



WELLCATS ANNUAL REPORT FY 2023

WELLCATS

Live. Work. Be Well.

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INTRODUCTION

WellCats Employee Wellness Program

The *WellCats* program is included in the University Master Plan, Goal 5: Developing Infrastructure and Resources, Objective 5.1 (Position Texas State University as an employer of choice).

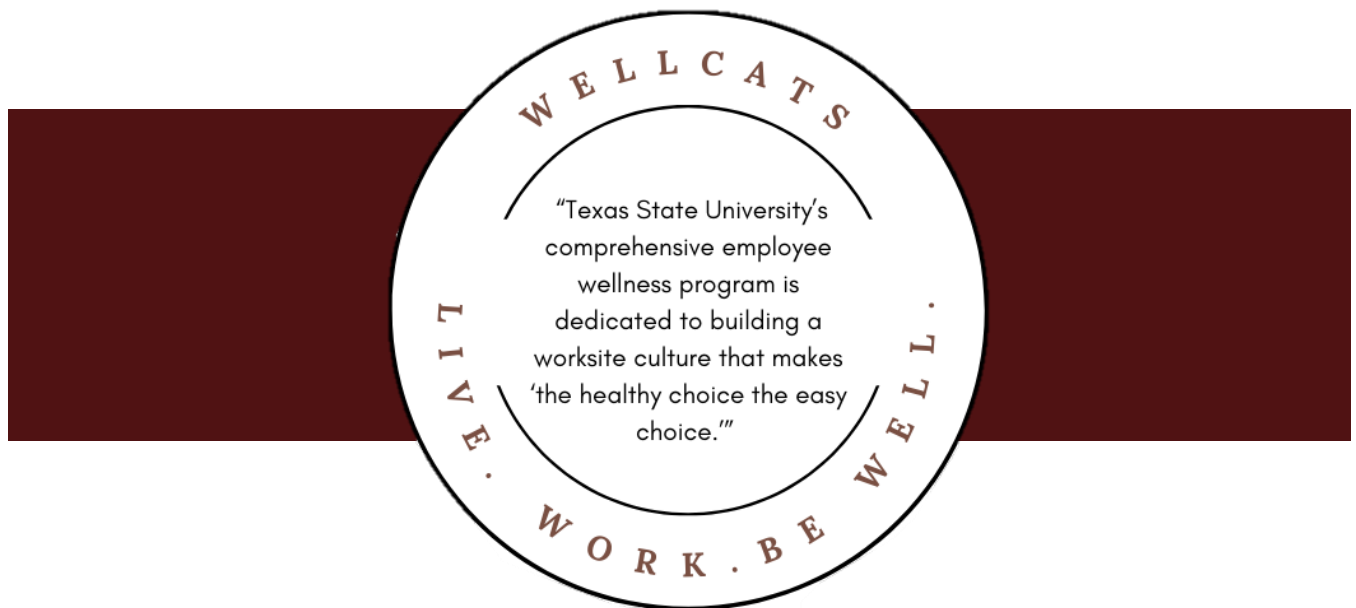
Vision statement for *WellCats*

WellCats is a nationally recognized, evidenced-based, comprehensive employee wellness program designed to inspire Texas State employees and the community to enhance wellness, while engaging students in education, research, and service.

Mission statement for *WellCats*

WellCats is Texas State University's comprehensive employee wellness program dedicated to building a university culture that makes 'the healthy choice the easy choice'.

We believe that wellness is living fully in each of the dimensions of wellness and achieving balance among those dimensions. All dimensions are interconnected to one another, and attaining a high level of wellness is achieved by addressing all dimensions throughout life.



WellCats Strategic Plan Progress

A. Increase enrollment and engagement (Goal 1) – in response to attendance reports and employee feedback, prioritizing recruitment and retention efforts have continued to be key objectives. The *WellCats* leadership team regularly reviews attendance records and participation data to build strategies for retention at monthly planning meetings. Some of our successful initiatives for increasing enrollment and retention in FY 2023 have included:

