksites.com](http://www.healthyworksites.com)

## HEALTH AND SAFETY IDEAS

- Develop a hazard/incident reporting system.
- Do ergonomic assessments.
- Hold a first-aid training session.
- Do an inventory of hazardous materials.