

Becoming a

# Blue Zones Community

Creating Healthier, Happier, More Productive Residents



BLUE ZONES PROJECT®  
by HEALTHWAYS



Brought to  
Southwest Florida by

**NCH**  
Healthcare  
System



## MESSAGE FROM NCH HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

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ALLEN WEISS  
MD, MBA, FACP, FACR  
President and CEO, NCH

What if we could make small, incremental changes to the way we live and dramatically improve the well-being of our community? What if those changes resulted in increased longevity and higher levels of well-being in Southwest Florida? It's not only possible, it's already been done across entire communities.

NCH Healthcare System is launching a major initiative that uses scientific research to help communities boost their well-being. It's called Blue Zones Project® and we're proud and excited to launch the program in Southwest Florida. Blue Zones Project initiatives have been successfully implemented in 13 communities across the country. In every case, there's been demonstrable progress in improving the well-being of participating communities.

NCH is committed to improving the health and well-being of people across Southwest Florida. We're pursuing this important goal on a number of fronts: changing how medical providers are compensated for treating you; helping people navigate the healthcare system in ways that increase the likelihood of recovering from illness; introducing innovative programs that dramatically change how you're treated. But we also know that we won't make sustainable progress until we change how we live.

If we're successful — and with your help we will be — Blue Zones Project can change the dynamics of well-being in Southwest Florida in favor of health, happiness, and longevity. That's what's at stake, and that's why Blue Zones Project is so important to NCH and the future of our community.

## THE CASE FOR CHANGE

### OUR CURRENT STATE

Though Southwest Florida consistently ranks amongst the top healthiest communities in Florida, obesity and chronic diseases have continued to rise since 2002. In 2010, 22.4 percent of Collier County adults indicated they were obese. This percentage has increased from 16.7 in 2002. An increase in the prevalence of obesity and overweight is related to a higher incidence of numerous chronic diseases including stroke, hypertension, cancer, cardiovascular disease and diabetes. This same type of statistical association exists between level of physical activity and chronic health conditions. Research shows that environmental factors like diet and lack of exercise contribute more to the development of type 2 diabetes than genetics, making it more important than ever that we impact our environments to improve the well-being of Southwest Florida.

### HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Life is busy — and the rise in obesity is likely the result of gradual lifestyle changes we've made in response to this. In the last 30 years:

- We've engineered natural movement out of our daily life. For example, we've created jobs where we sit more and move less and we've built communities that require us to drive instead of walk.
- Food portion sizes have grown considerably and we're eating more processed and convenience foods instead of fresh, homemade meals.
- Our social interactions and connections have changed from less face-to-face time to more electronic interactions.
- Stress levels have skyrocketed.

### LET'S MAKE SURE OUR KIDS WILL KNOW THEIR GRANDKIDS

Making meaningful changes to our environment could help us gain back as many as 12 years of life free of illness and preventable chronic disease. Our family, friends, and neighbors are important to us here in Southwest Florida, and with changes like these our children will have a chance to know their grandchildren and even their great grandchildren.

### WHAT IF WE DON'T CHANGE?

If we don't change, more people in Southwest Florida will have debilitating chronic diseases, making it difficult for employers to find a productive workforce. Healthcare could become unaffordable for many of us. And, we could experience a negative impact on our ability as a state to compete in business. This is both a personal and an economic challenge of record proportions.

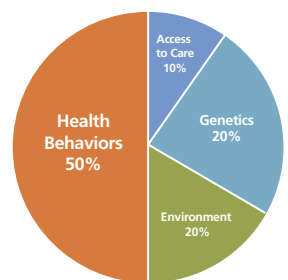
### THE GOOD NEWS

The good news is that we can control 70 percent of the factors influencing our health. (See pie chart.) Research by the Urban Institute and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have documented four key factors and their percent of influence on an individual's health.

Obesity and the resulting chronic conditions are preventable. It's just going to take us helping our neighbors to lead the way to prevention. We can do this through a series of many small, meaningful changes in our environment in which we live, work and play.

***"Obesity is such that this generation of children could be the first basically in the history of the United States to live less healthful and shorter lives than their parents."***

—Dr. David S. Ludwig,  
Director, Children's Hospital  
Boston Obesity Program



Source: Urban Institute<sup>6</sup>

1 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data, Centers for Disease Control, 2012

2 Obesity: Halting the Epidemic by Making Health Easier — At a Glance 2011, Centers for Disease Control, 2011

3 Type 2 Diabetes in Children and Adolescents, American Diabetes Association, 2000

4 The Future Cost of Obesity, America's Health Rankings, November 2009

5 Reducing Health Care Costs Through Prevention, Prevention Institute and The California Endowment, August 2007

# GALLUP-HEALTHWAYS WELL-BEING INDEX®

## FLORIDA'S WELL-BEING INDEX RANKINGS

Well-Being Overall	30	34
Life Evaluation	29	41
Emotional Health	24	33
Work Environment	35	33
Physical Health	25	30
Healthy Behaviors	12	13
Basic Access	36	42



