

# COUNTY OF VENTURA MEMORANDUM

## County Executive Office HUMAN RESOURCES DIVISION

DATE: February 15, 2018

TO: Labor Management Committee on Health Care

FROM: Renee Davis, Wellness Program Program Assistant

SUBJECT: Wellness Program Annual Report

Attached is a copy of the Wellness Program Annual Report for 2017.

Below is a brief summary.



### Wellness Program Background

- Began in 1985 as cost containment strategy from recommendation of Labor Management Committee
- Recipient of numerous awards, including C. Everett Koop National Health Award and California Fit Business "Gold" Award
- Successfully completed a VC-Well Rewards program with Fitbit incentives to encourage program participation and healthier behavior
- Emphasis on fitness, nutrition & healthy living continued throughout 2017 with the "Healthier You" and "Healthier Together" campaigns

### Goals and Objectives

- Overall goal: to promote health and well-being, and help control increases in health care costs
- Primary objective: to provide education and resources to help employees identify and reduce health risks before serious health problems occur

### Health Management Strategies

- Health risk appraisal (HRA), biometric screening and follow-up
- High risk health coaching
- Health education classes and seminars (i.e. nutrition, fitness, stress, healthy living, chronic disease management)
- Physical activity challenges
- Incentives
- Healthy work environment, tools and awareness campaigns

### Participation

- 1220 Wellness Profile HRA's, 885 Biometric Screenings, 58 new Health Track participants, 3160 class attendance
- 1,500 WELLtrek Challenge users--In 3 competitions, County employees walked over 868 million steps & burned over 39 million calories
- Approximately 1,300 in combined health fair attendance (Corporate Games Fair, Taste of Wellness Fair/Farmers' Market and Employee Health & Financial Wellness Fair)
- 363 County Employees participated in the Corporate Games 5k event--a record turnout!

### Risks Identified

- 64% low physical activity, 74% overweight or obese, 18% diabetes/prediabetes, 42% elevated blood pressure, 65% had a low fruit/vegetable intake

### Risks Reduced

- Reported changes: 73% increased physical activity, 86% increased intake of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, 73% managed stress more effectively, 81% reported being more productive at work

*"I walk a lot more which helps me keep my energy level up to make it through my work day." ~Wellness Program participant*



*Thank you for supporting the Wellness Program. As you will see from the comments attached, participants have benefited in many ways from the Wellness Program.*

*Please feel free to contact me at 654-2628 or [renee.davis@ventura.org](mailto:renee.davis@ventura.org) if you have any questions or would like further information. Visit the Wellness Program website at <http://www.ventura.org/vcwell>.*

# COUNTY OF VENTURA

# WELLNESS PROGRAM

**Annual Report**  
2017



**Promoting Good Health and Helping Manage Health Care Costs**

**County Executive Office • Human Resources Division**

## **I. Program Background**

Expenditures for health care in the United States have skyrocketed over the past decades, far outpacing increases for workers' wages and inflation. The rates of increase are unsustainable for employers and employees alike. According to the CDC, chronic diseases account for 75% of health care spending. Additionally, experts estimate that lifestyle related factors may cause as much as 75% of all chronic disease. Research studies have documented the effectiveness of workplace wellness programs in reducing lifestyle risk factors and associated costs. Consequently, increasing numbers of U.S. employers offer wellness programs at the workplace.

In 1983, the County of Ventura experienced a 71% increase in medical claims. In response, the Board of Supervisors approved a Labor Management Committee recommendation to establish the County's Wellness Program as part of the solution to help contain escalating health care costs. Since initiated in 1985, the Wellness Program has continued to receive recognition for the success of its cost-effective strategies. Honors received by the County's Wellness Program include the: C. Everett Koop National Health Award, California Fit Business "Gold" Award, Health Action Leadership Award, National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Award, Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Commendation, National Association for Worksite Health Promotion Business and Industry Award and the Exemplary Public Worksite Health Promotion Program Award by the National Association of Public Worksite Health Promotion, in association with the Council of State Governments.

