

# COUNTY OF VENTURA WELLNESS PROGRAM

(VC-WELL: Ventura County – Working Energetically Loving Life)

## Annual Report 2022



**COUNTY *of* VENTURA**

County Executive Office  
Human Resources/Benefits

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

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**County Executive Office • Human Resources Division**

## **I. Program Background**

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 won numerous awards and has continued to develop and offer programs to help employees improve their health.

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

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

1. Provide education, resources, and opportunities to help employees identify and reduce health risks before serious health problems occur.
2. Enable a culture and environment supportive of healthy behaviors, and one that makes healthy choices the easiest choice at the workplace.
3. Improve accessibility to VC-WELL programs and resources.
4. Increase participation and engagement in VC-WELL programs.
5. Provide employees with health risks and/or diseases with resources to improve and effectively manage their condition/s.

### **Health Risk Assessment/Biometric Screening**

VC-WELL's Personal Wellness Profile (PWP) provides participants with access to a comprehensive Health Risk Assessment (HRA) & biometric screening. Eligible employees, and their spouses/domestic partners, can participate in an onsite screening at various county sites throughout the year. Immediately following the screening, participants can review their results with the screening technician. In 2022, Ventura County Public Health could no longer conduct screenings, so VC-WELL partnered with a third-party vendor to take over administering the screenings. All personal health information collected by the vendor is secured and remains completely confidential in accordance with HIPAA regulations. *Exhibit A shows screening participation between 2017-2022 and indicates a decrease in participation during the pandemic. Screenings were canceled in 2021 due to COVID-19 and resumed in 2022, with participation rebounding near the pre-pandemic average.*

### **Health Coaching**

Best-practice research demonstrates the value of health coaching for employees with health risks and/or disease to improve their risks and conditions. In 2022, VC-WELL partnered with a new vendor to offer free unlimited health coaching to eligible employees and their spouses/domestic partners. PWP participants identified with risk factors such as high blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol during their screening are invited to join. Participants work with a health coach to teach, inspire, and support them with lifestyle changes. *Exhibit B shows participation since 2018. Although participation dropped during the pandemic, it significantly increased by 46% over 2021 after implementing a new vendor in 2022.*

### **Health Education (HE) & Physical Activity (PA) Classes**

VC-WELL provides HE and PA classes to help employees make lifestyle changes to reduce their health risks and improve their quality of life. Topics focus on areas of nutrition, fitness, stress management, and healthy living. *Exhibits C and D show the significantly positive impact going virtual has had on class participation since 2020. HE & PA participation increased by 69.3% and 4.5% respectively over 2021.*

### **Physical Activity Challenges**

VC-WELL continues to leverage WELLtrek, a web-based & mobile physical activity tracking platform, to increase the physical activity level of our employees. *Throughout 2022, VC-WELL offered a full assortment of challenges to engage employees. Exhibit E displays unique users each year and shows a steady increase since 2018. Unique users and average annual steps/user increased by 12.2% and 12% respectively over 2021.*

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

VC-WELL strives to promote an environment supportive of healthy lifestyles with various events & campaigns. With many employees now working hybrid or 9/80 schedules, we've adapted by offering more virtual programs and tools to support healthy lifestyles including: *Wellbeats, Headspace, challenges, online courses, and a Weight Watchers reimbursement.*

### **Recreation and Leisure Events**

VC-WELL offers a variety of recreational activities, including weekend hikes, and two recreational events a year: softball and bowling. For individuals who are not health conscious but enjoy sports/recreation/leisure activities, these activities can act as a "gateway" into more traditional health improvement activities. *After a hiatus due to COVID-19, both the softball and bowling events resumed in 2022.*

