



CALIFORNIA TASK FORCE
ON
Youth and Workplace Wellness

For Immediate Release
October 13, 2008

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California's Healthiest Employers Honored at the 2008 Fit Business Awards Ceremony
State Task Force Applauds Innovations in Healthy Workplaces

SAN JOSE -- Recognizing the value of a fit and healthy workplace to organizations and workers alike, the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness today honored 78 California employers with the 2008 Fit Business Awards in partnership with The Health Trust and Silicon Valley Leadership Group.

Each award winner was presented with a Gold, Silver or Bronze certificate of recognition by State Senator Tom Torlakson (Antioch) and State Assemblyman Lloyd Levine (Van Nuys). This year's award ceremony was held at Kaiser Permanente in Santa Clara.

"With today's economic challenges, smart employers know that an investment in their employees' wellness will considerably benefit the company in many ways, including reduced insurance rates, increased productivity and lower, long-term healthcare costs," said State Senator Tom Torlakson, founder and Chair of the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness. "Today, we applaud the participation of management and the enthusiasm of employees as California strives to make our great state a unique model for healthy innovations in the workplace."

This year, four employers were honored with the Fit Business Gold Award for their clear commitment to ensuring that all employees – from those in the executive offices to those in the manufacturing facilities – receive access to workplace wellness programs.

- Cisco Systems in San Jose
- County of Ventura
- Mercy General Hospital in Sacramento
- SMUD in Sacramento

Among the innovations implemented by this year's Fit Business Award winners were health, fitness and nutrition initiatives tailored to business culture and employee needs. These included sponsoring employee sporting tournaments such as competitive basketball and volleyball to horseshoes and table tennis; ergonomics evaluations for new or relocated employees; nutrition education, cooking classes

and farmers market tours; health fairs, stress reduction seminars and health clinic screenings; interactive wellness websites, community health calendars and online newsletters; on-site fitness evaluations and free fitness/health classes; balanced & organic food selections made from scratch in employee cafeterias; physical activity breaks; sponsored walks and runs; as well as reimbursement for wellness and fitness-related services such as gym memberships.

“These four employers from around the state highlight the best practices of fostering unique wellness programs that meet their individual workplace needs,” said Frederick J. Ferrer, Chief Executive Officer for The Health Trust. “They’ve invested innovatively in the health and wellness of their workers. We recognize them today in hopes that more employers will appreciate the return on investment in workplace wellness and join our collective effort to make California the healthiest state in America.”

Numerous reports and studies indicate that the need for healthier workplaces is clear. California has one of the fastest rates of obesity among working-age adults, ranking this year as the 41st fattest state in the nation. Physical inactivity, obesity and other health-related problems cost California businesses an estimated \$28 billion in lost productivity, workers’ compensation, as well as direct and indirect medical costs each year.

“There’s no debate that business costs associated with an unhealthy workforce will continue to grow,” said Carl Guardino, President and Chief Executive Officer for the Silicon Valley Leadership Group. “The economic impact is heaviest on employers. Therefore, employers are uniquely positioned to care about and promote the health of their employees. They are increasingly aware of the positive connection that employee health has on their financial bottom line.”

In collaboration with representatives from Kaiser Permanente, American Cancer Society, The FruitGuys, Savvy Fitness, California Department of Public Health (Network for a Healthy California), 24 Hour Fitness, and Savvy Fitness, the Fit Business Award program continues to expand each year. More than 80 employers across the state applied for this year’s awards; 4 received Gold recognition, 31 received Silver recognition; 30 received Bronze recognition; and 13 received an Honorable Mention.

About the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness

The California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness is a public/private collaboration that brings together educators, health advocates, public health professionals, health providers, athletes and legislators in an effort to create and promote policies to improve health and fitness and lower obesity rates in California schools and workplaces. In 2001, State Senator Tom Torlakson introduced legislation which created the Task Force to address critical issues of fitness and nutritional health in California’s schools and workplaces. For more information, please visit: www.wellnesstaskforce.org.

About the California Fit Business Awards

In conjunction with the Fit Business Challenge issued by the State Senate in 2004, the Task Force created the California Fit Business Awards to encourage a new role for California’s employers—as models of healthy eating and physical activity. 2008 winners were selected using an uncompetitive rating system

based upon the breadth of their health and wellness programs; the quality and focus of their policies; the involvement of their leadership; the impact of their endeavors; and the reasons given for having wellness programs. Each application was evaluated by two expert reviewers independent of the Task force. The entire review process took more than two months.