

## All About Values

An Interview with Ron Williams,  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Aetna Inc.

**EDITORS' NOTE** Ron Williams joined Aetna in 2001, and was named CEO in February 2006 and Chairman of the Board in October 2006. He serves on the Board of Directors of American Express Company and is Vice Chairman of The Business Council. He also serves as Chairman of the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare and is a trustee of The Conference Board and the Connecticut Science Center Board. In January 2010, he Co-Chaired the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland.

Williams is a graduate of Roosevelt University and holds an M.S. in Management from the Sloan School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



Ron Williams

**COMPANY BRIEF** Serving 36.1 million people with information and resources to help them make informed health care decisions, Aetna Inc. ([www.aetna.com](http://www.aetna.com)) is one of the nation's leading diversified health care benefits companies, and offers a broad range of traditional and consumer-directed health insurance products and related services, including medical, pharmacy, dental, behavioral health, group life and disability plans, and medical management capabilities and health care management services for Medicaid plans. Their customers include employer groups, individuals, college students, part-time and hourly workers, health plans, governmental units, government-sponsored plans, labor groups, and expatriates.

### Would you highlight the importance of social responsibility and community involvement to the culture of Aetna?

At Aetna, we live by core values that naturally lead us to being a good corporate citizen. We believe that both giving and volunteering are vital to building and maintaining strong communities. Our employees demonstrate community spirit every day – it truly is embedded in our culture.

### Would you provide an overview of some of the corporate social responsibility programs that Aetna supports?

The notion of corporate social responsibility at Aetna goes beyond our work with the Aetna Foundation and community relations. It also includes leadership in public policy, valuing diversity, and a commitment to the environment. For several years, we have been actively

working to help transform the health care system in ways that will achieve greater access, quality, and affordability for all Americans. We also recently installed solar panels and a rooftop garden on one of our newly renovated buildings on our Connecticut campus to help reduce energy consumption and to improve air quality.

### How do your corporate social responsibility efforts align with Aetna's business strategy?

Our commitment to sustainability is a natural extension of being a health insurer. We're in the business of helping people live full and healthy lives, and embracing our corporate citizenship is fundamental to our ability to fulfill that mission. We have been active leaders in reducing racial and ethnic disparities in health care and have awarded more than \$30 million in support of these initiatives since 2001. We were the first insurer to ask members to voluntarily provide us with racial and ethnic information to help create more culturally focused disease management programs. We have invested in increasing cultural competency among health care professionals. We are also working with communities to improve health literacy and support their efforts to adopt healthier lifestyles in areas such as nutrition, weight management, and physical fitness.

### How do you measure the success of your programs?

The success of our programs can be measured in a variety of ways. We've seen that we can have a positive effect on people's health through the work we're doing with our customers and community partners. Our relationship with Magic Johnson Enterprises has had great success in launching community programs with measurable results. One of our recent programs helped elementary school children in Houston decrease their net body mass index and improve their overall fitness and flexibility. In addition, surveys we've conducted of both plan sponsors and individual consumers have shown that our investment in communities significantly improves Aetna's brand image and helps to attract new customers.

### Are you focused on partnering in your programs and would you highlight some of these relationships?

Partnering with external organizations has given us insight into how we can broaden our reach into communities. In addition to our efforts

with Magic Johnson Enterprises, we participate in the Alliance Healthcare Initiative, established in part by President Clinton. The initiative focuses on addressing childhood obesity through innovative health benefits offerings. We are working with our customers to change benefit programs to include coverage for nutrition and obesity counseling for children, before health complications like diabetes occur. This is giving us insights into how to improve health outcomes and lower health care costs through a greater focus on prevention.

### How do you engage employees in Aetna's social responsibility efforts?

We have a very motivated and engaged workforce at Aetna. We regularly promote opportunities for employees to support communities through volunteer work and financial donations. With help from Aetna's 50 volunteer councils across the country, our employees have logged nearly 2 million hours of community service since 2003. Another area of employee engagement was our tremendous growth in the Aetna Citizen Action Network, which educates employees on public policy issues and encourages their involvement at the grassroots level.

### How do you define the role of leadership in communicating Aetna's efforts and programs to employees?

Aetna has a long-standing tradition of giving back to the communities in which we live and work. This holds true for Aetna's leaders as well. Hewing to our values, Aetna's leaders are highly committed to our communities and to giving back. They regularly participate on the boards of nonprofit organizations, are actively involved in their local volunteer councils, and freely share their knowledge and experience within their communities, which in turn sets a great example for our employees.

### What are your key priorities for Aetna in regard to your corporate social responsibility efforts going forward?

Key priorities include our continued involvement in transforming America's health care system. We are also focused on helping to address some of our nation's most pressing health challenges, including the rising rates of obesity, as well as continuing to promote racial and ethnic equity in health care and advancing integrated health care that leads to high-quality, cost-effective care. As we expand internationally, we will need to develop partnerships in the new geographies we enter, as addressing chronic and infectious diseases on a global scale will become increasingly important. ●