### **Incentive Program**

Offering incentives is an important strategy used by employers to encourage greater participation in workplace wellness programs. The County's 2011-2016 Strategic Plan includes an objective to develop a wellness incentive program. Since starting our flagship cash award incentive program, "**WELLthy Reward\$**" in 2019 we continue to see an increase in employee engagement. Cash awards earned are taxable and paid via payroll in November. In 2022, VC-WELL added a \$50 bonus to the cash award of first-time participants to increase engagement. *Exhibit F shows the number of awards earned have steadily increase since starting cash awards in 2018, with a decrease in 2021\*. However, in 2022, earned awards significantly rebounded with an increase of 44.4% over 2021.*

## **III. Program Participation**

In 2022, participation in various programs trended back up as the worst of the pandemic subsided. Participation in screenings (600) rebounded closer to their pre-pandemic level in 2022 and was **7.1% higher** than 2020. Health coaching rebounded well from the pandemic, achieving our highest participation rate (314) ever in 2022. Implementing a renowned, comprehensive coaching vendor in 2022 helped facilitate greater engagement.

The transition to virtual HE classes continued its significant upward trend with average participants/class to **152 per class** in 2022, from **10 per class** in 2017, a **1378% increase**. One of VC-WELL's programs that fared well during the pandemic, **Wellbeats**, continued

to experience growth. Since implementing it, Wellbeats increased physical activity class participation **135%** from 2016 and **4.5% higher** than 2021. By adding free access to friends & family in 2023 we expect to see even higher engagement for Wellbeats.

WELLtrek usage continues to grow every year as our most popular program. 2022 experienced a **12.2% increase** in unique WELLtrek users compared to 2021, culminating in the Million Steps Challenge having the highest number of employees ever to complete it – **898**, a **34% increase** compared to 2021.

VC-WELL continues to offer relevant programs and activities to leverage WELLthy Reward\$ in improving overall program engagement. *Transitioning to virtual programming has proven to be an effective strategy in maximizing employee engagement while reducing program costs as the County moves to a hybrid work schedule. Please see Exhibits A – G to see participation trends for various programs.*

#### IV. Risks Identified

VC-WELL has been successful in identifying risk factors associated with the leading causes of disease and death. Table 1 summarizes the risks identified among those who completed a PWP in 2022. Some of those identified with health risks were previously unaware of their condition.

**Table 1**

<b>Status of Wellness Profile Participants 2022</b>	
<b>Percentage</b>	<b>Factors</b>
<b>61% (313)</b>	Got less than recommended physical activity
<b>9% (44)</b>	Had elevated cholesterol
<b>2% (8)</b>	Smoked
<b>72% (368)</b>	Were overweight or obese
<b>29% (146)</b>	Had elevated blood pressure
<b>33% (170)</b>	Had diabetes/prediabetes
<b>51% (262)</b>	Had at least one high stress indicator present
<b>70% (356)</b>	Had a low fruit/vegetable intake

**Table 2**

<b>Wellness Profile Participants 2022 Risk Factor Statistics</b>	
<b>Number of Risk Factors</b>	<b>Percent of People</b>
0 Risk Factors	<b>21.3% (109)</b>
1 Risk Factor	<b>25.0% (128)</b>
2 to 3 Risk Factors	<b>38.4% (197)</b>
4 to 5 Risk Factors	<b>12.5% (64)</b>
6 or more Risk Factors	<b>2.8% (14)</b>

PWP participants' health status worsened in 2022, with virtually all statistics being worse than 2021. One reason for this is having more overall participants (512) in the data pool compared to a significantly lower number in 2021 (211). However, we can't discount the pandemic's impact on our workforce's health in 2022 with the worse wellness score in 8 years. Stress was also a significant issue with 51% having at least one high stress indicator.

## V. Participant Satisfaction

VC-WELL participants complete evaluations of various programs. Participants consistently give high ratings for our programs. Based on feedback, employees have been very satisfied with program enhancements and new program offerings.

