

WITH A LIMITED BUDGET SLINGER SCHOOL DISTRICT PROVES WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY.



Across the country as the trend of “having to do more with less” grows, no one understands the painful ramifications of that more than cash-strapped school districts. With thousands of students to educate and hundreds of staff and teachers to retain, how does a school district function when faced with mounting budget pressures, including escalating insurance premiums of 10%-20% a year and a 0% state budget increase allocation? That is the kind of reality that causes real angst about the ability to provide teachers and staff with things like salary increases and a comprehensive benefits package. But in the face of all of that, one school district in Wisconsin is doing more than waving the white flag in surrender.

That’s why when HealthiestYou was presented to Daren Sievers, Superintendent Administrator for Slinger School District in Slinger, Wisconsin, he and his team were hopeful. With its focus on reducing claims, HealthiestYou was introduced to Slinger School District by their insurance broker who knew that getting creative with plan design would help the District, but no one

could have imagined to what extent. Thanks to the focus on consumer engagement that HealthiestYou brings to the table and the determination by Daren and his team to promote utilization of the benefit, Slinger School District ultimately flipped the solemn message of “no raises this year” to a very different one.

“Costs for health insurance for our employees were skyrocketing – as much as 20% annually and we just couldn’t keep up.

“It’s about improving morale and showing employees that the District has their quality of life and their best interest in mind. Says Daren, “Caring for people and helping them is what it is all about and that’s why we do it.”

With the help of our benefits broker, we decided to migrate to a consumer-driven model,” said Daren.

The 21-year veteran of the School District looked under every rock, and not only found a way to provide better health benefits without increasing premiums, but thanks to the savings generated from the new plan, he also is awarding well deserved raises to teachers and staff who thought this year’s state budget would leave them out in the cold.

Two years ago, when the District was facing a steep increase in health insurance costs, the issue of how to afford benefits for employees was a very real and frightening conundrum. The only choice was for the District to switch to a high-deductible (HD) insurance plan so premiums wouldn’t increase. Had they stayed on their current non-deductible plan, the District would have faced a 14% increase in health insurance costs, and with no increase in state budget, there was simply no money to fund it. With a new deductible of \$2,500, the District’s Health Savings Account (HSA) plan became even more important. It could ease some of that bigger out-of-pocket bite since the funds employees contribute to the account aren’t subject to federal income tax at the time of deposit.

And to further diminish the high deductible plan sting, HealthiestYou was then added to redirect the most common, acute illnesses to telehealth physicians who are available 24/7 at a fixed cost to the School District and no cost to the District employees. Daren liked the combination

because he knew this would not only save employees money, but also would help preserve their HSA funds for other needs that might come up. Additionally a wellness program was added to provide financial incentives to employees for setting and meeting specific health goals.

District Payroll & Benefits Administrator, Sue Stoffel, has logged 20 years with the District and is a former District student. She saw that switching to the high deductible insurance plan for teachers and staff who for years never had to worry about a deductible was indeed a tough pill to swallow. "I really give kudos to our broker for telling us about it. When we found out about HealthiestYou we saw it as a great benefit that would not only be relatively inexpensive for us as a District, but it would be a great supplement to our new HD plan." She admits that although people don't often get excited talking about insurance benefits, launching HealthiestYou was different.

"HealthiestYou made it easy for us to roll out to employees because they provided us with lots of materials to remind our people to use it. There is a list of the top nine reasons why people go to the doctor or the ER for non-emergency conditions that HealthiestYou provides. They are things like bronchitis, pink eye, ear infection, etc. Listing those conditions is a good reminder for people and gets them to think specifically about how to use HealthiestYou going forward. It's natural for people to forget they have it but the membership cards that HealthiestYou provides is a great tool and makes it easy since people don't need to remember their plan number or information – it's all on the card."

