

Voluntary Benefits Special Report

WELLNESS AT MGM

Three properties partner with Wellness Coaches

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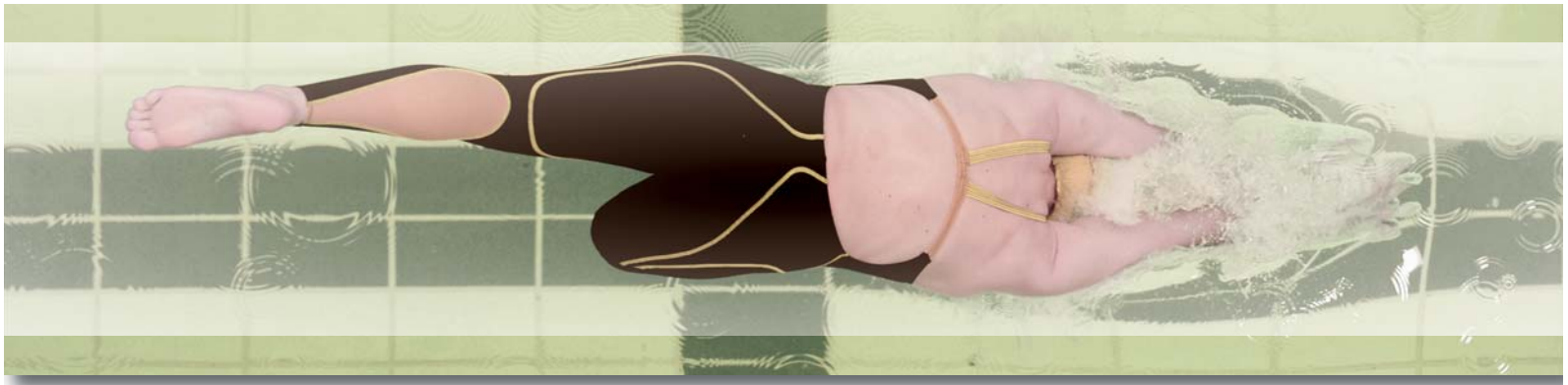
*—Melissa Friedman McCullough
MGM Benefits Communications
and Programs Supervisor*

MGM Resorts has launched a pilot wellness program at three of its Las Vegas-based properties: New York New York, MGM Grand and The Mirage. Under the program, employees will have access to on-site coaches who will provide one-on-one coaching sessions, either by appointments or on-demand during regular office hours.

MGM partnered with Wellness Coaches USA, Bluebell, Pennsylvania, to provide the service “because of their long-standing commitment to the health, safety and

productivity of employees,” according to John Socha, MGM director of health care operations. “We found the model of having somebody on-site and proactive is more highly effective than being passive, especially in our fast-paced industry.” He adds that the pilot properties “each have the opportunity to help pave the way for future health and wellness programs at sister properties.”

In addition to one-on-one coaching, coaches also host monthly healthful living events for employees and frequently attend pre-shift meetings.



“Attending pre-shifts is an important way to meet employees,” New York New York Wellness Coach Joe Gassler points out. “The staff and employees have really taken me in; it feels like I’ve always been a part of the team.” Joe, who is a certified nutritionist and athletic trainer, adds, “I’m proactive; I don’t just sit in my office all day. When I came on board and saw the hours, I knew I had to be available to all employees and shifts. I want them to know I’m here.”

All wellness coaches are experienced and trained to support employees’ efforts to maintain or improve their lifestyle behaviors. They are available to all employees and are trained on the benefits available through each person’s health plan so they can make program referrals based on coverage and the individual’s needs.

Dawn Pfefferle, New York New York director of human resources, says the program is a “great benefit because the healthier our workforce is, the better off we all are. When you feel good, you exude that to both guests and coworkers. Healthy employees won’t miss work and will have fewer health

problems so it can also reduce our overall health costs. In the end, it’s really a win-win for the employees and the company,” she concludes.

Wellness coaches provide guidance on a wide variety of topics, such as nutrition, exercise, diet, weight loss, and tobacco cessation. In addition, coaches can perform blood pressure checks and other biometric screenings to help employees manage their numbers or keep track of their progress toward individual goals.

MGM Grand Director of Training Joyce Boisell points out that the focus on wellness is “different for everyone because it depends on your own personal needs. Part of the coach’s role is to help employees figure that out and then help them address it. The important thing is they don’t tell people what to do. You don’t walk into their office and they say you need to lose 10 pounds. It’s more like you walk in and tell them you want to lose 10 pounds, then they’ll help you reach that goal.”

MGM Benefits Communications and Programs Supervisor Melissa Friedman McCullough points out that

the program is not intended to replace doctor visits. “For employees with chronic conditions, wellness coaches are there to help bridge the gap between employees and their doctors—not to replace them. Together with the doctor, they can help employees reach their health goals.”

So far, employees appear to feel engaged. In April, New York New York handed out more than 300 pedometers during its “Step into Spring” walking competition. The top three employees logging the most steps will win gas cards.

Vanezza Cruz, one of the three coaches at MGM Grand, reports that appointment calendars are very full. “Employees have been really happy, especially because it’s open to everyone,” she said. “I also think what entices them is that we’re not here to tell them what to do, but to listen, provide support, and help plan a strategy that will work for them at their own pace. It boils down to an honest conversation. That’s why we’re committed to making ourselves accessible. We’re there for the employees.” ■