The County's 2011-2016 Strategic Plan workforce focus area included a goal to "Champion and invest in workplace policies, programs and practices that promote the overall health and well-being of all County employees" with the key message "... a healthy workforce contributes to happy and productive employees that are better able to serve the community." In alignment, the Wellness Program launched a new VC-WELL (Ventura County Working Energetically Loving Life) initiative in 2016. VC-WELL included a Get Fit, Eat Well and Live Well Campaign. The VC-WELL initiative was so well received that VC-WELL has become the official name and logo for the County of Ventura's Wellness Program going forward. The emphasis on fitness, nutrition and healthy living was continued throughout 2017 with the "Healthier You" and "Healthier Together" campaigns.

## **II. Program Design/Health Management Strategies**

The overall goal of the County's Wellness Program (VC-WELL) is to promote health and well-being of County employees, and help control increases in health care costs. The primary objectives are to:

1. Provide education and resources to help employees identify and reduce health risks before serious health problems occur.
2. Provide special follow-up and assistance to employees identified at highest risk for preventable illnesses and excessive medical costs.
3. When health problems do exist, help employees make lifestyle changes to better manage their condition.

VC-WELL incorporates the following evidence based population health management strategies toward achieving results:

#### Health Risk Appraisal/Biometric Screening

Research has demonstrated that health risk appraisals (HRA's) which include follow-up are key components for an effective wellness program. VC-WELL's Wellness Profile provides participants with a comprehensive HRA. To make the HRA more meaningful participants can have biometrics included from their physician or the Wellness Profile screening which measures blood pressure, BMI, waist girth, total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, triglycerides and glucose. Wellness Profile participants receive the results of their HRA at a follow-up seminar where they get education and assistance setting health improvement goals. All participants discovered with high-risk conditions receive prompt personal follow-up and referrals as appropriate. All personal information remains completely confidential and is protected in compliance with HIPAA.

#### Health Coaching

Best-practice research also demonstrates the value of risk reduction coaching for high-risk employees within the context of a comprehensive program. VC-WELL offers Health Track, a health coaching intervention aimed at those employees at highest risk. Wellness Profile participants identified with significant risk factors such as high blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol are invited to join Health Track. Participants are assigned a Health Track coach who teaches, assists, guides and supports them with difficult lifestyle changes. Health Track coaches are health professionals such as Registered Dietitians and Certified Diabetes Educators. Prenatal and smoking cessation health coaching is also available.

#### Health Education Classes and Seminars

VC-WELL provides educational classes and seminars to help employees make lifestyle changes to reduce their health risks and improve their quality of life. Topics especially focus on areas of nutrition, fitness, stress management, healthy living and chronic conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. Classes are generally scheduled at noontime or by Department request. VC-WELL also offers stress management classes through the County's Training Division and Employee Assistance Programs and collaborates with the Work/Life Programs to offer parenting seminars.

#### Physical Activity Challenges

In 2017, VC-WELL introduced WELLtrek Challenges. WELLtrek utilizes a web based and mobile accessible platform that allows employees to track their actual steps/physical activities to progress along a virtual journey while participating in friendly individual and interdepartmental competitions. WELLtrek provides a fun way to get and stay fit while adding important technology and social support features to VC-WELL. In 2017 Employees and spouses participated in three 6-Week competitions: "WELLtrek Corporate Games Challenge", "Epic Walks Around the Globe" team competition" and "Celebrations around the World" Department Challenge.

#### Incentives

Incentives are increasingly being utilized by employers to encourage greater participation in workplace wellness programs. The County's 2011-2016 Strategic Plan workforce focus area included an objective to develop and fund a wellness incentive program. In



accordance, the VC-WELL Rewards incentive program was implemented in 2017. Through VC-WELL Rewards, Regular County employees were able to qualify for a limited number of Fitbit vouchers by meeting three criteria: 1) completing the Wellness Profile HRA, 2) having a biometric screening through their physician or VC-WELL and 3) using the WELLtrek platform.

#### Healthy Work Environment, Tools, and Awareness Campaigns

VC-WELL also promotes an environment supportive of healthy lifestyles with events like the Taste of Wellness Fair/Farmers' Market and Health and Financial Wellness Fair both offered in 2017. The VC-WELL website provides resources to encourage physical activity including walking maps and shower/locker facilities for County work locations and a local health club discount listing. The website also provides tools for healthier eating like tips for healthier foods at meetings, potlucks and special events. Wellness posters near County vending machines help employees identify healthier snacks and by the elevators remind employees to incorporate physical activity into their workday.

