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### Central Valley City and County employees are walking their way to fitness!

A coalition of Counties and Cities who participate in the San Joaquin Valley Insurance Authority (SJVIA) are collaborating employee wellness efforts by competing in a “**Walking Works Challenge**” to encourage members to improve their physical fitness and provide friendly competition between participants. Not only are employees competing by departments but the Cities and Counties are also competing for the most participation and average number of steps per day! The Counties of Fresno and Tulare, and Cities of Tulare, Ceres, San Joaquin, Reedley, Shafter, Sanger, Wasco, Riverbank, Farmersville and Gustine are all participating and competing by walking daily and recording results the week of **May 5th – May 9th!**

The SJVIA has worked with its wellness partners, Anthem Blue Cross, Delta Wellness Consultants and Gallagher Benefit Services, in providing free pedometers for employees who participate in the program! County of Fresno Board of Supervisors Chairman Andreas Borgeas commented, “*Wellness has always been a priority for the County and the SJVIA. This is the third year we have had a walking challenge, and it gets bigger and better each year! We realize that improved fitness consciousness leads to happier employees and a healthier workforce, and that is positive for all involved.*”. Last year thousands of employees participated and the competition encouraged teams to walk together and record their results. Participants reported improved fitness awareness that will translate to changing everyday behaviors.

The SJVIA Board of Directors approved the Walking Works Challenge as a way to promote wellness for its members, and do its part to keep overall medical costs down for each member entity. Wellness programs can help prevent costly illnesses early by providing screening tests, online tools and information, and integrated platforms that keep employees healthy and proactive. “*In the end, this effort is about encouraging employees to be proactive with their health on a daily basis.*” said SJVIA Board of Directors Vice Chairman and County of Tulare Supervisor, Pete Vander Poel.

The SJVIA was formed 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 has proven to be a successful model for participating Counties and Cities. The SJVIA has averaged single digit increases in annual benefit costs since 2009, which is well below the national average and credits wellness initiatives as a vital component.

For more information, please contact Stacy Borchardt at Gallagher Benefit Services ([stacy\\_borchardt@ajg.com](mailto:stacy_borchardt@ajg.com)), Paul Nerland, SJVIA Manager ([pnerland@co.fresno.ca.us](mailto:pnerland@co.fresno.ca.us)) or Rhonda Sjostrom, SJVIA Assistant Manager ([rsjostro@co.tulare.ca.us](mailto:rsjostro@co.tulare.ca.us)).

# Walking Works! Pictures