The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index® provides an in-depth, real-time view of Americans’ perceptions of their well-being. This information gives employers, health plans, health systems, governments, and communities unmatched insight into the state of their populations. The Gallup and Healthways partnership combines decades of clinical and behavioral economics research, and intervention and health leadership expertise to deliver a preeminent source of well-being data in the U.S. and globally. We now have the largest accumulation of well-being data in the world. Our measurement enables public- and private-sector leaders to know where they stand and how to respond to a variety of well-being factors including basic access to necessities, daily health and work-related experiences, and community and social involvement. This robust measurement gives leaders the opportunity to develop and prioritize informed strategies to help their organizations and communities thrive and grow.

After six years and 2 million surveys, Gallup and Healthways continue to advance the science of well-being in areas such as an individual’s sense of purpose, social relationships, financial security, connection to community, and physical health—elements that can be measured and acted upon for each individual. Our scientific measurement helps organizations establish a baseline, benchmark their population, determine gaps, prioritize and implement interventions, and ultimately understand the impact of their investments. Measurement is a foundational step in the process of systematic and meaningful improvement of well-being.

For communities and countries, increasing citizens’ well-being yields a competitive advantage for economic development and job creation, and it lowers disease burden and healthcare costs. For employers, it means greater productivity and lower costs in the workforce, and better business performance. For health plans and health systems, it means improved clinical outcomes and lower costs. And for each of us individually, higher well-being means living a better life.

### METHODOLOGY

The research and methodology underlying the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index and the State and Congressional District Well-Being Reports are based on the World Health Organization’s definition of health, which is, “. . . not only the absence of infirmity and disease but also a state of physical, mental, and social well-being.”

The Well-Being Index analysis contains six years of longitudinal data on Americans’ perceptions of their well-being. It includes topics such as physical and emotional health, healthy behaviors, work environment, social and community factors, financial security, and access to necessities such as food, shelter, and healthcare. Changes in condition can be tracked over time, and the introduction of both controlled and uncontrolled variables considered. Discrete populations can also be ranked one against another for a stratified view of their relative well-being.

■ Learn More:  
For more information, visit [well-beingindex.com](http://well-beingindex.com).

## BLUE ZONES ARE GEOGRAPHICALLY DEFINED AREAS WHERE PEOPLE LIVE MEASURABLY LONGER

What if you knew that you could add 12 healthy and happy years to your life? Would you be interested?

Dan Buettner, a world-renowned author of The New York Times bestselling book titled “The Blue Zones — Lessons For Living Longer, from the People Who’ve Lived the Longest,” identified common elements of cultures and healthy living which produced longer life expectancy. This research has been used to develop tools and programs that help people live longer, happier lives with lower rates of chronic disease and higher quality life.

Blue Zones® has incorporated the findings from an array of scientific research along with an eight year worldwide longevity study to produce lifestyle management tools, content, and products that help people live well, longer. The Blue Zones findings have garnered national media attention including “The Oprah Winfrey Show,” “Good Morning America,” “Anderson Cooper 360,” and “ABC Nightly News.”

In 2009, Blue Zones led the prototype project in Albert Lea, Minnesota, which was a community-wide makeover that integrated healthy environmental interventions in four areas: community, social networks, habitat and inner self. In 2010, Blue Zones and Healthways partnered with the Beach Cities Health District in Southern California to apply Blue Zones principles to three contiguous California communities, including Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach, and Manhattan Beach; and in 2011, Blue Zones and Healthways joined forces again to deliver Blue Zones Project to ten communities in Iowa, sponsored by Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield®. Now Blue Zones Project is coming to Southwest Florida to make our communities healthier, happier, and more productive.

### BLUE ZONES PROJECT

Blue Zones Project, a collaboration of NCH and Healthways, will ignite and lead a community-by-community movement to improve the well-being across Southwest Florida through the application of the learnings from the Blue Zones. Blue Zones Project will focus on permanent environmental and policy changes that will make the healthy choice the easy choice. For example, experts will work with restaurants to find ways to provide better and affordable choices, such as making fresh fruit the default option rather than french fries. Also, rather than asking residents to walk or bike more, walking and cycling will be made easier and more desirable than driving.

Blue Zones Project will encourage all communities across Southwest Florida to become Blue Zones Communities® in the coming years. Those who exhibit the greatest passion, interest, and ability to transform their communities will receive assistance from international experts to transform the well-being of their community. The selected communities will lead the way in transforming well-being across Southwest Florida and will share their experiences with others who are adopting Blue Zones principles.