### **III. Program Participation**

Participation in VC-WELL has been strong. In 2017, 1220 participants completed the Wellness Profile HRA. Of those, 885 had a biometric screening (278 through their physician and 607 through VC-WELL). 58 joined the Health Track high-risk coaching program. VC-WELL classes were attended by approximately 3160 participants and 311 class sessions were offered for a total of 3348 training hours. Class training hours are defined as the total number of class hours attended by participants. Almost all of those training hours were attended on the employee's own time, usually during their lunch hour. *Employee interest in Wellness classes is actually much greater than reflected in program participation statistics. If calculations included employees who had signed up for classes, but were unable to attend, total class attendance would have been more than twice as high.*

Through the VCWELL Rewards incentive program, 433 additional Fitbit Vouchers were awarded. Approximately 1,500 utilized the WELLtrek Challenge platform. Together County employees walked over 868 million steps (17.5 times around the earth) and burned 39,097,260 calories in the three 2017 WELLtrek competitions. A record number of 363 County employees participated in the Corporate Games 5k event. Approximately 1,300 (combined), attended the 2017 health fairs: "Corporate Games Fair", "Taste of Wellness Fair/Farmers' Market" and "Employee Health and Financial Wellness Fair".

Efforts have continued to make the Wellness Program accessible to more employees. County employees can request VC-WELL Programs at their work location using VC-WELL's online request form. In 2017, the Wellness Profile Program and Health Track Program were extended to County employees and their spouses at 13 different work locations and about an equal number of VC-WELL class sessions were held at outlying locations as were offered at the County Government Center.

The VC-WELLtrek virtual-challenge platform, which was used to facilitate healthy competition among employees, enabled employees and their spouses to participate in Wellness Program activities regardless of their work location.

#### IV. Risks Identified and Reduced

VC-WELL has been successful in identifying and reducing risk factors associated with today's leading causes of death and disease. Table 1 summarizes the risks identified among those who joined VC-WELL in 2017. Participants identified with elevated lab values were referred for appropriate medical follow-up. Many of those identified with high risks were previously unaware of their condition.

**Table 1**

<b>Initial Status of Wellness Profile Participants 2017</b>	
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Factors</b>
64% (777)	Got less than recommended physical activity
15% (183)	Had elevated cholesterol
2% (28)	Smoked
74% (1067)	Were overweight or obese
42% (457)	Had elevated blood pressure
18% (217)	Had diabetes/prediabetes
48% (644)	Had at least one high stress indicator present
65.4% (798)	Had a low fruit/vegetable intake

Table 2 displays results reported by Wellness Profile participants one year after entering the program. Wellness Profile participants reported significant lifestyle changes. Those who also joined the Health Track health coaching program reported even greater lifestyle changes. For example, 73% of Health Track participants reported increasing their physical activity and 86% reported increasing their whole grains, fruits and vegetables. In separate surveys, 77% of WELLtrek Challenge participants reported increased physical activity and 100% of Yoga participants reported managing stress more effectively and increased productivity at work.

**Table 2**

<b>2017 Wellness Profile 12 Month Follow-up Self-Reported Individual Progress Data</b>		
<b>How have you done in the following areas?</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
1. Have you increased your physical activity?	73% (96)	27% (36)
2. If you were overweight, have you lost weight?	56% (53)	44% (41)
3. Are you drinking less alcohol (including beer and wine)?	56% (36)	44% (28)
4. Have you reduced or quit smoking	67% (4)	33% (2)
5. Have you reduced your intake of fat?	77% (101)	23% (30)
6. Increased your intake of whole grains, fruit and vegetables?	86% (113)	14% (18)
7. Have you reduced your intake of sodium?	61% (72)	39% (47)

8. Are you managing stress more effectively?	73% (85)	27% (32)
9. Have you been more productive at work?	81% (87)	19% (21)

## V. Savings

In more than three decades of research, the University of Michigan Health Management Research Center (HMRC) has demonstrated the association between health risks and excess health care costs. The research has clearly documented that increased health risks equate to higher health care costs, whereas lower risks equate to lower overall costs. Presence of multiple combinations of risk factors provides a better prediction of future claims experience than any single factor. Based on the risk factor combinations of Wellness Profile participants in 2017 (Table 3), Wellsource, an industry leader in Health Assessment and Prevention Systems, calculates the average preventable health care cost per County Wellness participant at \$5,945 per year. Even if only a 20% risk reduction rate were achieved, the more conservative average preventable cost per Wellness Profile participant would be \$1,189 per year.

