



# ALGONA A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

The fourth certified Blue Zones Community® in the nation invests in well-being for a more livable, vibrant, and healthy future.







CONGRATS, ALGONA,  
FOR PUTTING WELL-BEING  
ON THE MAP!

In Algona, we are seizing every opportunity to move well-being in the right direction.

We've invested in new sidewalks, and **our Glo Run fundraiser attracted 900 participants and raised \$30,000 to expand the Algona Recreation Trail.** The downtown alleyways are safe for pedestrians and cyclists, thanks to a **\$1.9 million investment from the city and its partners.**

Algona has always been a great place to live, work, and visit. And it's only getting better.

We did this together. By putting our personal and collective well-being first, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. Here's to making Algona one of the healthiest cities in the nation, where residents are living better, together.



# THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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# PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN IOWA

## A GREAT STATE

What does it take to become a healthier state? What does that mean for those who live and work there? These were the questions on the minds of community leaders in 2011 when Governor Terry Branstad challenged Iowa to become the healthiest state alongside the Healthiest State Initiative. An answer came with Blue Zones Project®, a community-wide initiative that united civic leaders, businesses, restaurants, schools, grocers, families, and others in an effort to enhance the community landscape and improve the overall well-being of Iowans. With this vision as a foundation, the Blue Zones Project partnership is bringing value to communities statewide — with things like improved health, a strong economy, and happier, healthier, and highly productive residents who spend more time living well.

## AN INNOVATIVE SPONSOR

Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® chose to invest in the lives of Iowans by bringing Blue Zones Project to the state for what would be the cornerstone of Iowa's Healthiest State Initiative.

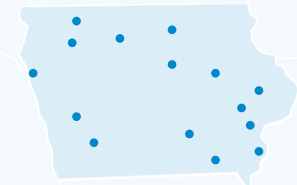
Wellmark knew that doing so would introduce an innovative approach that moves beyond diet and exercise regimens and applies the principles of behavioral economics to make healthier choices easier choices. The projected outcomes? Improved health and well-being for Iowans.

## A Transformative Solution

Blue Zones Project helps transform U.S. communities like ours into Blue Zones Communities — areas where people live longer with a higher quality of life. The secrets to well-being and longevity are found in the Power 9® — nine common principles from the Blue Zones® longevity hotspots of the world. Blue Zones Communities are places where residents, employers, and others collaborate to create environments where healthy choices are easier for everyone.

The results?

Vibrant communities where residents are happier, healthier, and more engaged with each other. Iowa was among the first to embark on this journey to well-being. Fifteen communities and five years later, the results are undeniable.





IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHER WELL-BEING, WE HAVE FOUND THAT PEOPLE LIVE LONGER, HAPPIER LIVES AND BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES FLOURISH. A RELIABLE WELL-BEING METRIC PROVIDES COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS WITH THE DATA AND INSIGHTS THEY NEED TO HELP MAKE SUSTAINED TRANSFORMATION A REALITY. AFTER ALL, IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE IT, YOU CAN'T MANAGE IT.

Dan Buettner  
*New York Times* best-selling author  
National Geographic Fellow  
Blue Zones founder

## Measuring the Impact

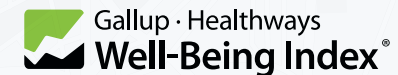
Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices to become easy choices today and for many years to come.

From 2010 – 2015, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index®, Iowa has outpaced the nation in overall well-being, improving at twice the rate of the national average.



### GALLUP-HEALTHWAYS WELL-BEING INDEX

The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index is the most proven, mature, and comprehensive measure of well-being in the world. Measuring well-being gives policy, community, and business leaders the data to benchmark populations, understand gaps and opportunities, and then prioritize interventions to measurably improve well-being. Improving well-being has been shown to lower health care costs and increase worker productivity, in turn, enhancing organizational and community competitiveness.





## 15 Communities Commit to Well-Being

In October 2011, 84 Iowa communities submitted statements of interest to be selected for Blue Zones Project, and an elite 15 were chosen. Communities received support from national experts and thousands of community members. Across the state, Blue Zones Project has seen:

520,000

Lives impacted by environmental changes designed to help people move naturally, eat wisely, develop the right outlook, and connect with others.

