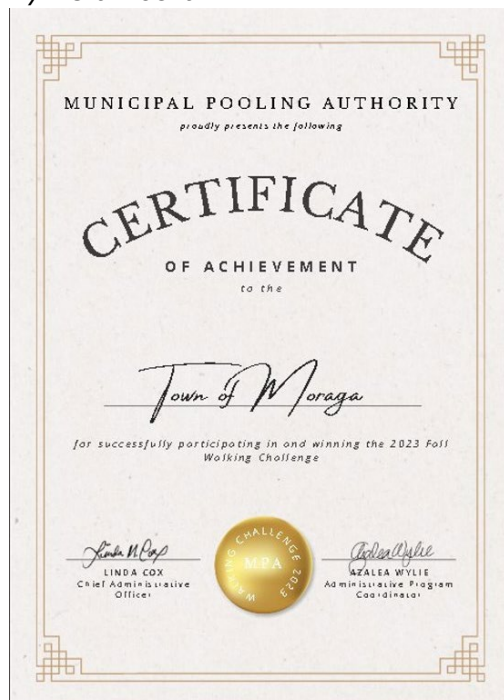




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Moraga employees win county-wide walking challenge

By Vera Kochan



Certificate awarded to the town for winning Fall Walking Challenge 2023 Photo courtesy Municipal Pooling Authority

The Municipal Pooling Authority, which provides workers' compensation insurance and liability coverage to municipal employees, held its first ever Fall Walking Challenge 2023, which spanned the month of October and was officially over on Oct. 31. Of the 14 Contra Costa teams that participated, 10 employees from the small but mighty town of Moraga came in first place with 322,334 average steps per day. Orinda came in second with 294,958 and Lafayette placed fifth with 246,865.

On an individual basis, Moraga Police Department Support Services Coordinator Cathy Ghiselli came in first place, out of 385 participants, with a month-long total of 913,352 steps (29,463 average steps per day).

According to MPA Administrative Program Coordinator (and point of contact for the Wellness Program) Azalea Wylie, several of their members were interested in participating in some type of walking challenge. With the blessing from MPA Chief Administrative Officer Linda Cox, the event had its first trial run with only Martinez taking part by using the Pacer app. The initial attempt was a success, and any feedback from Martinez proved invaluable to incorporating the Walking Challenge into the Wellness Program.

"The idea behind the Walking Challenge is to encourage healthy movement with your team/co-workers," explained Wylie. "You work with your team to earn the most steps, competing against the other members who are participating. In the end, the goal is to build a new

walking habit by way of some friendly competition. Research shows that something as simple as walking more often can help not only your physical well-being but also your mental well-being."

Participants' steps were recorded through the Pacer app and were automatically averaged. Top walker, Ghiselli received a Fitbit, while Team Moraga will receive a yet to be determined mystery prize, and each team member will also receive a certificate and an Iron Flask Sports Water Bottle of their choosing. The town will receive a plaque, and of course, bragging rights.

Besides Ghiselli, Team Moraga included: Senior Maintenance Worker Jose Limon, Engineer Technician/Inspector Justin Jerome, Part Time Accounting Technician Steven Thomason, MPD Officer Fabiola Hernandez, Public Works Senior Administrative Assistant Jeanet Lara, Town Manager Scott Mitnick, Planning Director Afshan Hamid, Assistant Planner Alistair Fortson, and Senior Accountant Sylvia Wells.

"Cathy, in our Police Department, deserves the most ink and attention," stated Mitnick. "She was the lead 'walker' and organizer for Team Moraga. This may seem like a silly thing that MPA does to promote healthy employees, reduce sick leave usage, and lower operating costs. However, it really does serve to make our employees aware of their lifestyle and personal health. It also helps to promote teamwork and bring our employees closer together."

Mitnick added, "It should be mentioned that by lowering use of sick leave due to having healthy employees, we are able to provide our taxpayers higher levels of service at a lower cost."

"The Fall Walking Challenge had such a great turnout," said Wylie. "We will be hosting another walking challenge in April 2024."

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

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