

# InnOVATIONS:

## Recognizing Advances in Health Care

An Issue Brief from the St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition

## Stopping Diabetes Before it Starts

**Abstract** *The total cost of diagnosed diabetes in the United States in 2012 was \$245 billion. The high cost of disease maintenance and treatment necessitates innovative approaches to prevention such as focusing on people at risk for developing type 2 diabetes. Pre-diabetes is a precursor to type 2 diabetes, where blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. People with pre-diabetes are at risk for long-term negative health impacts including heart disease and stroke. Around one-third of American adults have pre-diabetes, but very few are aware of this condition.*

*This issue brief focuses on NOT ME, an innovative diabetes prevention program developed by United Healthcare and the YMCA. A key feature of NOT ME is lifestyle change, with target weight loss of 5%-7% and increased physical activity. NOT ME is available in over 200 locations across the nation and is quickly growing across the St. Louis area.*

After 15 years of taking pills to treat his high cholesterol and blood pressure, Eddie Grider received a call from his health plan, United Healthcare (UHC). During the call, Grider learned he may be at high risk for diabetes and that UHC had a new program to help, NOT ME.

Developed by a partnership of the YMCA and UHC, NOT ME is not a disease management or a worksite wellness program, it's a disease prevention program. Pre-diabetes occurs when blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. People with pre-diabetes also are at risk for long-term negative health impacts like heart disease and stroke. Around one-third of American adults have pre-diabetes, but very few are aware of it. Each year, 10% of cases with pre-diabetes will convert to diabetes.

The good news is that people with pre-diabetes can prevent or delay the onset of diabetes by losing just 5% to 7% of their body weight and participating in at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week. The NOT ME program supports people with pre-diabetes in making these changes.

Participants, all of whom have been diagnosed with pre-diabetes, attend 16 small group sessions at a local YMCA or

in their workplace over 20 weeks. Most of the small groups have 8 to 15 participants. The program creates a supportive environment where participants learn strategies for eating healthier, increasing physical activity, and making other changes to improve their overall health and wellbeing.

With the help of NOT ME, Grider has lost 36 pounds, nearly 15% of his bodyweight. He's exercising, eating baked chicken and fish instead of fast food. The lifestyle changes are already resulting in better health.

"After several weeks in the program my doctor was able to take me off my cholesterol medication," Grider said. "At my next visit, I hope to be taken off the blood pressure medication as well."

Many participants are seeing similar results. NOT ME is an evidence-based, pay-for-performance program, shown to

- **More than 30% of Missouri adults are obese, 25% of Missouri adults engage in no leisure time physical activity**

• *In 1995, 4.1% of Missourians had diabetes, by 2012 that rate reached 9.4%*

reduce the risk of developing diabetes by 58% over three years.

“When participants are frustrated and question the process, it is very helpful for coaches to fall back on the fact that NOT ME is an evidence-based program,” said Joyce Hoth, a community health coordinator at the YMCA of Greater St. Louis.

What sets the program apart from traditional disease management and wellness programs **is its pure pay-for-performance model**. Payment to the YMCA is based on each person’s program engagement, participation, and completion, as well as one of two performance measures focused on percentage of weight lost. United Healthcare currently covers the full cost of the program and hopes NOT ME will expand to other national health plans. Individuals outside of United Healthcare’s coverage can still participate in the NOT ME program but they pay the full cost of the program without the pay-for-performance model.

Considering the cost of diabetes, there’s a significant opportunity for return on this investment in prevention. The



Joyce Hoth, Community Health Coordinator, YMCA of Greater St. Louis

total cost of diagnosed diabetes in the United States was \$245 billion in 2012, according to the American Diabetes Association. The study found about \$176 billion of this money went toward direct medical costs and \$69 billion was attributed to reduced work productivity.

Grider, who enrolled in the NOT ME program at the Emerson YMCA in North St. Louis County, said the small group dynamic and coaching encouraged him to stick with the program past the first challenging weeks. He has since met the program’s goals and is now in the maintenance stage, inviting family members to join him in a healthy lifestyle.