430,000+

Actions taken by individuals to improve well-being for themselves, their families, and friends.

610

Worksites, schools, grocery stores, and restaurants achieve Blue Zones Project designation.

21,164

(And counting) Actions taken by those organizations to make healthy choices easier, helping residents, employees, and patrons live longer, better lives.

180,245

Total feet of bike lanes, trails, and sidewalks built to encourage people to move more naturally.

142

Walking School Bus routes created to encourage students to move naturally.

15

**All 15** communities passed new Complete Streets policies to enable safe access for all users — drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.



### WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY?

Worksites, schools, grocery stores, and restaurants complete various **action items** on a **pledge** in order to earn their Blue Zones Project **designation**.



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IN EMBRACING THE BLUE ZONES MODEL, THE LEADERS AND CITIZENS OF ALGONA HAVE MADE A WISE INVESTMENT IN THEIR FUTURE. ALGONA'S ADOPTION OF THIS ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH TO IMPROVING WELL-BEING SHOULD DRAMATICALLY INCREASE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR MANY YEARS TO COME.

Dan Buettner

*New York Times* best-selling author

National Geographic Fellow

Blue Zones founder





# PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN ALGONA

As a pioneer in innovation, Algona is leading the way for a movement that is now more than 26 communities strong.

Our neighbors, teachers, and community leaders have made tremendous strides in optimizing the places where we all live, work, learn, and play.





HAVING THE FRAMEWORK OF BLUE ZONES PROJECT HAS HELPED US MOVE FORWARD WITH PLANS FOR THE ALGONA COMMUNITY AT A FASTER PACE AND WITH GREATER ASSURANCE THAT COMMUNITY PROJECTS WOULD LEAD OUR CITIZENS TO HEALTHIER CHOICES.

Lynn Kueck  
Mayor  
Algona

## All Trails Lead to Better Well-being in Algona

In Algona, we are investing in new trails that allow residents to move naturally. More than \$300,000 in new sidewalks have been installed, and a Glo Run fundraiser attracted 900 participants and raised \$30,000 to expand the Algona Recreation Trail.

We are seizing every opportunity to move well-being in the right direction. As you enter our city, a new welcome sign surrounded by native shrubs greets you. Volunteers planted more than 300 trees near the south entrance of our community. Pedestrians and cyclists are enjoying



the many trails we have. People are active at the busy farmers market and community gardens, enjoying fresh produce, connecting socially, and being physically active. Downtown alleyways are safe for pedestrians and cyclists, thanks to a \$1.9 million investment from the city and its partners. Worksites are primed to improve well-being, too. Breaks are a time when people walk or meditate, vending machines are full of healthy options like fruit, nuts, and water, and during meetings you're given the opportunity to stand instead of sit.

We are making changes to live better lives. It's just another day in a Blue Zones Community.

\$300,000

In new sidewalks have been installed

900

People participated in the Glo Run fundraiser

\$30,000

Raised to expand the Algona Recreation Trail





## A Community-wide Commitment to Blue Zones Project



5,560

Lives impacted

1,036

Individuals pledged to support well-being

4,392

Well-being actions taken by individuals

33

Organizations implementing well-being principles

1,140

Changes made by organizations to support living longer, better

19

Organizations completing the pledge

12

Algona worksites that are Blue Zones Worksites®

3

Algona restaurants that are Blue Zones Restaurants®

2

Algona public schools that are Blue Zones Schools®

2

Algona grocery stores that are Blue Zones Grocery Stores®



## SEE IT IN ACTION

### Blue Zones Project Highlight: Algona, Iowa

Algona is making well-being a way of life. Hear from our leaders and neighbors about how an emphasis on well-being makes our community a better place to live.

Watch the video:

[explore.bluezonesproject.com/Algona](https://explore.bluezonesproject.com/Algona)



## Media Coverage Places Algona on National Stage

Blue Zones Project in Iowa has attracted local and national recognition, with more than 1,600 media stories to date.

Since the launch in 2012, Blue Zones Project in Iowa has been heralded for innovative approaches to population health management in notable publications such as **O, The Oprah Magazine**.

