



For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

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## Public Employees Walk This Way in May



County, city and other governmental agency employees throughout the valley will be hitting the pavement next week participating in the fifth annual **Walking Works! Challenge**. A coalition of public agency employees who are part of the San Joaquin Valley Insurance Authority (SJVIA) are competing in the walking wellness event, the week of May 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>. The SJVIA received 7,500 pedometers donated by Anthem Blue Cross which have been distributed to the employees who will participate in the Walking Works! Challenge, to encourage members to improve their physical fitness and provide for a friendly competition between participants. Last year, 17 agencies participated and logged 118 million steps during the weeklong challenge. Employees are competing within their own city, county or agency as well as against the other agencies of similar size. Tulare County had the highest number of steps walked last year, while Fresno County won in the category of highest number of participants for the large size employers. Among the smaller sized entities in Group 2, the City of Modesto logged the highest number of steps while the City of Reedley had the highest number of participants. In Group 3 the City of Oakdale had the highest participation and the City of San Joaquin achieved the highest number of steps.

SJVIA President and Tulare County Supervisor Pete Vander Poel proclaimed "The SJVIA is excited to present a friendly competition to its member agencies. This is a fantastic opportunity to challenge fellow employees, represent your jurisdiction, and improve your own health and wellbeing while doing so. I hope participation continues to increase this year as it has in previous years. Good luck to all!"

The SJVIA Board of Directors approved the Walking Works Challenge as a way to promote wellness for its members, and do their part to keep overall medical costs down for each entity. Wellness programs can help prevent costly illnesses early by providing screening exams, online tools and information and activities that encourage healthy behaviors. "One of the goals of the Walking Works Challenge is to encourage exercise and healthy living beyond the one week competition" notes SJVIA Vice President and Fresno County Supervisor Brian Pacheco.

The SJVIA was formed in 2009 for the purpose of achieving greater critical mass for health insurance volume purchasing by public entities and reducing administrative costs. Collaboration in purchasing health insurance and wellness efforts have proven to be a successful model for the 25 participating Counties, Cities, Courts and the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District.