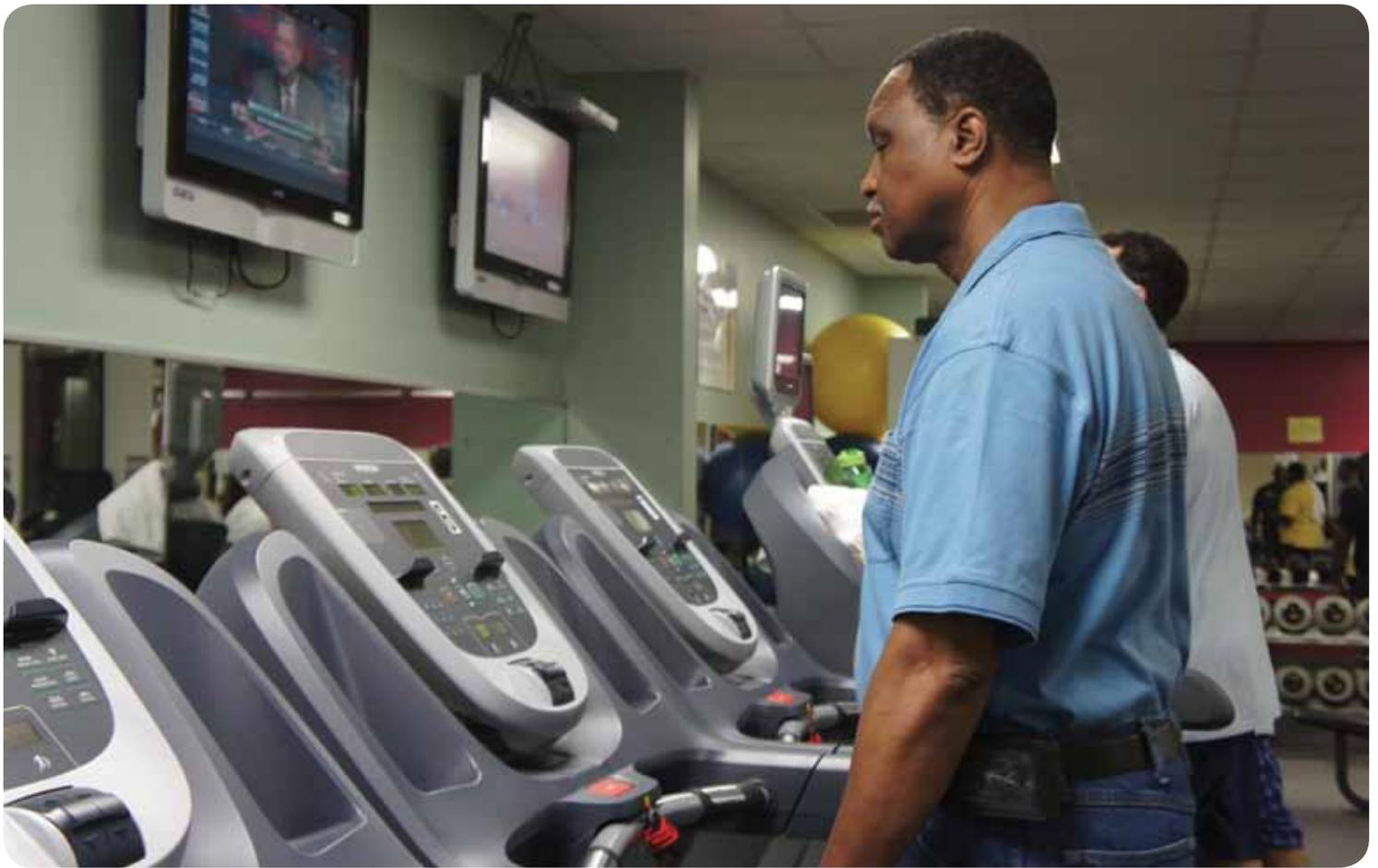
Hoth also sees the benefits of the small group dynamic. Participants may seem intimidated and anxious on day one, but by the sixth week they have grown to be more accountable to each other than to the coach. Hoth believes this type of accountability can encourage long-term adherence to program goals.