The people of Southwest Florida and their communities will have the ability to leverage tools and resources that will enable them to start changing their environment. By becoming a Blue Zones Community, you’ll help your friends and neighbors live longer, happier lives free of chronic disease because the healthy choice becomes the easy choice.

## BLUE ZONES POWER 9® PRINCIPLES

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Power 9 behaviors can be organized into four categories; Move Naturally, Eat Wisely, Right Outlook and Belong.

### ■ Learn More:

For more information on the Power 9 Principles, visit [collier.bluezonesproject.com](http://collier.bluezonesproject.com)

Researchers found that people who live in Blue Zones share nine common lifestyle behaviors that have a direct impact on their increased well-being and longevity. These healthy behaviors, called the Power 9® Principles, center on moving naturally, eating wisely, knowing your life's purpose, and belonging to a social community. The Power 9 Principles are easy, small steps that everyone can take in their daily lives to feel better, live longer, and be happier. These simple behaviors are patterned after the lifestyles of people who live in Blue Zones areas.

- **MOVE NATURALLY:** We can get more physical activity naturally if we live in walkable communities, de-convenience our homes, and grow gardens.
- **KNOW YOUR PURPOSE:** People who know why they wake up in the morning live up to seven years longer than those who don't.
- **DOWN SHIFT:** To reverse inflammation related to every major age-related disease, find time each day to meditate, nap, pray, or enjoy a happy hour.
- **80% RULE:** It takes your stomach 20 minutes to tell your brain it is full, causing most people to accidentally overeat; so stop eating when you feel 80% full.
- **PLANT SLANT:** Eat mostly a plant-based diet that is heavy on beans, nuts, green plants, and grains.
- **WINE @ FIVE:** If you have a healthy relationship to alcohol, one to two glasses of wine daily could help add years to your life, especially when consumed with a healthy diet.
- **FAMILY FIRST:** Living in a thriving family is worth half a dozen extra years of life expectancy. Invest time in your kids, nurture a monogamous relationship, and keep your aging parents nearby.
- **BELONG:** Recommit, reconnect, or explore a new faith-based community. No matter which faith, studies found that people who show up to their faith community four times a month live an extra 4-14 years.
- **RIGHT TRIBE:** Your friends have a long-term impact on your well-being. Expanding your social circle to include healthy-minded, supportive people might be the most powerful thing you can do to add years to your life.

## THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT DIFFERENCE

Anyone who has ever made a healthy New Year's resolution knows the challenges of maintaining it over time. Your circumstances and environment conspire against you, making the goal difficult to achieve. It's the same challenge faced by traditional health improvement programs that rely on behavior change alone.

Blue Zones Project is different because it takes an environmental approach to improve well-being. By optimizing our environments — those settings where we spend our time and which influence our behavior — we can make the healthy choice the easy choice so that we naturally adopt healthy behaviors.

### BLUE ZONES PROJECT OPTIMIZES FOUR KEY ENVIRONMENTS:

#### COMMUNITY

We can optimize communities by looking at policies, regulations, and the physical environment for ways to encourage natural movement and social interaction. Changes to sidewalks, traffic easing, public spaces, bike lanes, recreation areas, and perceived safety can make them more friendly to bicyclists and pedestrians, and provide safe routes to school.

#### SOCIAL NETWORK

Our social groups have a direct impact on our well-being, often influencing the decisions we make. By maximizing social interaction, helping people shape and expand their social network, and identifying and activating the most socially connected individuals, we can improve well-being.

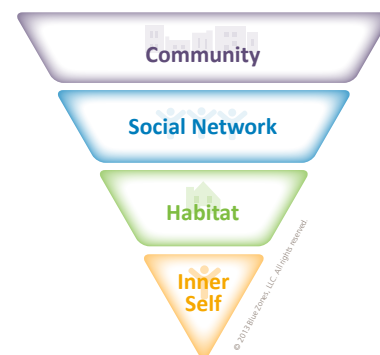
#### HABITAT

Habitat comprises the places where we spend most of our waking hours, like workplaces, homes, grocery stores, schools, and restaurants. We can optimize these settings by “de-conveniencing” our homes, creating healthier worksites, and working with restaurants to offer healthier options while preserving their bottom line.

#### INNER SELF

This is a person's purpose; the reason he or she gets out of bed in the morning. By helping people discover their purpose in life, it is possible to lift their well-being.

There is no silver bullet for improving well-being, but there may be silver buckshot. Through a coordinated approach to optimize the physical, social, and emotional factors that comprise well-being and applying it to the places where we spend our time, the Blue Zones Project naturally nudges people toward a healthier, longer, and better life.



#### ■ Learn More:

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[collier.bluezonesproject.com](http://collier.bluezonesproject.com).



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