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Working Well and Aging Well with Mather LifeWays

When employees have good health and personal fulfillment, those whom they serve are happier too. That's a key part of the culture at Mather LifeWays, an award-winning not-for-profit organization, founded in 1941, whose mission is to enhance the lives of older adults by creating Ways to Age WellSM. Developing a fulfilled workforce pays off for this leader in the senior care industry, with retention of long-term employees, high employee satisfaction, and national recognition for its services to seniors.

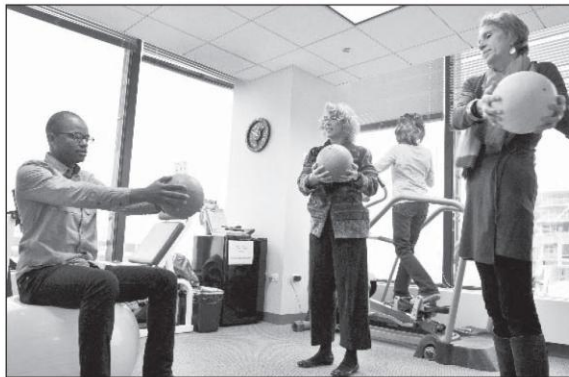
Through senior living residences, the Institute on Aging, and neighborhood programs, Mather LifeWays serves more than 34,000 older adults each year. To keep their dynamic culture strong, in an industry that often sees high employee turnover, Mather LifeWays gives its more than 600 employees many opportunities to grow both personally and professionally, and to nurture good health, in body and mind. The foundation for wellness begins with a workplace culture intended to inspire all. Added to that are benefits and workplace programs that encourage lifelong learning and personal wellness for everyone.

Mather LifeWays expects those whom it serves to be treated as unique individuals with distinct needs, passions and interests. The employees are treated this way too. Leaders of Mather LifeWays say a customer-focused organization begins with employees who are healthy, happy and committed to the mission. According to Mary Leary, president and CEO, "Our commitment to serving older adults is equaled only by our commitment to our employees. We believe that taking extraordinary care of our employees translates into extraordinary experiences for residents and customers."

One of the organization's newest operating principles is: Eliminating My Impossibilities (EMI). It is designed to help employees discover their dreams and passions while working to eliminate the barriers to doing so.

EMI in the workplace includes these key elements:

- The creation of EMI Zones: colorful, playful spaces within the workplace where employees can explore their interests, relax with and get to know their fellow workers, play games, eat meals, and so on.
- Full day academy training in the key principles and behaviors of EMI
- Helping staff identify ways to assess their strengths, identify learning opportunities, and eliminate barriers to change and growth.



Mather LifeWays employees (l-r) Justin Snow, Dawn Lehman, Eni Baverso (on treadmill), Jayne Schaefer, take a few minutes to get moving, burn a few calories, and take a mental and physical break from their work day.

The strong Mather LifeWays culture is backed by management practices that support employee growth, fulfillment and wellness. Benefits include tuition reimbursement for both full and part-time employees. Each year, employees use the tuition program to advance their education, not to mention the on-the-job training they receive from their very own Mather LifeWays Institute on Aging.

Through the Learning to Age Well Program, employees can also be reimbursed - up to \$120 per year for completion of classes like music lessons, yoga, or foreign language classes or membership in a health club.

There is also a vast menu of wellness programs, activities and incentives to foster healthy lifestyles and habits. These include:

- Annual Wellness Fairs which includes health risk assessments, acupuncture, health resources and more (89% of employees who participated in both 2010 and

2011 wellness screenings have made positive lifestyle changes because of their participation)

- The 10,000 Steps physical activity program to encourage all employees to walk throughout the workday
- Free wellness coaching
- 401K (with up to a 7% company contribution)
- Generous paid time off
- Medical, dental, vision coverage

The Possibilities Team (executive team) at Mather LifeWays believe that emphasizing employee wellness positively impacts staff, leads to greater focus and productivity and makes the organization more attractive to future job applicants. Mary Sullivan, Vice President of Human Resources, puts it this way: "Our dream is to become nationally known as a preferred employer with a waiting list of prospective employees clamoring to join our organization."

Looks like it's working. For the second consecutive year, Mather LifeWays was named one of the "Top 100 Workplaces" by the Chicago Tribune. No other job has been "quite like Mather LifeWays," says Anna Gosa, L.P.N. "To be appreciated and acknowledged for what you do - it really makes you happy."