1. *Removing mandatory registration and enrollment.* In response to data suggesting the *WellCats* annual enrollment process may present barriers to participation, mandatory registration and/or enrollment for faculty and staff was discontinued beginning September 1st, 2022. Now, all benefits-eligible employees of Texas State University are approved to participate in *WellCats* services. This change has enhanced program reach and visibility with the ultimate goal of increased participation. Membership cards are in development to be distributed during new employee orientation and will also be made available to existing employees beginning in the fall of 2023.
2. *Collecting data of Texas State employees to track health markers, determine wellness needs, and assess program participation.* Data collection efforts to track and report on health and wellness behavior metrics from *WellCats* participants have been expanded to include campus-wide distribution of optional surveys administered periodically to faculty and staff. *WellCats* leadership has plans to distribute a campus-wide Annual Survey (previous distribution occurred in 2018) in October 2023 to assess barriers and promoters to employee participation in *WellCats* services as well as programmatic needs and preferences. Additionally, a nutrition-specific survey aimed at the development of a group nutrition education pilot program is in the works for distribution in late fall of 2023.
3. *Creating cohort engagement through Microsoft Teams channel.* *WellCats* team members have been actively involved in the creation and management of a *WellCats* Teams channel since the fall of 2020. Employees can opt in to receive updates and reminders about programming and the channel provides an avenue for participants to engage with a collaborative and supportive cohort, sharing in

their wellness journeys. Activity and membership on the Teams channel have continued to grow, helping to keep *WellCats* participants connected and engaged throughout the week. The channel currently has over 500 active members.

4. *Participating in the Get Fit Texas Challenge.* In the spring of 2021, we participated as a university in the Get Fit Texas Challenge through Employee Retirement Services of Texas. After a strong showing from Texas State employees, the challenge continued in the spring of 2022 and 2023. In FY 2023, over 270 registered and 128 completed the challenge, logging a total of 454,622 minutes of activity. Participation occurred campus-wide and has set a record of participation for any previous university-sponsored health challenge.
5. *Engaging in department meeting outreach.* *WellCats* HR Representatives began engaging in departmental recruitment efforts in FY 2020. Due to ongoing demand and positive feedback, *WellCats* team members have continued these outreach efforts. In FY 2023, 20 departments were visited.
6. *Collaborating with Human Resources to host an employee benefits fair.* This interactive wellness fair, currently planned for October 2023, will provide benefits-eligible employees with opportunities to better understand their benefits provided through Texas State and interact with vendors. *WellCats* leadership will host a table and coordinate activities to increase awareness and visibility of *WellCats* services and program offerings.

B. *Design and offer convenient relevant programming to help employees achieve balance across the 8 dimensions of wellness (Goal 2)* - we routinely collect feedback from employees about our services and make changes to the program offerings based on the feedback received. Those changes included the following for FY 2023.

1. *Providing WellCats offerings both in-person and virtually.* *WellCats* continues to provide our services through a variety of platforms to accommodate preferences of onsite and remote employees of Texas State. Examples include: virtual Wellness Educational Series (WES) presentations, in-person and virtual options for nutrition counseling, health behavior change coaching, and cooking classes, and fitness/stretching classes provided both in-person and via our YouTube and Teams channels. Virtual Afternoon Stretch Breaks were introduced via Teams in FY 2023 to continue expanding our outreach efforts. A uniform script was also

included during all WES presentations to inform attendees of *WellCats* benefits, services, and includes a QR code linking to additional information on our website.

2. *Partnering with Blue Cross/Blue Shield and Employees Retirement System of Texas (ERS) to provide additional resources and programming.* Engaging more frequently with our community partners has been an ongoing effort to increase our visibility both locally and statewide and has allowed a broader range of content for our members regarding the dimensions of health. This year, the ERS Annual Virtual Wellness Fair was strongly promoted by *WellCats*, and Texas State University registration ranked among the highest across higher education agencies.
3. *Collaborating with Facilities to create walking routes on campus with mile-marker signage.* To support greater engagement with the outdoors on Texas State's campus, *WellCats* has been in communication with Facilities since January 2022 to design a number of walking paths.
4. *Collaborating with the YMCA of Central Texas to establish discounted membership rate.* The Y Corporate Wellness Program waived their joiner's fee and created a discounted membership that can be used at 5 YMCA locations across Central Texas for all full-time and part-time employees of Texas State University to engage in wellness activities.
5. *Collaborating with departments across campus for the first annual Bobcat R.O.A.R Games.* *WellCats* leaders organized a day of friendly competition for all employees to encourage group participation in field day activities. Eighteen teams of employees participated in six different group fitness activities.