## The Des Moines Register



PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN ALGONA



Algona Blue Zones Project leaders meet with Governor Branstad, May 2015.

In the News

**Blue Zones encouraging better choices**

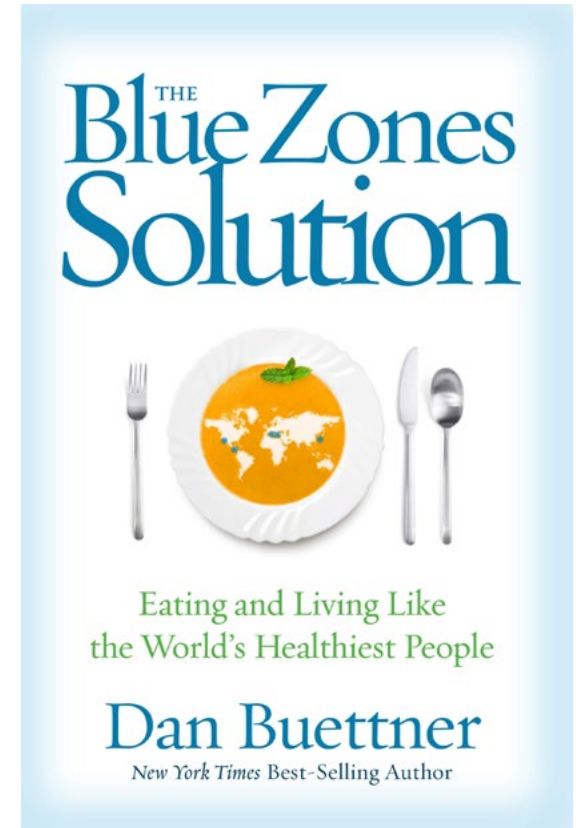
**Algona Upper Des Moines**

05.30.13

**Happy to be blue: Algona celebrates Blue Zones designation**

**Algona Upper Des Moines**

07.31.14



In addition to great media stories covering our efforts, the Blue Zones Project Iowa story is featured prominently in Dan Buettner's latest *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World's Healthiest People*.





# GUIDE TO THE POWER 9

The landscape for well-being in America cannot be improved without committed partnerships. That's why leaders across many sectors joined forces to take action and positively impact our residential and business communities. This broad, holistic approach is making healthy choices easier.


Using the secrets to longevity as our guide — [the Power 9](#) — businesses and residents have taken actions to make well-being a way of life.



## THE POWER 9

P.19

### Move Naturally

 Make daily physical activity an unavoidable part of your environment.

P.26

### Right Outlook

 Know your purpose.

 Downshift: work less, slow down, and take vacations.

P.30

### Eat Wisely

 Eat until 80 percent full.

 More veggies, less meat and processed food.

 Drink a glass of red wine each day.

P.37

### Connect

 Create a healthy social network.

 Connect or reconnect with religion.

 Prioritize family.



A group of people, including a woman in the foreground wearing a teal shirt and a helmet, are riding bicycles on a paved path that winds through a lush green cornfield. The sky is bright blue with scattered white clouds. The path is bordered by grass on the left and the cornfield on the right.

# MOVING NATURALLY

Together, Algona residents are moving more and moving naturally. Since launching Blue Zones Project, we have invested more than \$300,000 in new sidewalks.

We generally exercise too hard or not at all. However, the world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons, or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them to move naturally. They live in places where they can walk to the store, a friend's house, or places of worship. Their houses have stairs. They have gardens in their yards. It's not just about moving, it's about moving naturally.

## WHY MOVEMENT MATTERS

About 69 percent of the American population can be classified as overweight or obese.<sup>2</sup>

Our children's life expectancy is projected to be shorter than that of their parents for the first time in history. Obesity is not just a health problem, it's an economic one, too. The estimated annual health care costs of obesity-related illness are a staggering \$190 billion, or nearly 21 percent of annual medical spending. Childhood obesity alone is responsible for \$14 billion in direct medical costs.<sup>3</sup>

The good news is there is a solution for this growing issue. **Increasing simple movements like standing, walking, stretching, and bending can help burn an extra 350 calories a day.** Studies show that just by making our communities more walkable, the prevalence of obesity can decrease by more than 10 percent.<sup>4</sup> That adds up to even bigger possibilities, like lowered incidences of heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory issues and increased productivity, vitality, and years of quality life.

