

# Automotive News

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## How one dealership group keeps a lid on health-care costs

The Fred Beans Automotive Group has its own part-time wellness coordinator who helps lead healthy-living and wellness initiatives for 1,720 employees.

MELISSA BURDEN □ □ □ □



Fred Beans Automotive Wellness Coordinator Andrea Volm, center, leads a goat yoga session that included group Vice President Beth Beans Gilbert, far right.

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A pushup challenge on the showroom floor. Yoga classes. Monthly lunch-and-learns on various health topics. Step challenges. Quarterly wellness newsletters that feature recipes and highlight employee health successes.

These initiatives are part of the culture at Fred Beans Automotive Group of Doylestown, Pa., which has its own part-time wellness coordinator, Andrea Volm. The group's focus on healthy living has many benefits, company leaders say — from boosting employee performance and morale to serving as a tool for recruitment and retention — and the effort has led to healthier employees, driving down annual increases to health insurance.

## HEALTH FOCUS

Fred Beans Automotive Group of Doylestown, Pa., has its own part-time wellness coordinator who helps lead healthy living and wellness initiatives for the dealership group's 1,720 employees.

"We know that taking care of yourself mentally, spiritually and physically actually brings along a better employee," said Beth Beans Gilbert, the group's vice president. "We know it's not just about being a great employee, that you have to have all these other things in place to really be successful."

Gilbert said she and her father, group founder and President Fred Beans, have long held an interest in health and wellness. For his 80th birthday in 2019, Fred Beans, now 82, led an employee pushup competition, completing dozens of them.



Volm: Employee buy-in is growing

### Pumping up

The group for years conducted biometric health screenings and offered programs such as Weight Watchers. But Gilbert wanted to do more to educate her 1,720 employees about healthier lifestyles. She had worked with Volm, a personal trainer, after breaking her foot a few years ago, and the two realized their philosophies on health and wellness were a match.

Volm started working with Fred Beans in January 2018 as a consultant and became a dealership group employee in March 2020, right as the coronavirus pandemic struck.

While the pandemic delayed some plans, Volm said buy-in and staff participation in the wellness programming is growing.

Many of the on-site classes and workouts went virtual during the pandemic. A weight-loss challenge garnered 85 participants, and a June step challenge was a success, with one store having 28 of its 45 employees counting their steps, Volm said.

Volm said she has taken some of what Fred Beans was offering — such as lunch-and-learn sessions on topics including joint health, or jeans days, when employees pay a few dollars to wear jeans in recognition of and to benefit a health concern such as prostate cancer — and doubled their frequency each month.

"We try to get a lot of different areas of health and wellness, too," Volm said. "So we're not always targeting causes that are directly related to physical health, but also mental health. We do awareness on financial health and well-being."

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### 'In your face'

A staff member at each Fred Beans location was tapped to become that store's on-site healthy-living coordinator with whom Volm works and to whom employees can reach out with questions.

Employees also receive annual healthy-living activity cards that encourage participation in activities such as health fairs and workouts. Depending on quarterly participation, staff members can earn up to \$150 a year, Volm said. Employees also can earn a \$10 gift card to a Wawa convenience store for participating in a 30-day fitness challenge. Each month, the group shares an employee health highlight, and quarterly *Fred's Healthy BeansTalk* newsletters are mailed to employees' homes.

Volm also created 10-minute exercise videos to encourage employee movement at individualized levels and pace.

"We have employees sit at a desk, we have employees that are on their feet all day, [and] we have employees that work with their hands all day," she said.

Fred Beans TV programming that plays at group locations features work anniversaries and automaker news, interspersed with yoga classes, health reminders and information about the benefits of certain foods.

"It's in your face all the time," Gilbert said.

There also are financial incentives for employees to visit the doctor and dentist and to get cancer screenings.

Employees who get a free, in-network annual physical and complete certain screenings receive a \$140-per-month credit off the cost of their health insurance, Gilbert said.

Gilbert said having a wellness coordinator is a unique benefit and a tool for recruiting and employee retention for the group, which has 32 locations, including 21 dealerships and a large parts warehouse. The company was named one of the *Philadelphia Business Journal's* 2021 Healthiest Employers in the Greater Philadelphia Region.

Fred Beans, which sold 13,377 new vehicles and 11,810 used vehicles last year and is tracking to sell a combined 31,000 vehicles in 2021, switched to a self-insured health plan about four years ago. Gilbert said she keeps an eye on employee participation in the healthy-living programming and on the group's insurance costs.

"Each year I have an increase from our health insurance," Gilbert said. "But the healthier that we are, the [less] my increase is."

Inline Play

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