- *“All around I would like to say thank you guys for providing amazing and well-designed programs that are constantly changing to have options for the changing times and strains that can happen in and out of work.”*
- *“Thank you and thank you for all your efforts to continue to ensure County employees are healthy by offering On -Demand Solutions – on APPS (since we are all so busy.). We also like Well Beats.”*

### 2022 Survey highlights:

- 97% of bowling participants rated their overall experience as excellent or good
- 93% of screening participants rated their overall experience as excellent or good
- 79% of softball participants rated their overall experience as excellent or good

## VI. Conclusion

The County invests heavily in its most important asset – its employees. VC-WELL is an important tool in helping the County meet its strategic plan with respect to meeting objectives linked to workforce health, and the ability to serve the community through Strategic Goal 4 of Focus Area #2: *to champion and invest in workplace policies, programs and practices that promote the overall health and well-being of all County employees.*

Investing in workforce's health is wise and prudent, so it is crucial that VC-WELL continues to receive the support and resources necessary to fulfill its mission. It is recommended that industry best practices, programs, and policies are considered and implemented when available and appropriate. Some of these practices include:

- Greater intra-departmental & intra-representative group promotion of the program
- Continue transforming our environment & culture to one that permeates well-being
- Greater engagement by leadership in the program
- Creation of a Wellness Committee comprised of employees from each agency
- Expand use of incentives to increase participation
- Opportunity to participate in programs and classes (release time)
- Wellness Leadership training and recognition (management support)

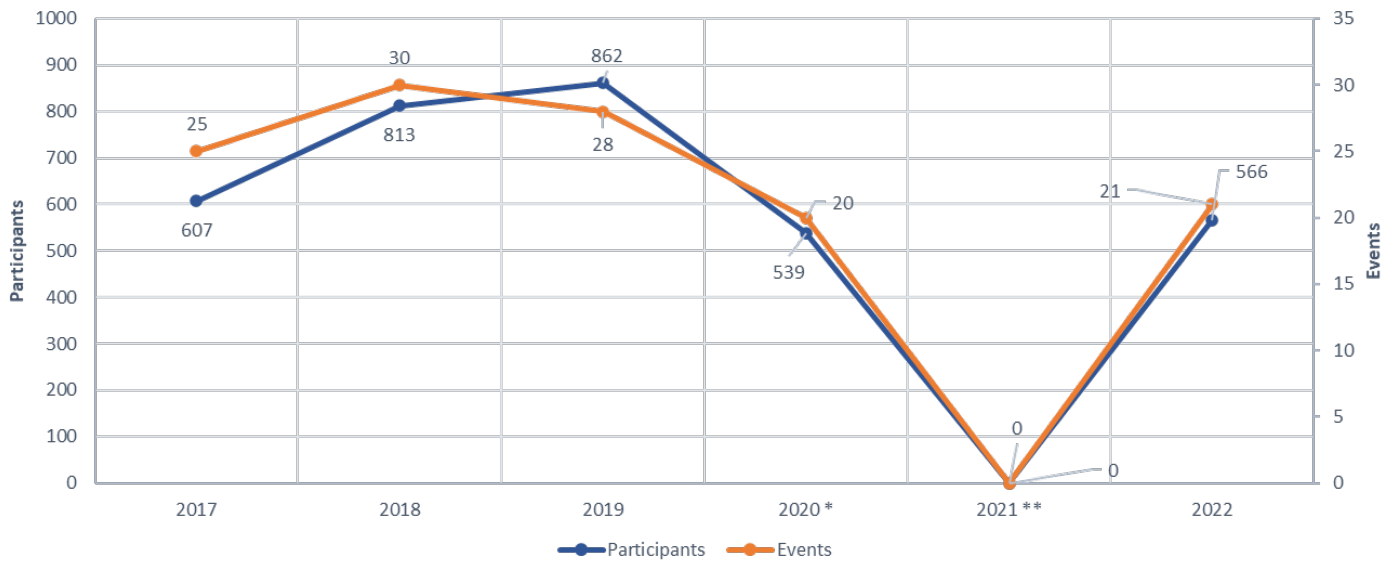
### Exhibit A: Onsite Biometric Screening Participation 2017-2022