## How Moving Naturally Impacts Our Community

City planners, schools, worksites, and organizations across our community have come together to create environments and support programs that help Algona residents move naturally. Our city has emerged as a leader for street and community design that nudges people to healthier daily habits. Here are some reasons why:

- 16 Walking Moai teams
- 84 Walking Moai participants
- 1 Walking School Bus Route



### WHAT'S A MOAI?

Moai is a concept from Okinawa, Japan, that roughly means coming together for a common purpose. When you find your Moai, you find your personal board of directors — a committed group of individuals supporting each other and working collectively to improve well-being, for life.



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IT'S CELEBRATING  
WHAT THE PEOPLE  
OF AMERICA ARE  
NOW WAKING UP  
TO, AND REALIZING  
WHAT THEY WANT.  
IT'S GOING TO  
HAPPEN IN IOWA  
FIRST.

Dan Burden  
Walkability Expert  
Blue Zones



”

WE ALL HAVE FAMILIES AND KIDS SIMILAR IN AGE SO IT'S VERY NICE TO BE ABLE TO TALK ABOUT THAT. I FEEL I CAN CALL THEM FOR ANY NEEDS AND THEY'LL STEP UP AND HELP.”

Rodney Davis  
Walking Moai member who has lost 175 pounds

## TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTS

A community resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of our residents first, is happening in Algona. Our community of more than 5,500 is investing in making the environment a place where well-being occurs naturally as a way of life.

In 2013, the Algona city council passed a Complete Streets policy. Complete Streets policies ensure roads are safe for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Positive built-environment projects are popping up all across the city, many of which include new trails and sidewalks to encourage our residents to move naturally and be more physically active.

**Our city and many partners invested \$1.9 million** to make eight blocks of downtown alleyways safe for pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles.

**We committed \$300,000 to replace 2,400 feet of potentially unsafe sidewalks.**

We continue to see trails expand, **with another 4,200 linear feet added in 2015.**

**We secured \$91,440 in federal funding** to extend bicycle and pedestrian paths to give our community a safe place to travel by bike or on foot.

The Algona Chamber Leadership Class raised \$81,000 in the past three years by hosting a new event to support the use and expansion of the Algona Recreational Trail. Nearly 900 people attended the initial Glow Run 5k, and the run continues to engage hundreds of people each spring. Proceeds benefit trail expansion and improvements.

## SEE IT IN ACTION

### Blue Zones Project Highlight: Algona, Iowa

Watch the video:

[explore.bluezonesproject.com/Algona](http://explore.bluezonesproject.com/Algona)







## ORGANIZATIONS MOVING NATURALLY

The health of our community is directly related to the health and vitality of our people.

Organizations across Algona have recognized their responsibility to create environments that support their employees and patrons in moving more.

### Worksites

We spend about one third of our waking hours at work. Over the last 50 years, the percentage of jobs requiring moderate physical activity has fallen from 50 percent in 1960 to 20 percent today.<sup>9</sup>

**This means four out of five jobs are sedentary or only require light activity.** This decline in physical activity translates to Americans burning 120–140 fewer calories each day, which results in burning 12–15 fewer pounds each year.

As waistlines expand so do our medical costs. Annually, obesity-related illnesses cost more than \$190 billion in health care costs and \$153 billion in lost productivity, annually.<sup>3</sup>

With so much time spent at work, it's important that these environments are set up to help people move more. **Our community saw 12 worksites complete actions to help people move more, including adding standing desks, sharing walking routes, and offering stretch breaks and fitness classes.**

These are small changes that can lead to huge results for the average person over the course of a career.



## In the News

### Healthy competition: A race to the finish Algona Upper Des Moines

06.13.13





WE'VE UTILIZED EMAIL, EMPLOYEE MEETINGS, WELLNESS EVENTS, AND A NEW EMPLOYEE NEWSLETTER TO EDUCATE OUR EMPLOYEES ABOUT SMALL CHANGES TOWARDS A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE. WORKING THROUGH THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT DESIGNATION HAS HELPED ALGONA MUNICIPAL UTILITIES FOCUS ON ITEMS THAT WILL MAKE AN IMPACT ON OUR EMPLOYEES' PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING.