C. *Incorporate wellness into the culture of Texas State University (Goal 3)* - Central to our mission is building a workplace culture that "makes the healthy choice the easy choice". Data collection and review has continued to guide our efforts to enhance wellness during our planning meetings. Strategies have included:

1. *Ongoing evaluation of health and wellness* – we now have 9 years of data on employee participants and have analyzed these data to understand the impact of program participation on measures of health and wellness. We are currently in the process of writing a manuscript describing the impact of our program offerings.

2. *Culture of Health Assessment Review.* In an effort to continue evaluating the effectiveness of our programming and determine how *WellCats* can best serve employees of Texas State University, ERS wellness consultants were engaged in the spring of 2023 to conduct a review of wellness offerings on Texas State campus and make recommendations for areas to improve. Site visits are scheduled to occur in September of 2023 and recommendations will be made to *WellCats* and university leadership in spring 2024.
3. *Increasing WellCats visibility.* Beginning in the summer of 2021, *WellCats* partnered with HR staff to develop a university-wide wellness blog and marketing plan which has continued to support increased visibility in FY 23. Newsletter and blog content is also shared through HR's listserv to reach a broader university audience. *WellCats* social media engagement via Instagram has also continued to thrive. Educational videos and reels have been viewed by thousands across the nation.
4. *Working with the Student Recreation Center to establish discounted membership.* To support wellness and physical activity beyond *WellCats* program offerings, and in response to feedback from participants, Student Recreation coordinated with *WellCats* leadership to subsidize employee memberships for \$80 per semester with the option to select for payroll deductions of membership fees. Free Fridays were also implemented at SRC for all employees during the summer of 2023.
5. *Working with partners across campus in first university-organized 5K.* In honor of World Mental Health Day, *WellCats* leaders collaborated with volunteers, sponsors, community partners, and university departments to host a campus 5K walk/run event. Over 100 racers took part in the event.
6. *Developing campus-wide events and challenges.* Educational and health screening awareness months including Pinktober (breast cancer awareness) and Movember (men's health) were emphasized to encourage employees to take action in their health, be proactive, and support the well-being of others. Over 100 employees participated in associated awareness activities in FY 23. Additionally, beginning in the fall of 2023, Walktober will be launched to provide an avenue for participants across campus to improve their physical fitness through a walking challenge. The challenge will engage employees via an interactive mobile app featuring a message board, motivational articles, weekly challenges, healthy recipes, badges, and more.



OVERVIEW OF *WELLCATS* OFFERINGS - PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- A. Group Exercise: 30 to 60-minute classes offered on both campuses throughout the day at several sites designed to meet the different needs, interests and fitness levels of our members.
- B. Health Behavior Change Coaching: One-on-one sessions designed to support health behavior change for employees who desire to prioritize healthy behaviors, especially related to eating healthfully and exercising consistently. Sessions are scheduled weekly, conducted in person, via telephone or Zoom, and the typical employee is coached for 3+months.*
- C. Nutrition Consultation: One-on-one sessions with a trained nutrition professional designed to assess an individual's current nutritional intake and to provide support in identifying goals to improve nutrition, overall health, and well-being. Consultation provided in-person on the San Marcos campus and via Zoom or telephone.*
- D. ProActive Nutrition (PAN): Monthly hands-on cooking sessions focusing on whole foods, healthful options for popular dishes, and exploring new possibilities in the kitchen. PAN cooking sessions are available to individuals, as well as to departments/offices as a fun team-building meeting alternative.
- E. Racquetball: Offered at Jowers Center, Monday through Friday, 12-1 PM for all faculty and staff.
- F. Subsidized Student Recreation Center membership: Provides a limited number of *WellCats* members a \$25/year or semester SRC membership subsidy.
- G. Walking classes: One-hour themed sessions offered monthly provide supported avenues for enjoying Texas State's beautiful campus on foot. All levels of fitness are welcome. Classes meet at LBJ entrance per the *WellCats* calendar from 12:00-1:00.
- H. Wellness Education Series: One-hour sessions offered monthly through Organizational Development and Communications covering topics ranging across all eight dimensions of wellness. These sessions are open to non-*WellCats* Members and are delivered by *WellCats* team members or by members of the Texas State University or San Marcos community.*
- I. Afternoon Stretch Breaks: Weekly, 15-minute sessions designed to be done at a desk providing office-friendly stretches and time to ask wellness-related questions.