The program, which began last year, has enrolled 150 participants across 10 local employers. Sigma-Aldrich Corporation, a BHC member company, joined in 2012. It partnered with United Healthcare to offer on-site diabetes screenings at their two largest locations, St. Louis and Milwaukee. Consistent with national rates, 8% of those screened had blood sugars in the diabetic range and 21% were in the pre-diabetic range. Jen McMahon, Senior Corporate Communications Specialist at Sigma-Aldrich, realizes the importance of evidence-based approaches to employee wellness. “We believe the lifestyle education provided through NOT ME is a practical and realistic way we can support our employees. Not only are we able to help our employees lead healthier lives, we see a secondary benefit of reducing health care costs.”

NOT ME has seen nationwide success in slowing or preventing the development of type 2 diabetes. The program continues to grow locally as well. “With a year under our belts, we are looking to expand our partnerships with health care providers and clinics,” Hoth said. “We would also like to offer the program in the Metro East.” Expanding the location and insurance options will allow hundreds of pre-diabetic St. Louis residents to take control of their health and say, “NOT ME” to diabetes.

### ***Annual Cost of Diabetes in Missouri***

- ***Medical Costs: 2.72 billion***
- ***Work Related Productivity: 850 million***
- ***Total Costs: 3.57 billion***



Eddie Grider learned new ways to be physically active while participating in NOT ME sessions.

## NOT ME At A Glance

- Identification** Synthesize employer's medical claims, demographics and other indicators to identify individuals who match pre-diabetic profiles
- Outreach** Host testing events to screen those at risk; contact eligible participants via multiple channels- telephone, direct marketing, and e-campaigns
- Enrollment** Enroll participants in the 16 session lifestyle program delivered over 20 weeks
- Engagement** The comprehensive program covers weight loss, healthy eating habits, pre-diabetes reduction and risk-factor reduction
- Maintenance** Participants have option of 12 months of "monthly maintenance" to sustain results
- Outcome** Better clinical and financial results:
- Increased physical activity
  - Healthier eating habits
  - Improved nutrition
  - 5% weight loss reduces diabetes conversion by 58%

Source: Diabetes Prevention and Control Alliance

---

## BHC Members

Aegion  
Ameren Corporation  
American Railcar Industries, Inc.  
Anheuser-Busch InBev  
Arch Coal  
Barry-Wehmiller Cos, Inc.  
Bass Pro Shops  
Brown Shoe Company, Inc.  
BUNZL Distribution USA, Inc.  
Charter Communications  
City of St. Louis  
Drury Hotels Company, LLC  
Edward Jones  
Emerson  
Energiizer Holdings, Inc.  
ESCO Technologies  
Ferguson-Florissant School District  
Francis Howell School District  
Global Brass & Copper, Inc.  
Graybar Electric Company, Inc.

Laclede Gas Company  
Laird Technologies, Inc.  
Maines Paper & Food Svc, Inc.  
Metro  
Mississippi Lime Company  
Monsanto Company  
Olin Corporation  
Panera  
Parkway School District  
Peabody Energy  
RockTenn  
Saint Louis County  
Saint Louis Public Schools  
Schnuck Markets, Inc.  
Shelter Insurance  
Sigma-Aldrich Corporation  
Solae Company  
St. Louis Graphic Arts  
Suddenlink Communications  
The Boeing Company

The Doe Run Company  
TheBANK of Edwardsville  
US Bank  
Vi-Jon, Inc.  
Victor Technologies Group Inc.  
Watlow Electric  
World Wide Technology, Inc.  
YRC Worldwide Inc.

## Sustaining Members

Aon-Hewitt  
Buck Consultants  
Lockton Companies  
Mercer  
Towers Watson & Co.

## Purchasing Partners

University of Missouri



8888 Ladue Road, Suite 250  
St. Louis, MO 63124  
(314) 721-7800  
[www.stlbhc.org](http://www.stlbhc.org)