



City of Batavia

Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Batavia's Employee Wellness Program Recognized as 2015 Harvard Ash Center Bright Idea in Government

Batavia, NY – February 18, 2015 – The Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, recognized today the City of Batavia's Employee Wellness Program as part of the 2015 Bright Ideas program. This year's cohort includes 124 programs from all levels of government—school districts; county, city, state, and federal agencies; as well as public-private partnerships—that are at the forefront in innovative government action.

In 2009 Batavia made a complete shift in the way it looked at health insurance, and a wellness program was established to influence employee behavior and focus on preventative care. Employees and spouses who participate in the program and achieve or exceed identified results have the opportunity to earn credits to either reduce their health care contribution or lower their out of pocket deductible. The employee and spouse, if both participate, can achieve a maximum of 25% discount on their health insurance premium, or pay as little as 5% for health insurance. The employee health care contribution is 30% of annual cost of the plan.

The following are the targeted goals for each factor based on standards established by the National Institute of Health and American Diabetes Association:

1. Health Risk Assessment – Need to complete (employee and spouse)
2. Fasting Glucose - ≤ 99
3. LDL Cholesterol - ≤ 99 mg/dL
4. Blood Pressure - $\leq 139/89$
5. Nicotine Use – Non-use only

In addition, if a participant shows a 60% improvement in fasting glucose, LDL cholesterol or blood pressure over the prior year, he/she will receive credit for the category, as the improvement shows significant movement towards obtaining the category goal. The City's medical plan also has a case management program in place that works with members to help coordinate all necessary health resources to maintain a healthy quality of life. The overall goal of the City's wellness program is to drive preventative utilization, reduce the number and severity of claims and reduce health care costs.

With respect to health care costs, the City has seen impressive accomplishments in managing what is regularly considered "unmanageable costs". Since 2010, Batavia has enjoyed an annual increase in healthcare premiums of approximately 4%. Notably, the cost of the average family healthcare plan in 2014 was \$15,927, this was a 5% decrease from 2013. Batavia's health insurance premiums have experienced marginal annual increases in health care premiums when compared to most municipalities in New York State and across the nation, while

premiums paid by employees have gone down. Most importantly, Batavia employees, spouses and families have become more educated and participatory in their own health.

“The Bright Ideas program demonstrates that often seemingly intractable problems can be creatively and capably tackled by small groups of dedicated, civic-minded individuals,” said Stephen Goldsmith, director of the Innovations in Government Program at the Ash Center. “As exemplified by this year’s Bright Ideas, making government work better doesn’t always require massive reforms and huge budgets. Indeed, we are seeing that, in many ways, an emphasis on efficiency and adaptability can have further-reaching effects than large-scale reforms.”

This is the fourth cohort recognized through the Bright Ideas program, an initiative of the broader Innovations in American Government Awards program. For consideration as a Bright Idea, programs must currently be in operation or in the process of launching and have sufficient operational resources and must be administered by one or more governmental entities; nonprofit, private sector, and union initiatives are eligible if operating in partnership with a governmental organization. Bright Ideas are showcased on the Ash Center’s Government Innovators Network, an online platform for practitioners and policymakers to share innovative public policy solutions.

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