

# The Good News About Health Care

(NAPSA)—Despite the long debate about the best ways to improve the accessibility of health care, there is some good news about changes that have taken place in the last two decades.

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, life expectancy at birth has climbed 2.3 years in the last 20 years and the infant mortality rate has dropped 25 percent.

Insurance premiums are down about 5 percent, found a recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation, and according to the Census Bureau, the number of Americans who don't have insurance remains steady.

Companies are also doing their part, creating innovative programs to keep their employees healthy and rewarding them for positive lifestyle choices.

An interesting example is Syngenta, a world-leading agribusiness, which launched its Reaping Rewards program in 1997.

The voluntary program is an incentive-based wellness program that encourages employees to adopt healthful behaviors by awarding “Reaping Rewards Points” for participation in exercise programs, regular physical examinations, an annual health risk assessment and many other wellness-based activities.



**Rewarding employees and spouses for making positive lifestyle changes has worked very well for one worldwide agribusiness.**



Since the program began, more than 70 percent of the company's U.S.-based employees have used the available support services. That's considerably higher than the 40 percent participation that is typical for similar employer programs. Participation may be so high for two reasons:

First, the Reaping Rewards points can be exchanged for cash up to the annual maximum of \$250.

Second, the company is going an extra mile—even thousands of miles—to make it easier for employees to take advantage of health services by making them easily accessible at company clinic sites or via its Mobile Wellness Unit, converted from a 40-foot RV. The staffed and fully equipped health facility travels the U.S. to nearly 80 company sites to conduct health care screenings.

Employees said that having the health services staff members reach out to them personally was often the key element in making lifestyle changes. Those who participated in the program have considerably lower health care expenses.

After reviewing medical claims for spouses, the global maker of agricultural crop protection products and high-quality seeds also sought to enlist employees' spouses in the program. So far, 22 percent of its more than 3,000 U.S. spouses and domestic partners have been screened.

For more information, visit [www.syngenta.com](http://www.syngenta.com).