John Bilsten  
Algona Municipal Utilities

## Schools

Every day, children are learning habits they will carry for the rest of their lives.

Establishing healthy habits like moving naturally is so important in the early stages of life. Physical activity and stretch breaks during the school day can improve grades, increase concentration, and improve math, reading, and writing test scores.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, research shows that including ten-minute activity breaks on a daily basis can promote improvement across these areas by up to 20 percent.

**Two schools completed actions to get students moving, including adding a Walking School Bus, brain breaks, and additional recess and physical education time.**

Bryant and Lucia Wallace Elementary Schools got kids moving by including **250 minutes of recess and 150 minutes of physical activity** in the weekly schedules.

## Restaurants and Grocery Stores

Grocery stores in Algona remind shoppers that parking further away is one way to easily add more activity into their day. Small efforts like these make moving naturally easier than ever before in Algona.



### WALKING HELPS KIDS

Children who walk to school are more alert and ready to learn, strengthen their social networks, and develop lifetime fitness habits.<sup>11, 12</sup> A Walking School Bus allows a group of children to walk to school under the supervision of two or more adults.



# RIGHT OUTLOOK

3,100+

With more than 3,139 hours logged by 83 individuals, volunteers in Algona have added \$69,843 in value to our community.<sup>1</sup>

Having the right outlook is a common thread in Blue Zones areas.

The longest-lived people have regular habits to shed stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors, Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap, and Sardinians enjoy happy hour. **It doesn't matter what you do, just so long as it helps you keep the right outlook.**

Blue Zones centenarians also put an emphasis on connecting with their reason for being. Whether through family, career, or community, living with purpose pays off. **Blue Zones researchers have found that people who have a clear sense of purpose in life tend to live about seven years longer than those who don't.**<sup>2</sup>





## WHY RIGHT OUTLOOK MATTERS

No matter where we live, stress and the pressures of daily life can weigh us down.

Practicing regular methods to downshift from everyday stress and understand our purpose can improve well-being. **Stress leads to chronic inflammation, which is tied to every major age-related disease.**

Research shows that those who connect with a sense of purpose and wake up to live with it each day outlive those who don't. In fact, those with a sense of purpose had a 15 percent lower rate of death than those without.<sup>13</sup>



## How Right Outlook Impacts Our Community

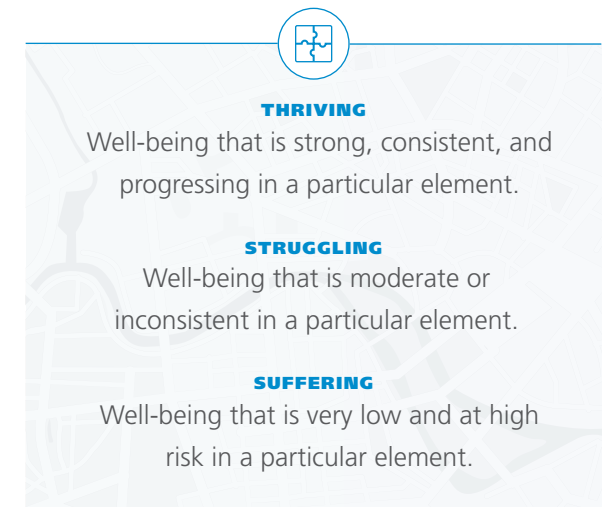
Through volunteering, Purpose Workshops, and Purpose Moais, Algona supports individuals in discovering their innate gifts. We help our community members find opportunities that match their passions and commitments to deepen their sense of purpose.



With more than 3,000 hours logged by 83 volunteers, volunteers in Algona added \$69,843 in value to our community. Thirty-six percent of the volunteers in Algona are Blue Zones Project volunteers.

Additionally, 85 people sought to discover their gifts and deepen their sense of purpose through Purpose Workshops and the creation of 12 Purpose Moais with 120 participants.

Grace Church embraced the concept of purpose through regular church activities and sermons. Purpose Moais were launched at the church for members and non-members. The pastor even shares ideas from the workbook with inmates at a jail with whom he meets regularly.