Screening						
	2017	2018	2019	2020 *	2021 **	2022
# Participants	607	813	862	539	0	566
# Events	25	30	28	20	0	21
Participants/Event	24.28	27.10	30.79	26.95	N/A	26.95
% Change from previous year		11.61%	13.60%	-12.46%	N/A	0.01%
% Change from 2017		11.61%	26.79%	11.00%	N/A	11.01%

\* COVID-19 Pandemic (Partial year)

\*\* COVID-19 Pandemic (Canceled entire year)

### Annual Screenings



### Exhibit B: One-on-One Health Coaching Participation 2018-2022

Health Coaching Sessions					
	2018	2019	2020 *	2021 *	2022 **
# Sessions	236.0	291.0	234.0	215.0	314.0
# Unique Individuals	77.0	65.0	58.0	29.0	98.0
% Change from prior year		23.3%	-19.6%	-8.1%	46.0%
% Change from 2018		23.3%	-0.8%	-8.9%	33.1%
Session Type	<i>In-Person</i>	<i>In-Person</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>Virtual</i>	<i>Virtual</i>

\* COVID-19 Pandemic

\*\* New Vendor

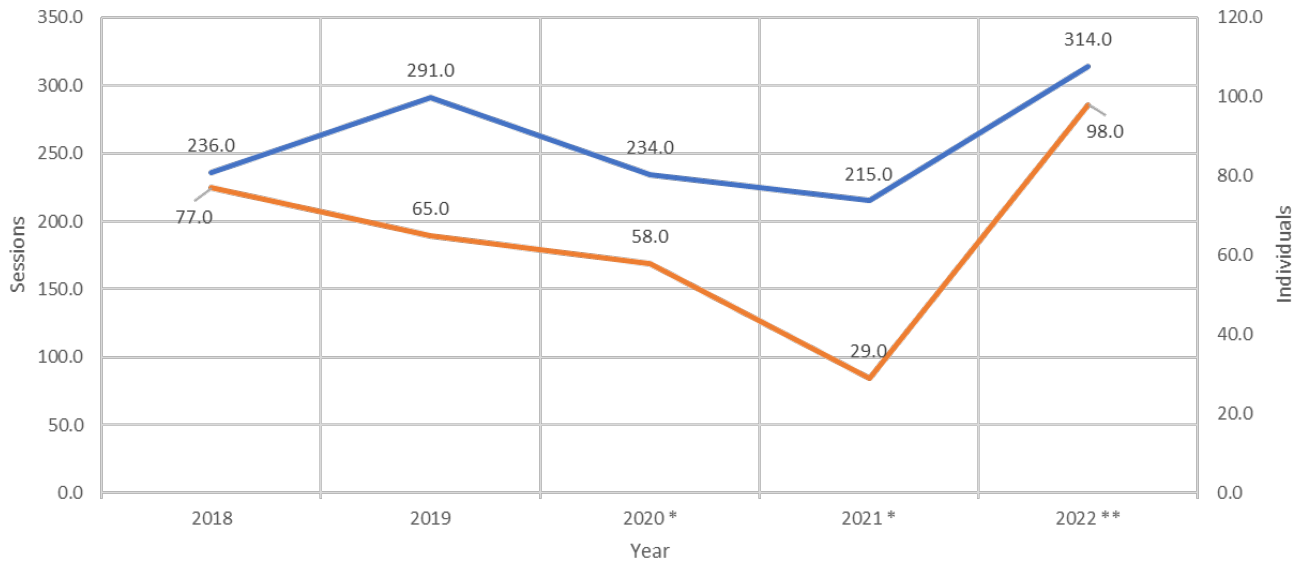


Exhibit C: In-Person to Virtual Class Participation 2017-2022

Health Education Classes						
	2017	2018	2019	2020 *	2021 *	2022
# Participants	237	172	345	1003	1439	3046
# Classes	23	12	15	13	16	20
Participants/Class (Avg.)	10.3	14.3	23.0	77.2	89.9	152.3
% Change from prior year		39.1%	60.5%	235.5%	16.6%	69.3%
% Change from 2017			123.2%	648.8%	772.8%	1378.0%
Class Type	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person	IP & Virtual	Virtual	Virtual