Knowing that high employee engagement was vital component to the plan's success, Daren put on his walking shoes and went from school to school within his 3,000+ student District and asked each teacher and staff member personally to be part of the solution that would improve their health and help the District save money. It would require a change of behavior and it meant thinking outside of the box. Their new wellness incentives required they focus on good health habits, and when they did get sick, to use the HealthiestYou plan first instead of their primary care doctor or emergency room. The HealthiestYou plan allows unlimited doctor access, ensures easier and faster care options so small things don't become more serious and more expensive sicknesses, and consequently minimizes, and in some cases eliminates, sick days altogether.

"Ironically, the first day I went around to tell everyone about the new plan I could feel myself getting a sinus infection. So I made a call to HealthiestYou at 10:30am. The doctor called me back immediately. I was diagnosed and had a prescription by 11:15am. By 2:00pm I was getting my voice back and getting on with my day."

And, getting on with his day included explaining to employees that in order to cope with the cold hard budget realities they had to face, the District had adopted a new set of benefits that needed their full support and interaction to be successful.

"We needed to soften the blow of changing to the new HD plan," said Daren. "So I personally explained to them how HealthiestYou could help. We were



THE FACTS...

- HealthiestYou Utilization rate: **81.8%**
- Number of employees enrolled: **225**
- Number of doctor consultations and resulting prescriptions: **181 & 151**
- Cost: **100% covered by Slinger School District with no cost to the employee**
- Out-of-pocket: **\$0 out-of-pocket consultation fee for employees**
- Number of schools in the Slinger School District: **3 elementary, 1 middle and 1 high school**
- Number of students: **3,107**
- Number of teachers: **195**
- Number of administrators/ support staff: **65**
- Percentage of insurance renewal increase/decrease for 2015-2016 academic year: **-2%**
- Typical percentage of increase Slinger was experiencing: **10-20%**
- Raise Pool: **\$310,000**
- Savings from wellness and avoiding traditional care (primary care doctors, ER, Urgent Care, etc.): **\$310,000**
- Broker/Plan Designer: **R&R Insurance Group**

still keeping their HSA and now with HealthiestYou they would not have to use it for day-to-day things, plus they would protect their family deductible. I also explained that whatever we saved in our renewal would come back to them in the form of raises. Everyone wins. And, that's what we did - we created a 2.3% teacher raise pool increase and a 3.1% support staff raise pool increase this year. Because they adopted the change, we saved \$310,000 on health insurance premiums and now that money is being funneled right back to them. Thanks to HealthiestYou and the Vitality (wellness incentive) program our renewal cost went down 2% instead of incurring the average 8% increase expected."

According to Sue, Daren got plenty of help promoting the benefit from HealthiestYou. "HealthiestYou is good at providing materials and posters and reminders for everyone. One of the most helpful things that HealthiestYou did was to attend our big meeting at the beginning of the school year to help us roll it out. It was great having accurate information being directly relayed right from the source. The HealthiestYou representative explained how it worked and got people talking about it. This was the first time our users had heard of it... and it was explained simply and accurately and that was the biggest advantage for us. Everyone could tell that the people at HealthiestYou cared that we received the right information on using it."

He sends weekly email bulletins that include personal anecdotes from employees sharing how they saved time, money, and got better faster and missed fewer work days. He also posts frequent reminders and tips to ensure people don't fall back on the old habits of calling the family doctor or making expensive visits to the ER or Urgent Care unnecessarily.

"What we really like about it is that it saves an actual visit to the doctor's office and it boosts our insurance program. It's easy to see how our employees could feel like they lost something when they went from a low-deductible plan to a high one, so supplementing with HealthiestYou helps them to think 'my employer is looking out for my well-being.' Our ultimate product is education for kids and keeping teachers in the classrooms is better for the kids. So we ask ourselves -'how can we make their life better?' You know yourself that when you like your job you perform better than someone who is irritated and that is bad for the kids. We go to the effort of making their life easier so they can teach - it is a win/win," said Sue.

Daren agrees that the effort is about more than saving money. It's about improving morale and showing employees that the District has their quality of life and their best interest in mind. "Caring for people and helping them is what it is all about and that's why we do it."



Daren Sievers