**WellCats* has continued to offer services both in-person and virtually based on ongoing feedback from program participants. Our goal is to provide flexible options for employees to participate in services.



MEMBER DATA

- [see Appendix I](#)

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

A. Overall Program Outcomes Data

In 2022-2023, the *WellCats* program continued to expand its offerings to deliver high quality services in a variety of modalities to all benefits-eligible employees of Texas State University. *WellCats* collaborated with community and university partners throughout FY 23, providing programming both virtually and in-person. Other changes to *WellCats* included the addition of a new HR representative to the leadership team (Youngs) who has been charged with increasing program visibility and spearheading *WellCats* outreach efforts.

B. Member Retention Data

A. Annual Participation Data

Beginning in FY 2020, in an effort to increase *WellCats* program awareness, retention, and member participation, *WellCats* HR representatives visited departments on campus to review *WellCats* services and programming. *WellCats* has continued to engage in these efforts. Additional outreach was initiated in various *WellCats* classes and events on campus including group exercise classes, wellness education series presentations, new faculty orientations, and departmental team building events.

B. Annual Outreach Data

- 2 departments visited in FY 2020
- 12 departments visited in FY 2021
- 39 departments and events visited in FY 2022
- 20 departments visited in FY 2023

C. Health Behavior Coaching Summary Data

- [see Appendix II](#)

D. PAN Cooking Class Summary Data

- [see Appendix III](#)

E. WellCats Online Content Summary Data

- [see Appendix IV](#)

MAJOR OBJECTIVES FOR 2023

- Administer annual employee health and wellness survey with specific focus on barriers and facilitators to program participation
- Remove mandatory membership enrollment in *WellCats* program
- Increase *WellCats* participation and university-wide program engagement
- Collaborate with ERS to increase visibility of offerings and promote and share resources
- Collaborate with Human Resources to create content for the monthly newsletter and interactive blog
- Develop and conduct a survey for employees to gauge interest in a group nutrition education series
- Support *WellCats* members by providing services in a variety of formats including virtual and in-person
- Update website, social media, Teams, and HR blog to keep members engaged with *WellCats* services
- Collaborate with Human Resources on an employee benefits fair
- Engage in a Culture of Health Assessment of Texas State University

MAJOR OBSTACLES

- Declining class attendance in wake of COVID-19 pandemic
- Supervisor support of employees using wellness time
- Promoting of the use of wellness time for employees
- Social support for members
- Increasing participation and employee engagement in program offerings
- Employee ability to balance work life responsibilities
- Lack of nutrition knowledge among employees
- Stress and mental health challenges for members
- Size of campus and distance required to attend in-person classes

Appendix I | Member Data

	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
# of <i>WellCats</i> members	359	543	492	364	534	3736
# of group exercise classes attended (total)	7999	7684	5089	2301	1969	2957
# of WES* offered	14	11	9	12	11	11
Average attendance at WES	14.28	12.42	22	23.08	7.81	5.73
Total attendance at WES	200	145	198	277	86	63
# of one-on-one health coaching sessions (total)	99	101	97	73	85	37
# of members participating in one-on-one health coaching	10	10	10	6	8	4
# of one-on-one dietary consultations provided (total)	15	14	14	61	21	22
# of one-on-one dietary consultations provided (# of individuals served)	14	11	14	15	15	14
# Male/Female – SM	258 Females 97 Males 3 Others	436 Females 91 Males 4 Others	362 Females 109 Males 8 Others	275 Females 63 Males 3 Others	399 Females 104 Males 8 Others	
# Male/Female – RRC	1 Female 0 Males 0 Others	12 Female 0 Males 0 Others	12 Females 1 Males 0 Others	14 Females 9 Males 0 Others	18 Females 5 Males 0 Others	
# of members – SM	358	532	478	341	511	ALL
# of members – RRC	1	12	13	23	23	ALL
BMI@ (average)	28.42	27.98	27.35	27.78	27.40	
Sick Leave Taken – Members (n=total sick leave hours)	16,639.30	22,081.31	22,515.28	12,149.01		
Sick Leave – Non-Members (n=total sick leave hours)	158,638.94	164,932.03	140,272.46	140,422.81		
Wellness Leave Taken – Avg Hours/Week						0.61
Percentage of employees who took Wellness Leave						11.1%

