

SPECIAL FOCUS Health

# Working up a sweat

With the help of Duluth-based BodyRich Fitness, local companies are taking employee healthcare to the next level.

by Danielle Howell

**Kyle Bowen gets his blood** pumping at work. Sweat forms on his forehead. His adrenaline runs high. And all this before he has even clocked in.

Bowen is CEO of Development, Planning and Engineering, or DPE, a Buford-based company. Like more and more businesses in Gwinnett, DPE has an on-site fitness center where Bowen and DPE's 28 other employees can workout without the hassle driving to a gym.

But the benefits don't stop at the treadmill. This gym is complete with personal trainers provided by BodyRich Fitness, a Duluth company that sells and maintains equipment and provides on-site training and fitness classes for employees. DPE and three other companies in the Buford office park share the cost for the state-of-the-art center, which features a steam room and an aerobic space.

Bowen says the cost of operating the gym is well worth the payout.

"I think the physical fitness of your employees will

be reflected in the work they provide for you," he says. "At the end of the day, they can work off that stress. They are happier, they'll feel better and they will have more energy."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, exercise reduces feelings of depression, anxiety and stress, helps people lose weight and allows adults to move around without getting tired. It also improves the quality of sleep. Exercise is recommended three to five times a week, but even people who only work out twice a week start to see results, according to studies.

Businesses across the nation are creating on-site gyms and other wellness incentives to combat rising health care costs, says BodyRich founder Rich Barton. Healthier employees mean fewer sick days and more focused and effective workers.

"I've definitely noticed a lot of CEOs are looking long term to see what they can do," Barton says. "By investing in wellness programs and personal trainers, they are seeing profit because they are reducing health care costs."

Twice a week, two personal trainers from BodyRich are sent to the corporate

gym for two-hour visits. They show members how to use the equipment and help them develop workout regimes and suggest diet changes that will improve their overall health.

Employees like workplace gyms because they are convenient and often cheaper than memberships to a traditional fitness center. DPE's workers pay only \$35 a month for the membership. The fee is drafted directly from their paycheck.

"They don't even have to change parking spaces to workout," Barton says. "It definitely takes away a lot of the excuses."



BodyRich CEO Rich Barton assists BodyRich member Doug Burns.

PHOTO BY DANNY GRIFFIN

Guaranty Mortgage employees also have access to the gym. President Sandie Tate says the fitness center does more than make it easy for people to get in shape – it encourages team building and helps employees get to know each other in a new environment.

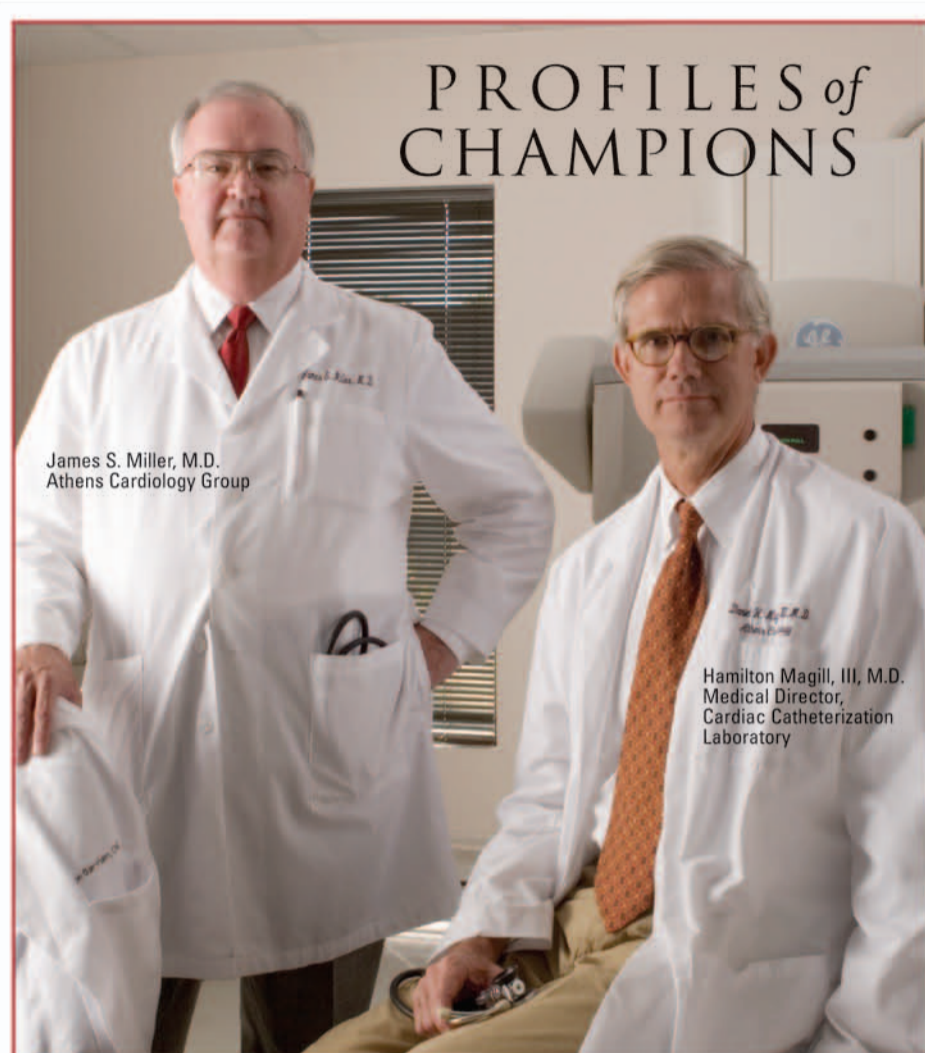
"When you play with someone there is not as much fussing and fighting at work," Tate says. "They are becoming friends with people they never thought they would become friends with."

Tate says offering a gym is one more way to attract and retain good employees.

"I see it like an employee benefit, like a 401-K and so I budget for it," she says.

Companies that don't have space for on-site gyms are still investing in the corporate-wellness trend. Glenn White, CEO of First Bank of the South, provides workout opportunities for his 50 employees at BodyRich's Duluth gym. After working out with BodyRich for several years, he became convinced of the benefits of exercise on overall wellness.

"I think more employers will start looking at corporate wellness programs," White says. "It's had a big difference on how our employees interact at work and it's given them a more positive attitude."



James S. Miller, M.D.  
Athens Cardiology Group

Hamilton Magill, III, M.D.  
Medical Director,  
Cardiac Catheterization  
Laboratory

YOU SEE PIONEERS IN CARDIOLOGY.  
LEADERS IN CARDIAC CARE.  
WE SEE CHAMPIONS.

They met in medical school, both with an interest in cardiology, and eventually decided to become business partners and open Athens Cardiology Group in Dr. Magill's hometown. That was 1977 and Athens was lacking in cardiac care. "We were the first 'specialists' to come to Athens," says Dr. Miller. "At that time there was no cardiac testing in this area – not even a treadmill."

From those humble beginnings, these two men have spearheaded a revolution in cardiac care in northeast Georgia. "We saw the potential and the need in this community," says Dr. Magill. "And having a hospital like ARMC that has always supported us with advanced technology and a superior staff has enabled the cardiac care community to become one of the best in the country."

"I can't think of a better profession to be in," added Dr. Miller. "We see improvements made in healthcare almost every day that ultimately benefit our patients and this region."

At ARMC, we are honored to recognize these two men as Champions. Their work-ethic, medical knowledge and passion for excellence serves as inspiration for each one of us.

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