\* COVID-19 Pandemic

Annual Participation & Classes

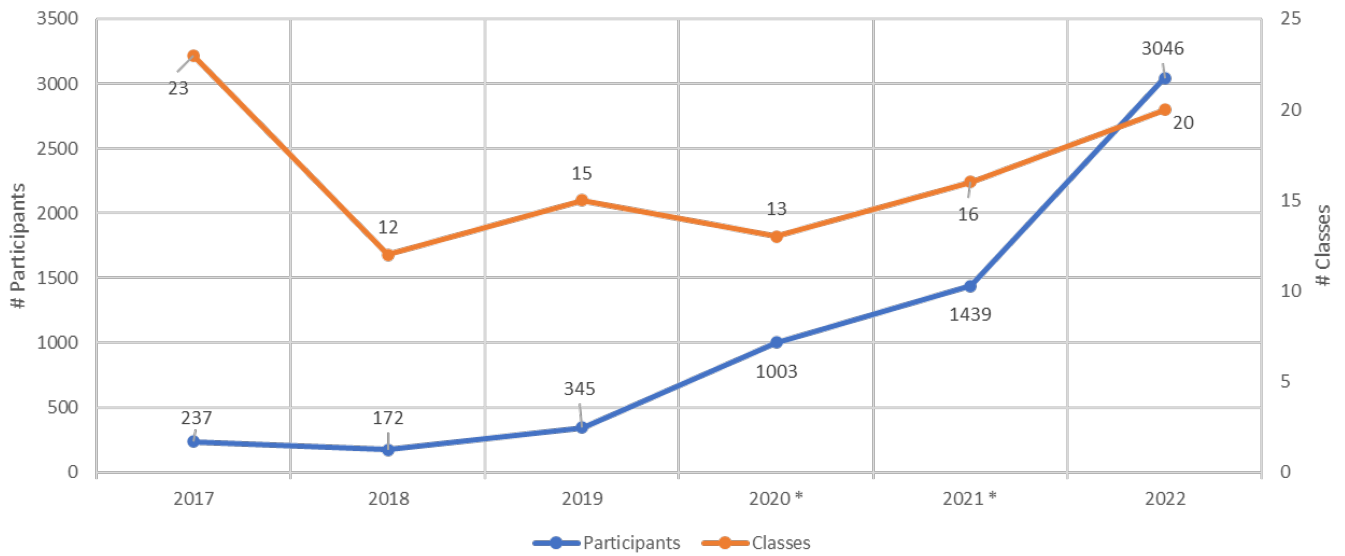




Exhibit D: In-Person to Virtual Class Participation 2016-2022

Activity Classes						
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021 *	2022 *
# Participants	2887	2507	1783	1383	5953	6787
# Months	12	12	12	12	11	12
Participants/Month (Avg.)	240.6	208.9	148.6	115.3	541.2	565.6
% Change from prior year		-13.2%	-28.9%	-22.4%	369.6%	4.5%
% Change from 2016			-38.2%	-52.1%	124.9%	135.1%
Class Type	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person	In-Person	Virtual	Virtual

\* Wellbeats class usage (implemented FEB'21)

