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OUR WAY

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One Employee Shares How 'Being Healthy Makes Life Better'

It was about a year and a half ago when Minnesota Depot Yard Supervisor Steve Birr first learned about and began Wellness' Livewell program. Since that time, he's lost about 20 pounds, significantly lowered the dosage on his cholesterol medication and feels fewer aches and pains. But Birr said the greatest gift he's been given through the program is a better life. "Being healthy makes life better," he said.

Birr began the Livewell program when it was first introduced in January 2021. During a physical in late 2020, he learned some of his numbers were high. Although Birr didn't have prediabetes, he started the program as a prevention and a way to lead a healthier life. "My weight had also started to go up," Birr explained, "and I knew I needed to do something. When I saw this program was available, I decided to try it."

Livewell is a free weight loss and diabetes prevention program for employees and spouses. The goal of the program is to help those most at risk make simple lifestyle changes, so they don't develop Type 2 diabetes. The changes include exercising about 150 minutes a week or 21 minutes a day, and making better nutrition choices to get to a healthier weight.

Birr said he appreciated that Livewell broke down aspects of improving one's health into weekly topics. This gave him time to understand what he needed to do and why and begin applying it to his daily life. Since he works off-site in Minnesota, Birr attended the sessions virtually, and Wellness staff, and in particular Jaylen Gorden, worked with Birr when he needed to make up a class due to his work schedule.

"Jaylen was fantastic and knows her stuff," Birr said. "Everyone in Wellness was great to work with, and I knew they always had my best interest at heart. I would definitely recommend the Livewell program to others. It helps you live a better life."

Birr said he also enjoyed the camaraderie among other employees who were in the Livewell program. "On our weekly calls, we would share recipes, ideas and tips," he continued. "We were all in the same boat and would help motivate one another."



Minnesota Depot Yard Supervisor Steve Birr said Wellness' Livewell program is helping him live a better life.

Prior to starting the program, Birr said he was having pain in his knee. But he learned by eating the right foods you have less inflammation in your body, which helps you move better. "My knee pain is now gone. I learned I can experience less pain in my day-to-day activities by making small changes."

In addition to making better food choices, the program encourages participants to exercise daily. For Birr, this meant stretching in the morning and at night and spending at least 30 minutes a day on his elliptical or ski machine. "I kept losing weight and that motivated me to do even more," he said.

Birr also saw results when he went for his first physical after starting Livewell. "I was taking 80 mg of my cholesterol medicine each day when I began the program," he said. "A month later, my numbers had improved so much that my doctor cut my dosage in half to 40 mg a day. On my most recent visit, he reduced my dosage again to 20 mg a day."

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Employee finds the key to Livewell (Continued from Page 1)

"This program really helped me. People can encourage you to do something, but you have to be willing to change and do the work to get where you want to be. When the company offers opportunities to improve yourself and your health, you need to take advantage of it. There's also the added benefit of discounts on your health care premiums if you meet your Wellness goals."

Livewell participants complete 16 weekly sessions with a lifestyle coach and then schedule follow-up appointments as needed. Sessions can be done in-

person or virtually. Participants also receive an information guide as well as a food and activity tracker. The program is free for employees and spouses. If you are interested in learning more or signing up for Livewell, contact Wellness at 205-307-2745 or email wcenter@american-usa.com.

livewell
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