These estimates do not even include reduced absenteeism, increased productivity or other areas impacted by lifestyle risk reductions. In 2017, of County Wellness Profile participants reported they have “been more productive at work” and 45% reported that they have “taken off less sick days”. Furthermore, based on the initial risk factor combinations of Wellness Profile participants in 2017, Wellsource calculates the average participant may add seven years to his or her life expectancy by maintaining good health practices.

**Table 3**

<b>Wellness Profile Participant FY 2017 Initial Risk Factor Combinations</b>	
<b>Number of Risk Factors</b>	<b>Percent of People</b>
0 Risk Factors	22.3% (272)
1 Risk Factor	27.9% (340)
2 to 3 Risk Factors	36% (434)
4 to 5 Risk Factors	12% (140)
6 or more Risk Factors	3% (34)

## VI. Participant Satisfaction

VC-WELL participants complete evaluation forms at the end of most programs. Participants consistently give the highest ratings possible for Wellness programs offered. On the evaluation forms, many participants express their appreciation for the increased awareness, improvements in health status and overall improvement in quality of life. For example:

*“I've been doing wellness profiles for over 20 years - last year I was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, discovered as a direct result of my wellness profile. Out of the blue and totally unexpected (no family history). I'm thankful for this service and appreciate the educational programs too.”*

See Attachment “A” for a larger sampling of participant comments from 2017.

## **VII. Conclusion**

Preventable illness makes up a large portion of the nation’s health care costs. Scientific studies have established the ability of worksite health promotion programs to decrease health care costs and increase productivity. The County’s health plans will spend millions of dollars this year to treat the illnesses of employees and their families. For only a tiny fraction of what the County will spend on treatment, the Wellness Program provides an important investment in prevention. It is a wise investment to pay the small cost for a cholesterol education program instead of the high fees associated with bypass surgery or stroke recovery; or to provide cancer screening education instead of paying the costs instead of the tragic costs of a low birth weight baby. The results of the County’s Wellness Program to date and the individual testimonies received from participants make clear the VC-WELL will benefit the health and well-being of the County and its employees not only this year, but well into the future.

**Attachment “A”**  
**2017 Employee-Satisfaction Comments**

**Ventura County Employees are “Working Energetically and Loving Life”**

*“The Wellness Program made me aware of my statistics. It also alerted me to the areas where I need improvement. Also, the Wellness-Program-sponsored walks/competitions have motivated me to walk and move more.”*

*“More conscious of what I take and more exercise. The Fitbit has made me move more.”*

*“It is a great opportunity to have blood work and analysis done. It is wonderful you put it all together to measure and assist us with where we need to emphasize improvement. This is a terrific program you offer. Thank you so much.”*

*“I have lost about 25 pounds over the last year and drink less. My Blood Pressure is much lower than it was...”*

*“I keep better track of my cholesterol and I walk more.”*

*“I am more active. I remind myself almost every minute to move more at work, taking that extra step to deliver messages. I find talking to people at work about work is more productive than sending an e-mail.”*

*“It gives me a baseline on my fitness/nutrition and also how I am doing. I think this program is wonderful.”*

*“I have definitely increased my level of activity since the Welltrek competitions and wearing a Fitbit. I have seen a huge increase in my department in activity levels and a lot of weight loss. I think this program was a brilliant idea!”*

*“The Wellness Program is a program that I may not normally be able to afford to partake in -- thank you for providing it as a free services to all staff.”*

*“The Wellness Program encouraged me to schedule annual appointments with my physician.”*

*“I lost the majority of my weight in 2003 after doing the Wellness profile and meeting with [my Health Track Coach]. I lost 50 pounds then and have lost an additional 10 pounds in the last year...”*

