**History of NWI**

Originally, the organization was launched under the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) Foundation, as the Institute for Lifestyle Improvement. Three UWSP faculty at that time—Dennis Elsenrath, EdD, CWP, director of counseling services; Fred Leafgren, PhD, director of student life; and Bill Hettler, MD, CWP, director of health services—joined together with the idea that we, as humans, could live better, healthier lives through the principles of balance and awareness. In 1976, Dr. Hettler released what was to become the base philosophy for the National Wellness Institute: the Six Dimensions of Wellness model. The six dimensions are intellectual, emotional, social, spiritual, occupational, and physical. By balancing these six dimensions and actively seeking to improve them, the organization’s founders believed individuals could improve their overall well-being.

In 1985, the name of the organization was changed to the National Wellness Institute to reflect a more global mission. Then, in 1988, NWI separated from the UWSP Foundation and applied for its own nonprofit status, which was granted August 3, 1989. The National Wellness Institute is a registered 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Stevens Point, Wisconsin.
So, Just What is “Wellness?”

The term wellness has been applied in many ways. Although there might be different views on what wellness encompasses, there is a general agreement that:

- Wellness is a conscious, self-directed and evolving process of achieving full potential
- Wellness is multidimensional and holistic, encompassing lifestyle, mental and spiritual well-being, and the environment
- Wellness is positive and affirming

The definition of wellness, long used by the National Wellness Institute is consistent with these tenets. Wellness is an active process through which people become aware of, and make choices toward, a more successful existence.

Career Options in Wellness

Those who hold a degree in Health Promotion & Wellness can go on to pursue a variety of career options, including, but not limited to:

- Allied Health Professional
- Community Wellness Coordinator
- Corporate Wellness Coordinator
- Counselor
- Health Educator
- Human Resources/Benefits Manager
- Occupational Health & Safety Professional
- Occupational Therapist
- Parks and Recreation Director
- Personal Trainer
- Physical Therapist
- Physician
- Physician Assistant
- Psychiatrist
- Psychologist
- Public Health Administrator
- Social Worker
- Wellness Coach
- Wellness Consultant
- Wellness Coordinator
- Wellness Director
- Wellness/Health Promotion Executive
- Worksite Wellness Specialist

The National Wellness Institute (NWI) was founded in Stevens Point, WI in 1977. It continues its mission to provide health promotion and wellness professionals unparalleled resources and services to fuel professional and personal growth.