

***By Carolyn Lee***

### ***The Imperial Republican***

The Upper Republican Natu

ral Resources District (URNRD) is one of 33 Nebraska employers to be honored this year for successful efforts in promoting workplace wellness by the Governor's Excellence in Wellness program.

The NRD won the award through the Grower award division. The Grower award honors businesses and organizations demonstrating significant improvement in employee health behaviors.

The Sower award division recognizes workplaces with quality wellness programs.

"These awards recognize employers for their serious commitment to employee wellbeing," Gov. Dave Heineman said.

"Prevention and wellness efforts in the workplace have produced higher productivity, better employee satisfaction and helped control health care costs. Wellness works every time. These programs are helping more Nebraskans lead healthier lives."

Deb Hayes is the coordinator for the URNRD wellness program. She said the Nebraska Association of Resource Districts became interested in the program for NRDs across the state about two years ago.

Hayes and other NRD coordinators met with WorkWell Inc. and companies already using wellness programs to design their own programs.

The NRD coordinators meet quarterly to share ideas and update their programs.

The URNRD program is designed around three areas upon which employees wanted to improve. Those were eating the daily amount of recommended fruits and vegetables, physical activity, and routine health checkups.

Those are the three categories in which the URNRD applied for and won its award.

Hayes said the 10 employees in the district are keeping fruit in their workplaces, rather than bringing in doughnuts. They are walking more, and increasing the amount of time they walk. Every eight weeks Hayes adds another challenge. During this time period, she has added using a seatbelt while driving.

The staff contributes ideas during meetings, too. They have worked on weight loss, stress management and taking an hour out of the day to spend time with family.

When applying for the award, the URNRD employees completed a health survey. That data was compiled and the percentage of improvement or non-improvement was determined. That information was then sent to the state.

Hayes said the program has definitely benefitted the URNRD employees. People are walking more, one employee has been able to give up blood pressure medication, and several have lost weight.

The URNRD will receive a plaque at a luncheon in Lincoln Oct. 21.

A total of 96 employers have been recognized since the program began three years ago. The award program is a partnership of the Office of the Governor, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, and WorkWell, Inc.