*“The Fitbit has helped with monitoring my heart rate as well as pushing me when I work out.”*

*“I've really enjoyed this program immensely. Both my husband and myself do the screenings routinely. Love that you've incorporated the FitBit give-away. We haven't stopped moving since. Keep up the great work.”*

*“Even though I have not lost any weight I feel very strong and healthy...”*

*"I love the exercise programs, the health fairs, the speakers, the step counting program, and all aspects of the very motivating Wellness Program."*

*"The Wellness Program has improved my cholesterol level significantly. It dropped by 40 units."*

*"The Wellness Program gave me incentive to get in better physical shape. In addition, regular physical activity helps to handle life stress. It feels great to be fit and to be able to participate in sometimes strenuous activities (I recently hiked to the top of the Pt Mugu trail and up & down canyons on Santa Cruz Island...and I am not a spring chicken). My clothing is more comfortable. I have gotten into the habit of walking during work breaks...."*

*"The Wellness Profile provided important information as related to my health status and areas for improvement. This has led to increased physical activity on my part and served as a motivator for sustaining effort. The overall Wellness Program generally has been helpful, as it offers participants/employees a way to stay informed of programs that are available."*

*"I am now more aware of lifestyle change to live a much healthier life."*

*"The Wellness Program has helped improve with my food choices, helped me keep up with my daily activity."*

*"Fitbit made me more aware of my activity levels."*

*"Has been instrumental with My Back Pain & Stress Management"*

*"Encouraged me to choose healthy fats and more fruits and vegetables. It is helpful to see change in wellness scores over time and either encourages me to stay on track or make changes"*

*"Doing the Wellness profile every year keeps me accountable when it comes to my health and health habits. It gives me a baseline and helps me make achievable health goals because it is such a comprehensive health analysis. I really appreciate it."*

*"Have lost 20 pound--. Walking an extra one mile daily".*

*"I received proper and very helpful information to better take care of my health. The resources presented to me were perfect."*

*"My triglycerides levels were very high before going on the Wellness Program. With my [Health Track Coach's] coaching and changing the way I eat the numbers are significantly lower."*

*"By bringing awareness from my wellness results it helped to motivate me to do more to improve my health."*

*"It helps to keep me aware of what I need to do to improve my health"*

*"Gave me concrete knowledge of my health with specific, reasonable steps I could take to improve. Also, the free fit bit has helped me stay mindful of my exercise goals"*

*"The results of each Wellness Profile are a wake-up call and part of my program to attempt and achieve improvement. I'm grateful for the program."*

*"I like to make certain that I managing my health as I am getting older. It is convenient and well worth the time to do this on a yearly basis."*

*"It keeps me on check and maintains me motivated to continue living a healthy lifestyle and improve on areas that I may need to improve. I love getting the results and compare them year after year. Its like a reassurance tool that confirms me that living a healthier life style and making better choices does make a difference in my body and overall health."*

*"Helps me to get motivated to eat better and exercise and lose weight.... I know I have to make different choices....not easy to manage in our busy lives of children and work....but I appreciate the wellness program.....helps with info necessary to improve health and fitness."*

*"I like to get a sense of where I'm at physically through this program. It helps me set the bar for myself as the year progresses."*

*"It has made me take the time to take care of myself"*

*"I am out walking a lot more than I have in the past."*

*"The yoga classes have greatly reduced my back and leg pain."*

*"Every aspect of life and work is improved by the yoga classes you provide. Thank you."*

*"I am very grateful for the Wellness Program, I have attended yoga, meditation and other activities that have been new to me. It has provided me with different ways of staying healthy. Thank you very much."*

*"The Wellness Program has significantly impacted my daily life. I feel so good after taking an exercise class that it motivates me to remain active."*

*"I love the Wellness Program classes! All the activity benefits my health & my productivity."*

*"I have become more aware of just how delicate life is, and how improving my wellbeing and health brings me happiness which is evident in my work and personal life."*

*"The classes have improved my overall health and fitness."*

*"Yoga through the Wellness Program has helped me through chronic pain, through daily work pain and stress and has helped me learn to breathe deeper and to take time for myself to be a happier, more well-rounded person."*

