

J&R Schugel's Worksite Garden

Anytime an employee at J&R Schugel Trucking needs a stress-relieving wellness break, they don't need to walk any further than just outside the front door. There they'll find an inviting worksite garden to help them re-energize and re-focus.

"The garden started out as a type of building morale project," said Michelle Luther, administrative assistant at J&R Schugel. "Sometimes in our industry, it can be pretty stressful, and people go outside and stand around and complain to each other. Now instead, they go out and weed the garden or water it!"

The seeds for a worksite garden were born four years ago after the company moved their air conditioning units up to the roof, leaving an empty slab of cement. There was talk about putting patio furniture in the area when someone suggested a garden. Luther herself got excited about the idea since, like many other employees, she no longer had a garden of her own at home. A committee on building morale was formed through their wellness program and they decided to create the garden.

Luther did extensive research on companion planting and soon, plans for the garden began to take shape. Employee Jeremy Jacobs volunteered his time to build seven raised gardening beds from excess pallets that had been laying around the property, along with a reading bench. The Wellness Committee put different groups in charge of each planting area and tasked them with choosing a stain color for their garden bed and planting the seeds. Now called "Building Morale," the garden space is filled every year with different vegetables, cooking herbs, herbs for tea, ingredients for salsa and flowers.

Jen Maurer, coordinator for the Heart of New Ulm, said, "As businesses continually look for ways to improve employee health and wellbeing, worksite gardens like J&R Schugel's have continued to increase in popularity. Since establishing their wellness committee with the help of The Heart of New Ulm Project back in 2009,



The Heart of New Ulm Worksite Wellness Action Team cites many benefits of worksite gardening, including nutrition, physical activity and stress relief.



J&R Schugel hosted a "Herb-tasting Day" where employees could try herbs or take them home, along with handouts with descriptions, uses and benefits for each different herb.

it's been exciting to see the company's commitment to wellness continue to grow and flourish."

Luther said in a typical year, about three-quarters of their 75 office employees are involved in the garden in one way or another. There's a formalized weekly rotating schedule for employees to weed and/or water, and people regularly go out and pick a bunch of vegetables and then let everyone in the office know what's available to take. All office employees and drivers are also encouraged to stop out in the garden anytime to grab a vegetable for a snack or to take home. There's a reading bench and Luther said their drivers often enjoy sitting there and enjoying the garden.

"We're having a lot of fun with it; experimenting with different things," said Luther. "It's a great way for people to communicate with each other on a non-work basis."



Heart of New Ulm
Supporting a culture of wellness