



Press Release  
Be Healthy Berrien

## **Be Healthy Berrien and YMCA of Southwest Michigan bring wellness to worksites**

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**Contact:**

Heather Cole

269-982-4063

[heather.cole@uwsn.org](mailto:heather.cole@uwsn.org)

This is the first article in a 4-part series highlighting Be Healthy Berrien and YMCA of Southwest Michigan's worksite wellness programs and services.

YMCA of Southwest Michigan, through its partnership with Be Healthy Berrien, has identified four worksites in Berrien County that have voluntarily chosen to participate in their YMCA Worksite Wellness Program - Ballard Elementary School in Niles, Southside School in Niles, STEAM Academy at MLK in Benton Harbor, and Westwoods of Niles. This new program brings YMCA Diabetes Prevention Programs (YDPP), Health Coaching, and Lunch-and-Learn sessions on-site to worksites. The program also provides expert help for worksite leaders to build healthy practices that support healthy choices for their employees, like creating water stations, holding regular walking meetings, and including information about health topics during staff meetings.

One of the partner-worksites, Ballard Elementary School in Niles, is well on their way to creating a healthier place to work and learn. One participant in YDPP at Ballard Elementary (who did not want to share her name) has made some significant changes since beginning the program and has lost nearly twenty pounds. She utilizes the YMCA membership that is included with YDPP every morning before heading into work. "I believe a lot of my success has come from just being more aware and educated when making food choices" the participant stated. In addition to offering Y-Diabetes Prevention Programming and Health Coaching on-site, school staff and leaders are making even more healthy changes. Healthier snacks and fruit are now offered at meetings, instead of donuts or candy. Literature about healthy eating and exercise has been posted throughout the building, and staff is participating in walking groups after school.

Making wellness programs more accessible to worksites is a major priority for Be Healthy Berrien. "Most adults spend about 1/3 of their day at work. We're hoping to make those hours more supportive of good health, and make healthy choices easier for employees" said Heather Cole, Director of Be Healthy Berrien. Learn more about Be Healthy Berrien's worksite wellness project at [www.BeHealthyBerrien.org/worksites-wellness](http://www.BeHealthyBerrien.org/worksites-wellness).

YMCA of Southwest Michigan offers customizable worksite wellness programs to employers throughout Berrien County, including on-site services, expert advice, and corporate membership



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options. For more information on YMCA Worksite Wellness services, contact Monica Norton at the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph YMCA, (269) 428-9622.

The YMCA Worksite Wellness Program is supported by Be Healthy Berrien through a 4x4 Grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. The purpose of the Michigan Health and Wellness 4 x 4 Coalition Initiative is to implement Michigan's priority strategies to improve health and reduce obesity by creating healthier communities, expanding prevention activities and empowering people to make healthy choices and adopt health as a core personal value. The expected outcomes include changes in weight status and improvements in healthy eating and physical activity.

Be Healthy Berrien is a county-wide partnership of Berrien County Health Department, Lakeland Health, Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, United Way of Southwest Michigan, and YMCA of Southwest Michigan. These organizations are working together to reduce obesity and chronic illness by creating healthy places to live, work, learn, and play. For more information about Be Healthy Berrien, please visit [www.BeHealthyBerrien.org](http://www.BeHealthyBerrien.org).

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