



Ohio Department of Health
246 North High Street
P.O. Box 118
Columbus, Ohio 43216-0118
www.odh.state.oh.us

Bob Taft, Governor
J. Nick Baird M.D., Director

N E W S

Office of Public Affairs • (614) 644-8562
Jay Carey, Director

For Immediate Release
May 19, 2004

TAFT HOSTS NATIONAL EMPLOYEE HEALTH AND FITNESS DAY

COLUMBUS – Governor Bob Taft today joined state employees for annual National Employee Health and Fitness Day (NEHFD) festivities at the YMCA of Central Ohio. The event was sponsored by the Governor’s office and the Ohio departments of Health and Administrative Services.

“Taking part in even short periods of physical activity is imperative to leading a healthy lifestyle,” Taft said. “As we Healthy Ohioans like to say, small steps such as those taken today can lead to big strides in improving your overall health.”

Taft presented the 2004 Healthy Ohioans Healthy Worksite Award to six Ohio businesses for demonstrating their commitment to employee health. The winners were: Bank One; Cuyahoga Community College; Moen, Inc.; Rockwell Automation; St. Rita’s Medical Center; and Whirlpool Corp.

Leading by example, Taft resolved to be a “Healthy Governor” at this year’s 39th-annual Hocking Hills Winter Hike in January. An avid bicyclist and hiker, Taft manages to work exercise into his busy schedule and encourages Ohioans to do the same.

Taft, in conjunction with the Ohio Department of Health, launched the Healthy Ohioans initiative in 2001 after learning of Ohio’s poor ranking in the areas of tobacco use, physical activity and daily consumption of fruits and vegetables. Healthy Ohioans is a statewide health and wellness initiative designed to encourage Ohioans to increase physical activity levels, increase fruit and vegetable consumption and stop tobacco use.

With Healthy Ohioans, Taft hopes to help reduce the number of unhealthy Ohioans in the state. As it stands today, the top-five leading causes of death – heart disease, cancer, stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and diabetes – can be linked to lifestyle choices.

Consider:

- More than one-fourth – 27.2 percent – of Ohio adults are current cigarette smokers.
- Nearly one-fourth – 22 percent – of Ohio adults are obese.
- More than one-third – 37 percent – of Ohio adults get no physical activity.
- Less than one-fourth – 23.6 percent – of Ohio adults eat the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables.

-MORE-

Such statistics are also expensive. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported obesity accounts for slightly more than 6 percent of Ohio's overall medical expenditures – or \$3.3 billion annually.

“I want to get Ohioans moving again,” Taft said. “Getting healthy does not require hours invested at the gym. Getting healthy does require getting off the couch, eating more fruits and vegetables and giving up tobacco.”

Taft led state employees on a fitness walk around the downtown YMCA to illustrate how simple – and enjoyable – physical fitness can be.

State employees also took part in stationary bicycle “races,” basketball shootout competitions and baton relay races. Representatives from Taft's Healthy Ohioans Business Council – appointed at NEHFD in 2001 – also took part in the event.

Today's activities also included fitness demonstrations and other healthy activities. More than 15 health-related businesses staffed booths offering guidance and literature related to various health and wellness activities.

The CDC recommends establishing a regular routine of physical activity that includes at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity all or most days a week as an essential element to good health.

For more information on the Healthy Ohioans initiative check out our Web site at <http://www.healthyohioans.org>.

-30-

Contact:

Orest Holubec, Governor's Office, at (614) 644-0957

Ohio Department of Health – Office of Public Affairs (614) 644-8562