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## WELL-BEING SAVES EVERYONE MONEY



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### THRIVE, DON'T SUFFER

For employees with the highest levels of well-being — those with the highest scores in the “thriving” category — the cost of lost productivity is only \$840 a year. Among the “suffering” employees — those with the lowest scores in the “thriving” category — the annual per-person cost of lost productivity due to sick days is \$28,800.



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### WHAT IS DISEASE BURDEN?

Disease-burden cost is how much money a person spends due to disease, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, back pain, diabetes, depression/anxiety, and sleep apnea/insomnia.



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### IT PAYS TO BE HAPPY

Respondents in the “thriving” category averaged \$4,929 per person annually in disease-burden cost versus \$6,763 a year for respondents in the struggling and suffering categories. For an organization with 1,000 workers, thriving employees would cost their employers \$1.8 million less every year. Furthermore, the average annual new disease-burden cost for people who are thriving is \$723, compared with \$1,488 for those who are struggling or suffering.

## ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE RIGHT OUTLOOK

### Worksites

Fewer than 50 percent of Americans find meaning at work. Employers who invest in making work meaningful for their employees are more likely to see production rise and turnover decrease.<sup>14</sup>

Our community saw 12 worksites complete actions to help improve outlook and purpose among employees, including creating designated quiet spaces, posting the company mission or vision, and encouraging volunteering.

Employees have noticed health benefits since Algona Municipal Utilities became a Blue Zones Worksite. Nearly 100 percent of employees participated in the biometric screening program to learn about their health risks and how to have a healthy lifestyle. In 2014, they saw a 29 percent improvement in healthy cholesterol levels among employees.

Employees at Kossuth Regional Health Center (KRHC) help patients on their path to well-being, and each other. KRHC pays the fees for employees to join a local service club and encourages volunteering in the community. If employees are interested in quitting tobacco or weight loss, KRHC covers part of the cost of attaining these goals.

In 2015, Farmers State Bank offered a subsidy for membership to the YMCA for all employees, leading 100 percent of employees to sign up for membership.

#### Actions Completed by Worksites

- 1 Creating designated quiet spaces
- 2 Posting company mission
- 3 Encouraging volunteering
- 4 Introduced biometric screening programs
- 5 Subsidized YMCA memberships

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BLUE ZONES PROJECT HERE IS GOING TO MEAN SOMETHING DIFFERENT FROM WHAT IT MEANS IN A COMMUNITY OF A LARGER SIZE. SO WILL IT LOOK EXACTLY LIKE IT DOES NOW? PROBABLY NOT, BECAUSE IT NEEDS TO EVOLVE AND CHANGE FOR WHAT THE NEEDS OF OUR COMMUNITY ARE. BUT I THINK A LOT OF THESE THINGS WILL BE PUT IN PLACE AND WILL JUST BECOME THE EXPECTATION.

Joanne Roepke Bode  
Engagement Lead





Well-being is growing in Algona, where we have 55 free community garden plots and where our kids grow fresh produce in three school gardens to enjoy in the lunchroom.

Eating wisely is not a diet plan, it's a way of life in Blue Zones areas. Residents of Okinawa, Japan, have a smart strategy for maintaining a healthy weight. **Before meals they say "hara hachi bu," which means stop eating when you're 80 percent full.** Studies show that cutting back on calories can lead to better health, longevity, and weight loss. Centenarians in Blue Zones areas eat a plant-packed diet with a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, and beans. Rich in disease-fighting nutrients, fava beans, black beans, soy beans, and lentils are the cornerstone of their diets. **Don't diet; eat wisely.**





## WHY EATING WISELY MATTERS

It is estimated that by 2030, 86 percent of the American population will be overweight or obese if current eating habits and exercise habits remain the same.<sup>15</sup>

Food is fuel, and what we eat impacts our productivity, too. A 2012 study revealed that **unhealthy eating is related to a 66 percent increased risk of loss of productivity.** Health-related employee productivity loss accounts for 77 percent of all productivity loss and costs employers up to three times more in annual health care expenses.<sup>16</sup>

In addition to looking and feeling better, **the benefits of healthy eating are numerous. In the U.S. estimated savings are \$114.5 billion per year (in 2012 dollars) in medical savings, increased productivity, and reductions in heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and osteoporotic hip fractures.**<sup>17</sup> Poor diet is a major risk factor for these five health conditions, all of which reduce life expectancy. By making subtle but substantial changes to our food options, we can be healthier.