2020 classes canceled due to COVID-19

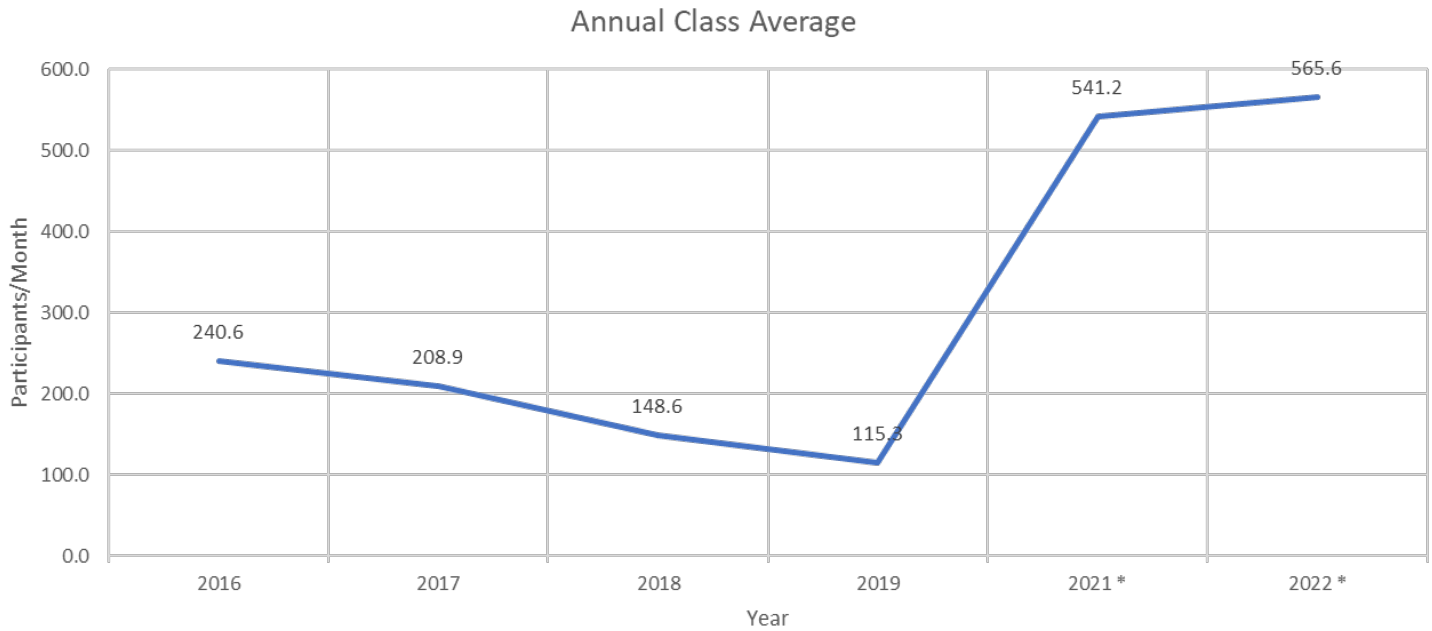
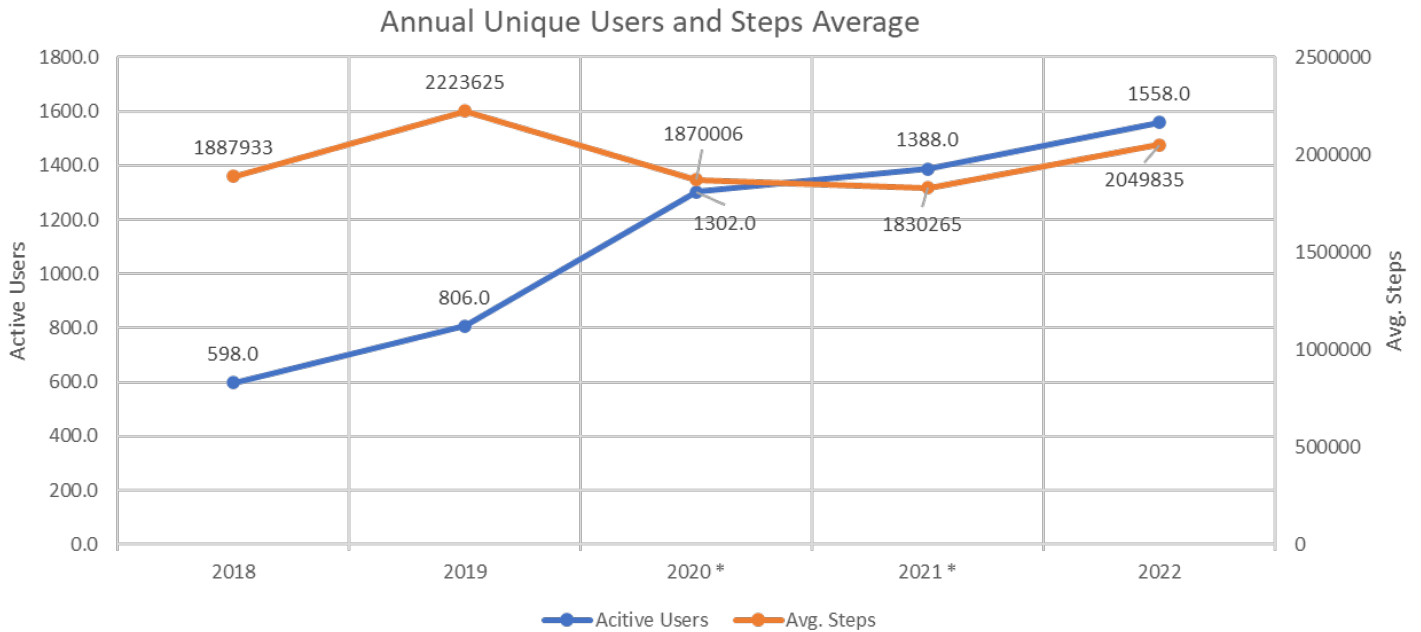


