



CLIENT SPOTLIGHT

SSD wellness program pivots to Wellbeats at home and onsite

Spreading the word is pivotal to wellness program success, and the Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD) stands out for engaging more than 90 wellness champions throughout its 265 public schools who promote Wellbeats and other wellness initiatives to its 6,100 district employees.

SSD employees *need* ways to relieve stress as the largest specialized education provider in Missouri. SSD's staff provides education services and technical education to students in St. Louis County, serving 22 school districts while operating nine additional schools and programs.



Brenda

Insurance and Benefits
Manager

Pile on the COVID-19 pandemic and forced distance learning. "We had to take a step back and reassess how to administer our wellness program," explains Brenda Dooley-Artis, Insurance and Benefits Manager and SSD's wellness program lead. "That's where Wellbeats came into play." The district launched Wellbeats in May of 2020.

Wellbeats enabled SSD to offer all employees virtual fitness, nutrition, and mindfulness classes available anytime and anywhere. "We were able to meet employees where they were during quarantine, whether it was at home, at their desktop, or on their mobile device," says Brenda. "It's a very popular program with our employees. It gave us great flexibility."



Special School District of St. Louis County

CLIENT SUMMARY

- Largest specialized education provider in Missouri
- 6,100 employees
- 265 public schools
- More than 90 wellness champions

KEY CHALLENGES

- Lacked a virtual fitness benefit
- Desire to offer a wellness program that everyone can access
- Most employees worked remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

- **Flexibility:** Wellbeats is available remotely anytime and anywhere
- **Support:** Leadership support + active partners + 90 wellness champions
- **Participation:** October challenge nets >4 times unique logins

It Takes a Village

“The success of SSD’s wellness program is a direct reflection of the support it receives, and it truly takes a village,” says Brenda. “From employees’ participation and engagement; to our 90-plus Wellness Champions throughout the district promoting the various programs; to our partnerships with Aetna, Marsh McLennan Agency, and Personal Assistance Services collaborating on wellness initiatives; to the support of SSD’s Leadership Team – they all are crucial to the success of the wellness program.”

In fact, SSD’s districtwide initiatives are implemented by the Aetna team, with Lisa Bangert, Wellness Account Consultant, taking the lead. “I use Wellbeats’ pre-created communications to promote the program on the SSD portal and administer districtwide custom challenges,” says Lisa.

The Frightfully Fit Challenge in October 2021 was one of SSD’s most popular. “We get input from employees on topics of interest, whether it’s physical activity, gratitude, self-care, or hydration,” says Lisa. “The custom challenge we did in October was really fun and we had good participation, with four times more unique logins in October than in September.” Lisa sends emails weekly during the challenge, “and there’s a calendar tracker so employees can track their progress and then submit the calendar at the end to be entered in a prize drawing.” Prizes supporting employee health and wellbeing include insulated water bottles, Bluetooth scales, yoga sets with a yoga mat and block, and wellness swag such as bags, bottles, and lunch boxes with the SSD wellness logo.

Worksite Wellness Mini-Grant

SSD’s efforts were rewarded in May 2021 with a Worksite Wellness Mini-Grant. “One of our wellness champions brought the competition to our attention and I reached out to Lisa (Bangert) who researched the requirements and started

the application process for us,” says Brenda. Funds from the grant were used to purchase TVs, exercise mats, and yoga equipment for two SSD buildings. [An article in Midwest Health Initiative states](#), “These onsite fitness rooms will enable SSD employees to livestream Wellbeats ‘on the big screen’ while at work.”

SSD Wellness Champions Drive the Program’s Success

It helps that SSD’s 90 volunteer wellness champions have great energy and enthusiasm. Jerry, the central office wellness champion, has developed a following. “He makes it fun,” says Brenda. Jerry does Mindful Monday and Workout Wednesday live segments on Zoom. “He did a flashback to the ‘70s. He was promoting a stretching exercise using fake legs. He put one up over his shoulder while on camera and it was really funny.” Jerry uses Wellbeats’ marketing materials and “adds his own flair to it. A lot of our wellness champions are like that. They’re really enthusiastic.”

Aetna Consultant Notes SSD’s Leadership

Asked to summarize SSD’s wellness program success compared with other organizations, Lisa said: “SSD is definitely a leader. They do the research, they find quality partners to support their programs and initiatives, and they use data to help make decisions, which makes a big difference.”

SSD Classes Played May 2020 – December 2021

142,792
minutes played

9,320
classes played

“

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