*WES = *WellCats Education Session*

@BMI = *body mass index*

Appendix II | 1-on-1 Health Coaching Feedback Summary

of "Health Behavior Change Coaching Feedback Surveys" returned = 4

Surveys were included if the individual finished coaching between [September 2022] to [August 2023]

I. **Participants were asked to rate the coach's effectiveness on a scale of 1-10.
(10 = Very effective; 1 = Not Effective)**

Category	Category Average
Knowledge	9.8
Helpfulness	10
Empathy and connection	9.8
Quality of change support	9.6
Quality of guidance	9.8
Quality of resources	9.6
Competence	10

II. **Survey questions, summary, and direct quotes.**

i. In what area(s) can the coach improve?

1. Based on the responses, individuals stated that Dr. Janet Bezner did a great job and had no recommendations for improvement. Each participant indicated she is a wonderful coach.
2. Direct quotes:
 - a. *"The pace was great; the advice was on point and needed even when it was hard to hear."*
 - b. *"Dr. Bezner was great."*

ii. In what ways has coaching benefited or changed you the most? Describe "before" and "after" if possible.

1. Many individuals stated that Dr. Janet Bezner assisted them in changing their mindset when it comes to habit building and attainable goal setting. They also learned new tools and tactics for introspection and approaching lifestyle changes.
2. Direct quotes:
 - a. *"Coaching has benefited and changed my way of thinking and my approach to everything."*
 - b. *"I learned that keeping commitments to myself is just as important as keeping commitments to others. I learned to avoid all-or-nothing thinking when it comes to exercise and routines, and to give myself grace."*
 - c. *"It changed my mindset about improving health and wellness, now I set small attainable goals and I'm more flexible in my approach."*

iii. What goal is most important to you now? (That you are going to focus on post-coaching)

1. Many of the participants had goals primarily concerned with continuing the practice of mindfulness and revisiting their goals frequently to check in on their progress. Some of the goals set by participants had to do with maintaining healthy habits like sleeping more and regular physical activity.
2. Direct quotes:
 - a. *"...being mindful and giving myself grace. Revisiting long-term goals to keep the bigger picture in mind."*
 - b. *"...better incorporate mindfulness fully in my life and therapy sessions that will help me to stay focused on my goals and reduce bad habits."*
 - c. *"To continue to be flexible and commit regularly to small goals."*

- iv. Participants were asked to comment on the following topics and how health coaching with Dr. Bezner has benefitted them in each of these realms of wellness.
1. In general, participants felt that coaching was multifactorial in the sense that they made progress in more than one aspect of health and wellness. Below, we have listed direct quotes in relation to each component of wellness.
 2. Direct Quotes - Confidence:
 - a. *"I have more confidence in my ability to improve my well-being and quality of life."*
 - b. *"I now know that I'm stronger than I think. I can make small changes now that will benefit me later"*
 - c. *"I am more confident in saying what I need, and I don't feel guilty for resting"*
 3. Direct Quotes - Motivation:
 - a. *"I am more motivated because I no longer fear that I cannot make small changes that add up over time"*
 - b. *"I am more motivated to start again after 'failing'"*
 - c. *"I now reach out for help when I need it instead of trying to do everything in a silo."*
 4. Direct Quotes - Energy:
 - a. *"I have improved energy and now take regular walks during my lunch break"*
 - b. *"My energy has increased, in large part due to more sleep."*
 - c. *"I have more of it. I could do better, but I am not where I used to be and for me that is progress."*
 5. Direct Quotes - Work performance/productivity:
 - a. *"I focus more now because I'm being more mindful of what's going on in and around me that affects my behavior/choices"*
 - b. *"I still struggle with work life balance although I no longer stay up late to catch up on work."*
 6. Direct Quotes - Physical activity habits:
 - a. *"I am more active now than before coaching."*
 - b. *"I am strength training more regularly."*
 7. Direct Quotes - Eating habits:
 - a. *"Eating habits have changed for the better, but still need more room for improvement. Eating more plant based, less fried foods and sweets. No more soda."*
 - b. *"The most impactful eating habit that I got from Dr. Bezner was, the importance of water consumption and how much water I need to consume."*
 - c. *"...has improved. I focus on eating whole foods, with protein, fats, and carbs at every meal."*
 8. Direct Quotes - Sleep:
 - a. *"Dr. Bezner helped me to pay attention to the habits that I had that were leading me to get poor sleep, so that I could improve my sleep quantity"*
 - b. *"...has its moments, but overall since I started this process, I sleep much better and have better habits."*
 9. Direct Quotes - Stress management:
 - a. *"...better because I am recognizing more when I'm under stress and how to combat it with better habits and seeking advice."*
 - b. *"Has improved but is still a work in progress."*
 10. Direct Quotes - Self-compassion:
 - a. *"Dr. Bezner reminded me that the emotions that I'm going through because of my personal challenges are expected and that grace was the expected response."*
 - b. *"This may be the greatest area of improvement. I can give myself grace and stop intrusive thoughts with compassionate ones."*
 - c. *"Giving myself more grace."*
 11. Direct Quotes - Health:
 - a. *"...overall health is good."*