Exhibit E: Annual Unique Active WELLtrek Users 2017-2021

Unique Active Users					
	2018	2019	2020 *	2021 *	2022
# Unique Users	598.0	806.0	1302.0	1388.0	1558.0
% Change from prior year		34.8%	61.5%	6.6%	12.2%
% Change from 2018			117.7%	132.1%	160.5%

Average Annual Steps per User					
	2018	2019	2020 *	2021 *	2022
Average Steps/User	1887933	2223625	1870006	1830265	2049835
% Change from prior year		17.8%	-15.9%	-2.1%	12.0%
% Change from 2018			-0.9%	-3.1%	8.6%

\*COVID-19 Pandemic



### Exhibit F: Incentives Distributed 2017-2022

Incentives Distributed						
	2017	2018	2019	2020 *	2021 *	2022
Annual incentives	433	240	717	792	662	956
% Change from prior year		-44.6%	198.8%	10.5%	-16.4%	44.4%
% Change from 2017			65.6%	82.9%	52.9%	120.8%

\* COVID-19 Pandemic Years: 2020 - 2021 (screenings canceled in 2021 and 4 mos of 2020)

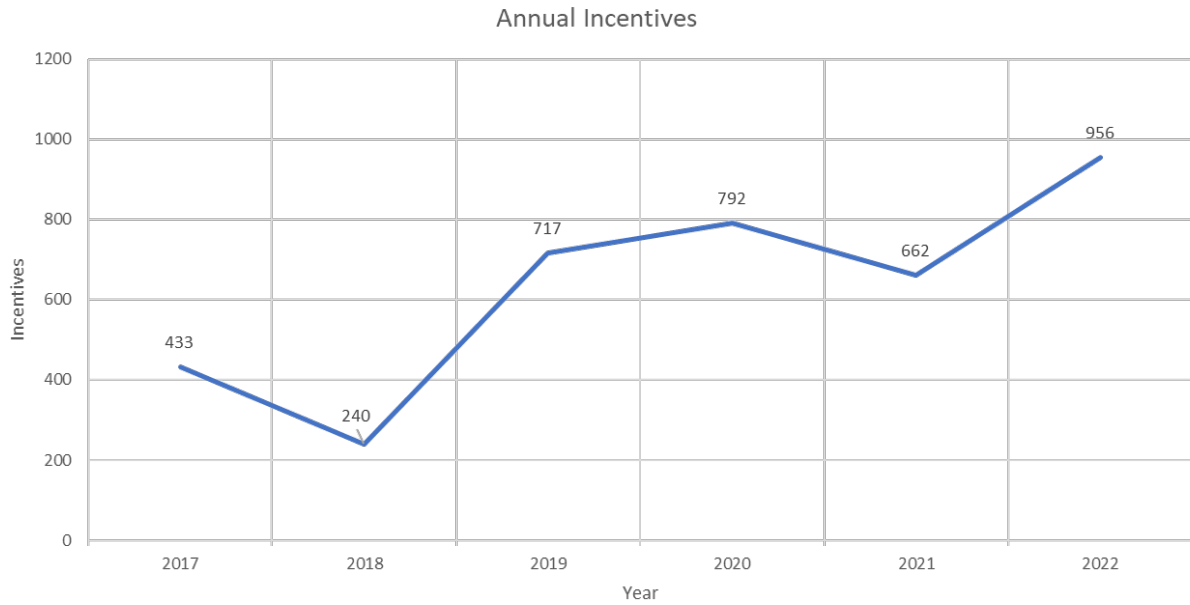


Exhibit G: 2017 - 2022 COV Wellness Program Dashboard

	2017	2018	2019	2020 #	2021 #	2022	Reference *
<b>Incentive</b>							
Incentive amount value	\$120	\$500	\$100-\$1000	\$100-\$300	\$100-\$300	\$100-\$400	79% ERs > \$150
Incentive type	Fitbit	Cash	Cash	Cash	Cash	Cash	Cash/GCs/Premiums
<b>Participation</b>							
Benefits eligible employee headcount (as of 1/1)	8702	8593	8579	8565	8621	9183	Lg. ERs > 4999
<b>Biometric wellness screenings (onsite &amp; Dr. physical)</b>							
Biometric wellness screenings (onsite & Dr. physical)	885	829	888	560	0 #	600	56% Lg. ERs offer
<b>Percent workforce participation</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>0% #</b>	<b>6.5%</b>	<b>43% (@)</b>
<b>Health Risk Assessments (HRA)</b>							
Health Risk Assessments (HRA)	1199	750	874	565	211	512	70% Lg. ERs offer
