



Walking Works!



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For Immediate Release

Culture of Wellness takes hold in Central Valley Cities and Counties

Several City and County agencies are collaborating successfully to mitigate the rising cost of health insurance for their employees. The County of Fresno & Tulare, City of Tulare, Ceres & Waterford participate in the San Joaquin Valley Insurance Authority (SJVIA), a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) organized under the State of California, offering medical benefits to Cities, Counties and Special Districts statewide. Focused wellness efforts that change behavior and raise awareness are an important component of this successful collaboration.

Last week, SJVIA member entities, concluded a walking challenge called “***Walking Works!***” to encourage members to improve their physical fitness and provide friendly competition with other valley participants. The Counties of Tulare and Fresno, and Cities of Tulare and Ceres all agreed to participate. The week-long Walking Works Challenge concluded May 24th, and resulted in hundreds of employees participating and thousands of steps reported each day. Thousands of pedometers were provided to employees based on the SJVIA’s partnership with Anthem Blue Cross and Delta TeamCare. Supervisor Henry Perea of the County of Fresno states, “Walking is a simple form of physical activity that can be done almost anywhere. The enthusiasm and awareness raised during this campaign encouraged our employees to make a simple change in their lives and walk at least 30 minutes per day, five days a week.” Participants reported improved fitness awareness that will translate to changing everyday behaviors. Paul Nerland, Employee Benefits Manager, County of Fresno reflected, “This is a feel good story for all the entities involved. We had a great time, improved our fitness consciousness, and encouraged our employees to be proactive with their health decisions on a daily basis. The competition and collaboration with other entities made this effort even more successful.”

The SJVIA has averaged a 3.5% increase in annual benefit renewals since 2009, which is well below the industry average of 7.8% annually, and credits its wellness initiatives as a vital component. Jeff Cardell, the Human Resources Director for Tulare County states, “Wellness is a priority for any public entity wishing to keep health costs down for their members, and insure the wellbeing of their employees. We will promote healthy habits as part of the SJVIA culture and approach, and will encourage active participation by our employees. ” Wellness programs can help catch costly illnesses early by providing screening tests, online tools and information, and integrated platforms that keep employees healthy and proactive.

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