

Creating Real Well-Being Change

What if you had an opportunity to create a community where the healthiest choices were also the easiest ones to make? Here it's easier to bike than drive to work, shopping centers, and parks thanks to better, safer bike lanes. This is a community built for active living and an environment where public policies provide a supportive nudge toward well-being.

You're probably asking if such a community exists? It does through **Blue Zones Project®** by Healthways—a community well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to environment, policy, and social networks.

By helping people live longer, better through more livable, walkable, and bikeable environments, communities can lower health-care costs, improve productivity, and boost national recognition as a great place to live, work, and play. It's already happening in several cities across the nation.

Environmental Approach to Living Longer, Better

Blue Zones Project is based on findings from an eight-year, worldwide quest led by Dan Buettner, *National Geographic* Fellow and *New York Times* best-selling author, to find Blue Zones®—places where individuals live measurably longer, happier lives with lower rates of chronic disease and a higher quality of life.

In 2010, the Blue Zones Project team partnered with Beach Cities Health District in Southern California to apply Blue Zones principles to three California communities—Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach, and Manhattan Beach. Then in 2011, we joined forces with Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® to deliver Blue Zones Project across the state of Iowa in support of the Governor's Healthiest State Initiative.

Blue Zones Project optimizes four key environments and Power 9® principles, making healthy choices the default.

- **Inner Self:** By helping people discover their purpose in life, it's possible to improve their well-being. In Blue Zones® cultures, purpose is so important that there are often special words for it. In Costa Rica, for example, they call it “Plan De Vida” – a plan for life.
- **Habitat:** If we de-convenience places where people spend most of their time, such as home, work, and school, we can encourage healthier activity like in Okinawans’ households. Instead of using chairs, they stand-up and sit-down from the floor numerous times a day. That constant, moderate exercise rewards them with years of healthy life.
- **Social Networks:** People’s social connections influence the decisions they make; people in Blue Zones cultures regularly socialize face-to-face with friends whose healthy behaviors reinforce their own.
- **Community:** Environmental surroundings encourage healthy behaviors—from restaurant and grocery store choices to sidewalk and bike path access that offers safe physical activity for all ages and abilities.



Living the Power 9

What's made Blue Zones areas special are the nine common lifestyle traits they share—known as the Power 9®. These nine small, easy steps fit into four categories and can be practiced anywhere.

DOWN SHIFT



PURPOSE



PLANT SLANT



WINE@FIVE



FAMILY
FIRST



80% RULE



MOVE
NATURALLY



RIGHT TRIBE



BELONG



"Blue Zones Project helped our community set amazing, aggressive, and achievable strategies that moved the Public Health agenda further in 10 months than what I could have expected in 10 years."

—Lois Ahern, Director of Freeborn County Health, CA (retired)

Driving Well-Being Improvement

After three years or less of working to improve the health and well-being of communities in California and Iowa, Blue Zones Project has been successful in creating real change. This improvement is measured through the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index®.

Outcomes

- Beach Cities well-being continued to climb while obesity and smoking rates fell to 14% and 8% respectively, among the lowest in the nation.
- Iowa's Well-Being Index score increased each year since 2010, landing the state in the Top 10 two years in a row. Only three other states have ever had back-to-back top ten finishes.



Making a Difference In Your Community's Well-Being

It's time to start dreaming about a well-being way of life, and picture the best possible version of the community you call home. Blue Zones Project® can help make this dream a reality.

"When Blue Zones Project began, I got to thinking about adding longevity to my life and how much that would add to my enjoyment of my grandsons. If I could add some years to my life, that would give me more time with them. I started the Project in June at 400 lbs. and now weigh 343 lbs." [six months later].

—Leroy Buehler, Waterloo, IA

Learn more at bluezonesproject.com.

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