<b>Percent workforce participation</b>	<b>13.8%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>	<b>10.2%</b>	<b>6.6%</b>	<b>2.4%</b>	<b>5.6%</b>	<b>45% (@)</b>
<b>WELLtrek (unique engaged EE#)</b>							
WELLtrek (unique engaged EE#)	492	598	806	1302	1388	1558	
<b>Percent workforce participation</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.9%</b>	<b>9.4%</b>	<b>15.2%</b>	<b>16.1%</b>	<b>17.0%</b>	
<b>Incentives earned</b>							
Incentives earned	433	240 **	717	792	662	956	52% Lg. ERs offer
<b>Percent workforce participation</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>10.4%</b>	
<b>WELLthy Reward\$ unique participants</b>							
WELLthy Reward\$ unique participants					1340	1469	
<b>Percent workforce participation</b>					<b>15.5%</b>	<b>16.0%</b>	
<b>Health Outcomes (biometrics &amp; HRA)</b>							
Average risk factors per employee per year	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.9</b>	
Risk stratification: Percent of participants who are low risk	<b>73.1%</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>74.1%</b>	<b>72.6%</b>	<b>74.9%</b>	<b>70.1%</b>	
Percent workforce having good or excellent Wellness Score	<b>87.9%</b>	<b>89.3%</b>	<b>89.5%</b>	<b>89.2%</b>	<b>84.9%</b>	<b>83.0%</b>	
Average Wellness Score (0 - 100; higher the better)***	<b>73</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>71</b>	

\*\*\* Wellness Score Categories:  
 Excellent = 80 - 100  
 Doing Well = 60 - 79  
 Needs Improving = 20 - 59  
 High Risk = 0 - 19

# COVID-19 Pandemic Years: 2020 - 2021 (screenings canceled in 2021 and 4 mos of 2020)

\* 2022 Kaiser/HRET Employer Benefits Survey; @ 2020 Kaiser/HRET Employer Benefits Survey (data not available in 2022)

\*\* Eligible for random drawing of eighty (80) \$500 cash awards; done at end of 2018 (9/1/18 - 11/14/18)