*"I truly feel that yoga is the only thing that helps my chronic back pain. I always feel refreshed after..."*

*"I walk a lot more which helps me keep my energy level up to make it through my work day."*



*"It makes me walk and run more. I am also eating healthier. I have lost 25lbs!"*

*"It completely motivated me to be active. It allowed me to set myself a daily goal and helped me track myself. Since about March I actually started walking, I set myself to walk every evening after work for atleast 3 myself and allowed to find a new hobby, hiking..."*

*"It made me feel like someone else cared about my well-being."*

*"It greatly improved my activity levels and made me more aware of my health."*

*"It definitely got be out of my chair and walking around...even the conference table!!"*

*"This program helped to push me away from my desk to go for a walk over my lunch break, instead of sitting through lunch. I feel much healthier for it!"*

*"It motivated me to move more!"*

*"Made me make sure to at least get in my morning and afternoon walk to get my 7K steps"*

*"The program increased my activity by 31%."*

*"...I now find myself walking everywhere rather than driving during my breaks."*

*"I am fairly new to the program but have learned so much about my overall health! I feel much more informed and able to make better decisions related to my "whole being". - Very thankful for this program!"*

*"My health and life has been extremely improved by yoga. Every aspect.. Mind. Body. Soul. Thank you."*

*"It has really helped my overall health and fitness."*

*"As a working mother, wife, and in the recent past, a graduate student, it is easy to forget to take care of myself. The Wellness Program has enabled and encouraged me to focus on my own internal well-being."*

*"General physical and mental health much better (taken yoga thru County for seven years now), sciatica symptoms (before I took yoga) now gone, helps with calmness & constant sitting at desk..."*

*"My physical therapist encourage me to take yoga. It was really convenient that I was able to take this class during my lunch break"*

*"So far, the classes have made me more aware of simple things that I can do to live a more healthy lifestyle."*

# HEALTHIER **YOU** Campaign

Join your co-workers in the **WELLtrek "Corporate Games Competition"**!

In celebration of the **REAL Corporate Games**,

**HAVE FUN & GET FIT**

with our popular **WELLtrek Challenge** virtual platform!

**WEEKLY  
PRIZE\*  
DRAWINGS!  
WOW!!**

**6 Weeks: 3/25/17 - 5/6/17**

Create an account or log in @ <https://vcwelltrek.walkertracker.com>

## What is a "virtual" platform?

A **virtual** platform is a computer-based online community environment that is designed and shared by individuals so that they can interact in a custom-built, simulated world, (in this case a simulated **Corporate Games** world).

This **ENERGIZING** 6-week competition will track the **actual** steps & activities you do throughout the day to progress you along a **VIRTUAL Corporate Games** journey!

Watch for interesting factoids along the way...

AND—participating in this **VIRTUAL Corporate Games Competition** is one of the requirements to earn **YOUR Fitbit!** [See Fitbit details.](#)

**GET STEPPIN'!**



**EPIC WALKS  
AROUND THE GLOBE**

**6-Wk Team Competition 9/11/17-10/12/17**

**Weekly Fitbit Charge 2 drawings!**

**WINNING TEAMS** also receive a special\* **"WINNERS"** prize!

\*(not pictured)

Per IRS rules, the value of the Fitbit is considered taxable income and will be reported as such.

Log in to **WELLtrek** or create an account @  
<https://vcwelltrek.walkertracker.com/>

All who cross  
the finish line  
win an 11oz.  
custom  
coffee mug!



fitbit chargeHR





# HEALTHIER **TOGETHER** *Campaign*



**6-Wk Dept. Competition 10/31/17-12/11/17**

- ▶ **Weekly Fitbit\* Charge 2 drawings!**
- ▶ **WINNING AGENCY/DEPARTMENT will earn temporary custody of the all new "Golden Sneaker Trophy"!**

<https://vcwelltrek.walkertracker.com/>

\*Per IRS rules, the value of the Fitbit is considered taxable income and will be reported as such.



All who cross the finish line win a stylish 20 oz. aluminum sports bottle!



Winning Agency team members, who achieved at least 7,000 average steps/day, earned a "Golden Sneaker" pin.



*And permanent "bragging rights"*