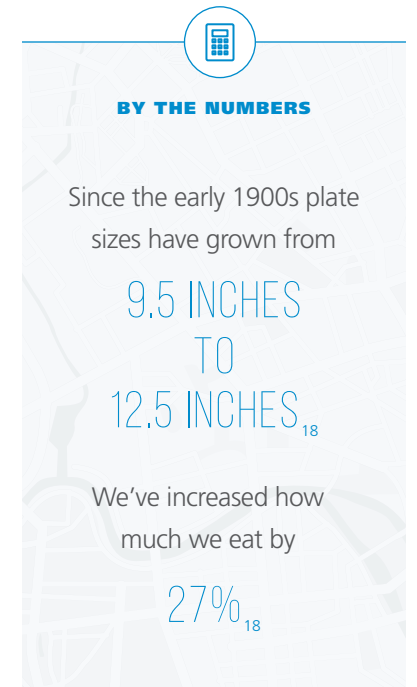
## How Eating Wisely Impacts Our Community

People make more than 200 food decisions every day.<sup>18</sup> Blue Zones Project helps people choose wisely. Algona implemented small changes and defaults in restaurants, worksites, grocery stores, and schools. For example, restaurants created new, irresistible, good-for-you menu options. Grocery stores stocked their shelves with nutritious, tasty foods. Schools removed vending machines so kids aren't tempted by sugary snacks and sodas during the school day.

10  
Cooking classes with 120 participants bringing healthier cooking home to their families

2  
Community gardens

3  
School gardens



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IT'S A GREAT WAY TO HELP PROMOTE HEALTHY LIVING, HEALTHY LIFESTYLE, AND TO MAKE SURE TO ENGAGE OUR STUDENTS IN THAT AND TO TEACH THEM THE CONCEPT AS THEY'RE GROWING UP. I THINK IT'S IMPORTANT TO START AT A YOUNG AGE TO MAKE SURE THEY'RE LEARNING THE WAYS OF LIVING HEALTHY EARLY.=

Brad Sudol  
Principal  
Bryant Elementary

## Growing Well-Being

With three community gardens springing up each season, Algona is literally growing well-being. Our committed volunteer base made the initial community garden a reality in 2011, and since then we have expanded to two additional sites. Algona Community Gardens offer 55 large plots to our residents at no cost.

Schools are taking part, too, with gardens at both Blue Zones Schools tended by students. Bryant Elementary has five garden beds, and the garden at Lucia Wallace Elementary includes flowers and produce. The produce is used in nutrition education and some even makes its way onto plates in the lunchroom as salads, sides, and entrees.

In the summer of 2016, local residents with disabilities contributed volunteer hours to help maintain the school gardens. Volunteers appreciated the opportunity to put their skills to work weeding and watering, and enjoyed the fruits of their labor when the gardens began producing fresh food.







## ORGANIZATIONS EATING WISELY

Changes made to our restaurants, grocery stores, and schools can make a huge impact on the health and well-being of the community as a whole. By working together, we can make eating wisely second nature, not a chore.

### Restaurants

The typical American entrée (without an appetizer or dessert) has 1,000 calories, with some entrees ranging up to a shocking 2,500 calories!<sup>22</sup> For the average adult, eating one meal away from home each week translates to gaining roughly two extra pounds per year.<sup>23</sup> With nearly one half of every food dollar spent on food prepared outside the home, it's important that restaurants make it easier for their customers to make the healthy choice by offering healthy entrees.

People appreciate the change. In a study of sales at chain restaurants between 2006 and 2011, chains that increased their better-for-you/low-calorie servings saw a 5.5 percent increase in same-store sales, while those that did not suffered a 5.5 percent decrease.<sup>23</sup>

Actions were taken by three Algona restaurants to make healthy food choices easier — things like offering half-size portions, creating new healthy entrees for adults and children, serving food on smaller plates, and serving healthier sides as the default option.

