



**Health Care and Community News**  
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## **IEHP Walks Away With “Fit-Friendly” Award**

**San Bernardino County, November 2, 2009** – The Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP) earned a Fit-Friendly award from the American Heart Association (AHA), which has fought cardiovascular disease for more than 85 years.

The AHA bestowed its Gold level Fit-Friendly plaque on IEHP for inspiring a workplace culture based on physical activity and wellness.

“We’re honored to receive this distinction from the American Heart Association,” said Dr. Brad Gilbert, chief executive officer for IEHP, a not-for-profit healthcare provider. “Since we emphasize preventive health to care for our Members, we’re proud to lead by example.”

The award, judged by an AHA panel, drew applicants from across the nation as part of the AHA “Start!” fitness movement, which rewards companies and organizations that roll out a series of fitness and nutrition campaigns, showing concern for their staff. The health agency points out that millions of Americans spend more hours at work without physical activity, raising the risk of heart attack, stroke and other related diseases.

As part of the Fit-Friendly prerequisite, 250 employees at IEHP – half its workforce – completed a 12-week workplace walk program last spring, which saw dozens of teams cover more than 43,000 miles over a nearby route. Top walkers took home prizes such as retail store gift cards and sport bags.

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The final stretch of the fitness campaign was the Inland Empire Heart 5K Walk, a premier AHA fund-raiser that drew thousands of walkers to Riverside's Cal Baptist University last September. Hundreds of IEHP employees turned out to fight the top two killers in the nation: heart disease and stroke.

In that spirit, IEHP kicked off a 3-month nutrition promotion, teaching employees about healthy eating through daily online tips, games and displays in the main lobby. IEHP also launched a "Take the Stairs" campaign by hanging banners at each exit, encouraging employees to bypass elevators and get fit "One Step at a Time".

Studies show that organizations that pursue a workplace fitness culture can increase employee productivity, reduce absenteeism and decrease healthcare costs.

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**IEHP**, a Knox-Keene licensed Health Plan located in San Bernardino, California, is organized as a not-for-profit public agency. The IEHP service area includes San Bernardino and Riverside Counties and currently serves over 420,000 Members in the following Programs: Medi-Cal, Healthy Families, Healthy Kids, and a Medicare Advantage Special Needs Program.

**AHA**, The American Heart Association was founded in 1924. It's the nation's oldest and largest voluntary health organization dedicated to building healthier lives, free of heart disease and stroke. It funds research, conducts lifesaving public and professional educational programs, and it advocates to protect public health.

To learn more, visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org).

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