



“Who doesn’t want to see the Golden Gate Bridge?”



How One Client Walked “Across the Country” *One Step at a Time*

Walking is an easy and low-cost way to get more exercise. All you really need is a good pair of sneakers—it doesn’t take a gym membership or fancy equipment. Les Russell, the Human Resources director at City of Monroe (a Meritain Health® client) recognized this fact. He had an idea, and it involved helping employees fit more steps into their days, across the entire United States.

The plan

Located in the state of Georgia, Monroe is on the eastern edge of the U.S., and Les saw that as a clear-cut opportunity to walk straight across the country—virtually. In his words, “Who doesn’t want to see the Golden Gate Bridge?”

The group currently offers the Healthy Merits Wellness Program from Meritain Health to provide wellness resources and support. As part of the program, the group has access to wellness credits, a pool of money to be used on health-related products and services for employees.

Working together with the group’s Meritain Health account manager and Healthy Merits population health management strategist, Les developed the Great Walking Challenge. First, he purchased a Fitbit for every employee, using the Healthy Merits wellness credits. Then, he encouraged employees to walk more every day, and use their Fitbit to track and report their steps.

How it worked

As part of the Great Walking Challenge, employees were divided into teams according to their department. Each team reported their weekly steps to a team captain. Over seven weeks, the captains reported their total team steps and Les converted steps to miles. Then, he plotted the miles on a map of the U.S.

Each week, Les shared the map with the company to see their progress—with fun facts and tourist tips about each city they had reached. The challenge included details to keep everything fair:

- To prevent larger departments from having an unfair step advantage, each team could only report the progress of 10 teammates.
- To encourage everyone to participate, individual steps were capped at 70,000 for the week. That way, a team couldn’t rocket ahead based on the work of one person—they needed to work together.

The goal of all teams was to reach the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco over the seven weeks of the challenge—that’s 2,519 miles away from Monroe.

Motivating employees

Beyond getting motivated to move more and possibly tightening some belt-buckle notches, employees were promised a reward at the end of the challenge: a breakfast celebration would be provided to the first place team, and served by all other teams.

Success!

At the conclusion of the challenge, two of the six teams made it to San Francisco, with more than 11,000 miles reported. Overall, employees walked more than 20,000 miles combined, and reached destinations such as historic Route 66 in Oklahoma City and the Painted Desert in New Mexico. Said one employee, “It was great—we had a fun time and it really encouraged me to get up and walk more, even if just a trip around the building on my break.”

Monroe is already planning to make the walking challenge an annual event! Les remarked, “The team challenge was fun, but the best part was to hear so many stories about people who were challenging themselves to walk more. And it’s the partnership with Meritain Health that really made this all possible.”

Want to encourage your employees on their path to wellness?

Whether it’s a wellness challenge, access to online tools or program offerings, Healthy Merits has you covered. We’ll work with you to provide a well-rounded wellness experience that fits the unique needs of your employee population. To learn how Healthy Merits can help your company, just reach out to your Meritain Health representative.

This story is based on an actual client experience.

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