

Memphis business group spotlights health and wellness

By Kevin McKenzie

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Medtronic may be the world's largest medical technology company, but the president of its Memphis-based spinal business, Doug King, thought that the health and wellness policy supporting physical activity for its workers needed shaping up.

U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen praised benefits of the Affordable Care Act and urged more funding for National Institutes of Health research, but said there are "health deserts" in Memphis where people still find it difficult to get health care.

And the chief executive officer of the Governor's Foundation for Health & Wellness, Richard Johnson, challenged a group of Memphis employers already focused on establishing a "culture of health" in their workplaces to compete for a governor's trophy award that will go at the end of this year to the 25 healthiest places to work in Tennessee.

"If you don't have a workplace wellness program ... go start one," Johnson said as parting advice, adding a request that organizations with one encourage others.

The remarks came Tuesday at a Memphis Business Group on Health awards luncheon at Rhodes College.

The luncheon recognized 34 area employers participating in an ongoing CEO Culture of Health initiative meant to help reshape a region regarded as one of the nation's least healthy.

Medtronic Spine is a participant and King said that while healthy food choices were already on the cafeteria menu and in vending machines, policy around physical activity needed attention.

On-site resources are crucial, he said, citing a fitness center, trainers, a two-mile track around the campus area, running clubs and blood pressure monitoring sites in the building.

Memphis Business Group on Health chief executive Cristie Upshaw Travis and Johnson announced that the CEO Culture of Health award winners automatically will also receive state Healthier Tennessee workplace awards.

Johnson said the state effort will bestow similar rewards and recognition on

communities, places of worship and schools that meet goals for encouraging and enabling physical activity, providing healthy food choices and being tobacco free.



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