

• Work it out

Every week, employees at M&I Bank's downtown office can take a yoga class or attend a Weight Watchers meeting on-site.

Each day, the office staff at J.H. Findorff & Son Inc. can use a fully outfitted gym in their building.

Steps like these are bringing Milwaukee companies closer to being named Well Workplaces by the Wellness Councils of America (WELCOA). And if 40 companies meet WELCOA's standards over the next two years, Milwaukee will become Wisconsin's first Well City.

"We want to show that we're not lagging, we're leading," says Janet McMahon, executive director of Milwaukee's Well City initiative.

According to McMahon, Milwaukee must have 20 percent of its workforce (about 50,000 people) employed by companies that have achieved Well Workplace designation (from WELCOA) in order to become a Well City USA. Currently, the list of employers who have made a commitment to the Well City Milwaukee initiative reflects more than 85,000 employees. "The challenge now is for each employer to meet the wellness program standards set forth by WELCOA and become a Well Workplace by the end of 2009," says McMahon. This spring, at least two companies will have met the Well Workplace criteria. For the rest, "this is our roll-up-the-sleeves year."

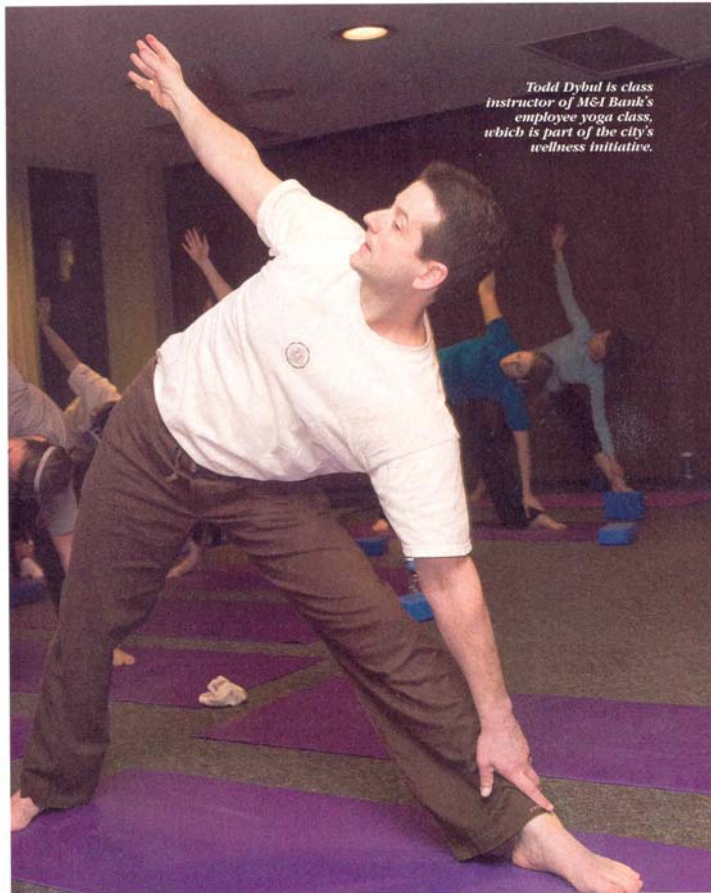
M&I Bank's 1,000 Milwaukee-area employees have been invited to participate in screenings for risk factors, such as high cholesterol, and complete surveys about their health. Employees who participate get a reduction in their health care premiums for two years and are included in a prize raffle.

"Once we get the results of our health assessments and find out what our risks are, we will develop specific programs to address those," says Barbara Feiertag, a nurse who serves as the bank's corporate wellness manager.

"We've already seen some success stories. We had employees who quit smoking since our smoking cessation program in October. They said, 'OK, this is the time.'"

Findorff's office staff numbers just 34, but the company would like to expand its efforts to its 150 Milwaukee-based field workers and its Madison employees.

"In construction, safety is the No. 1 consideration, and health is part of that,"



Todd Dybul is class instructor of M&I Bank's employee yoga class, which is part of the city's wellness initiative.

notes Valeria Alba, project manager assistant in charge of wellness efforts. "A lot of our field workers have lunch boxes full of Doritos or they smoke, and we want to reach out to them."

Findorff moved its headquarters to North 6th Street around the time it signed on to the Well City initiative, which explains in part why it has an on-site gym complete with showers. The office also has a bike rack to encourage two-wheeled commuting, and an outdoor basketball hoop that gets lots of use.

M&I and Findorff also have employees participating in Lighten Up Wisconsin, an online-based workplace exercise and

weight loss incentive competition.

The Well City initiative received seed money from several area health systems and is partnered not only with companies but also with nonprofit organizations and local colleges and universities. WELCOA, which has a Wisconsin council headquartered on Milwaukee's East Side, is providing a framework for the effort.

"The application itself is a cookbook for success," says McMahon. "If you work with the criteria and follow through, in the end you will have a comprehensive, results-driven wellness program."

"That's what this is about — it's not about giving out trophies." M

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