12. Direct Quotes - Life satisfaction:

- a. *"Being able to feel more in control of my health has improved my level of life satisfaction."*
- b. *"Even in moments of stress and chaos, I am still grateful."*

v. What are your coach's best qualities?

1. Each of the individuals expressed their gratitude for how personable, compassionate, and thoughtful Dr. Bezner was throughout their coaching experience. In addition, many participants felt that Dr. Bezner created a very safe environment that was free of judgment. She allowed them to talk through their missteps and provided participants with resources and guidance in order to overcome any barriers they had in their health journey.

vi. How could your coach improve?

1. All the individuals stated that there was no room to improve as the coaching was great as it is. They appreciated Dr. Bezner's drive and motivation.

vii. How did the coaching experience differ from expectations?

1. Many individuals did not know what to expect as they came into the coaching experience. They were surprised by the way Dr. Bezner incorporated all aspects of health and how much it positively impacted their everyday lives. These participants felt that this aspect allowed them to take charge of their own lives and continue to grow in more ways than expected.
2. Direct quotes:
 - a. *"I expected a one-size-fits-all approach where I was told what to do. Instead, I received coaching that was collaborative and personal."*
 - b. *"...it was life changing. I am so grateful to Dr. Bezner and the time she invested in me."*
 - c. *"I didn't know what to expect, but I think it is a well thought out program."*

Appendix III | ProActive Nutrition (PAN) Summary Data

of "WellCats Nutrition Services surveys" returned = 12

I. PAN Cooking Class Feedback

A. Summary of surveys = 16 completed

1. The members who attend the classes have typically been *WellCats* members for at least 1 year with a majority having been members for more than two years (11/16).
2. All participants have attended PAN classes in-person. Overall, *WellCats* members found their ability to locate information about the cooking class (15/16) and accessing the class (12/16) moderately or extremely easy.
3. Survey results indicated that majority of members strongly agreed or agreed (94%) that the instructor was engaging and entertaining with the class.
4. 12 respondents strongly agreed (75%) and 3 respondents agreed (19%) that the instructor provided interesting recipes that they wanted to try.
5. 9 respondents strongly agreed (56%) and 6 respondents moderately agreed (38%) that the instructor (1) gave helpful tips and tricks for food preparation and (2) encouraged group participation and sharing.
6. 9 participants strongly agreed (56%) and 4 respondents agreed (25%) responded that the instructor gave helpful alternatives to the recipes.
7. 13 respondents (81%) reported that they have made the recipes again that were provided in the virtual cooking classes.
8. 12 respondents (75%) strongly agreed and 2 (13%) agreed that all their questions were answered during the PAN cooking class.
9. Participants recommended that it would be helpful to post recipes prior to class, include recipes with less sugar, have a schedule that is easy to reference/find, offer more options with meat, and provide name tags for participants.

Appendix IV | WellCats Online Content Summary Data

Note – All online content evaluation results have been combined.

	Posts	Reels	Followers	Reach	Total Accounts Reached
August	5	2	186	2507	5545
September	8	2	204	301	1608
October	4	2	217	266	302
November	7	1	214	979	1036
December	0	2	Unknown	482	Unknown
January	5	4	Unknown	18,868	Unknown
February	4	1	Unknown	12,541	Unknown
March	6	3	279	2,371	2187
April	2	1	279	174	323
May	3	0	279	0	103
June	4	2	280	105	279
July	3	3	371	172	371
TOTAL REACH	51	23	371	38,766	11,754

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