**The Chocolate Season** offers numerous plant-based options, featuring local produce as well as gluten-free and dairy-free items. Customers can easily make healthy choices with in-house salads and fresh fruit as side items. **Hy-Vee** rearranged its salad bar and uses colored tongs to draw attention to healthy options like fruits and vegetables.



Photos courtesy of The Chocolate Season/Bradley Jensen





Photo courtesy of The Chocolate Season/Bradley Jensen

## In the News

### “Stone Soup” evening held at Algona Public Library

Algona Upper Des Moines  
06.24.14

## Grocery Stores

Two grocery stores completed actions to make healthy food choices easier, including sharing healthy recipes, ensuring water is available in checkout lanes, offering healthy foods on end caps and in special displays, and offering a Blue Zones checkout lane full of healthy options.

In 2015, Hy-Vee saw a nearly **18 percent increase in the sales of water, a 3 percent increase in the sales of produce, and a 2 percent drop in the sales of soda**. Sales of healthy items like protein, fruit, and nut bars in the Blue Zones checkout lane continued to improve throughout 2015. Offering healthy options allows consumers to more easily make healthy choices in Algona.

18%

Increase in the sales of water at Hy-Vee in 2015

3%

Increase in the sales of produce at Hy-Vee in 2015

2%

Drop in the sales of soda at Hy-Vee in 2015





## Worksites

Seventy percent of Americans eat at their desks several times a week, which can lead to distracted, disengaged, and mindless overeating.<sup>24</sup>

In Algona, 12 of our worksites completed actions to make healthy food choices easier — things like starting healthy potlucks and worksite gardens, improving cafeteria options, and adding healthy choices in vending machines.

Algona Municipal Utilities offers employees a healthy snack basket full of fresh fruit, nuts, and granola to make healthy snacks easily available.

### Actions Completed by 12 Worksites

- 1 Healthy potlucks and worksite gardens
- 2 Improved cafeteria options
- 3 Healthier vending machine choices

## Schools

**With childhood obesity at 17 percent, there's never been a more important time to examine what students are eating at school.**<sup>25</sup>

The place they go to learn about history and science should be the place they go to learn about eating wisely as well.

Two of our schools completed actions to make healthy food choices easier for students — things like growing gardens and starting farm-to-school programs, offering recess before lunch, and implementing new policies for celebrations and fundraising with food.

Both of our Blue Zones Schools implemented farm-to-school programs that allow our students to learn about locally grown foods and visit a local farm. The district has been sourcing foods from these local growers and now sources local ingredients for school meals. **Nearly 25 percent of apples and 10 percent of tomatoes are sourced locally.**

Students who attend schools that sell foods with low nutrient density and sugar-sweetened beverages have lower intake of fruits, vegetables, and milk at lunch and higher daily percentages of calories from total fat and saturated fat.<sup>26</sup>

Redesigning the school lunchroom is a simple and cost-effective way to nudge students into eating healthier without creating strict policies. Research by Brian Wansink of Cornell University found that **simple changes to the lunchroom design tripled salad sales, doubled fruit sales, doubled sales of healthy sandwiches, and reduced the purchase of ice cream.**<sup>18</sup> By optimizing the school environment, students are nudged towards healthier choices.

### Actions Completed by Five Schools

- 1 School gardens
- 2 Farm-to-school programs
- 3 Healthier vending machines





120

Algona residents discovered their gifts and passions through Purpose Moais.

The world's longest-lived people in Blue Zones areas have always understood the power of social connectedness and putting their families first.

In Okinawa, "Moais" — groups of about five people who commit to each other for their whole lives — provide social connection and emotional and sometimes financial support in times of need. Moai members have the security of knowing there is always someone there for them.

**Putting family first and investing time with loved ones can add up to six years to your life.**<sup>27</sup> Having a sense of belonging is an important part of enjoying a long and healthy life. It doesn't matter which faith you belong to, **studies have shown that people who belong to a place of worship and attend four times a month live four to 14 years longer than those who don't.**<sup>28</sup>

”

WE CAME TOGETHER AS A GROUP. WE KNEW WE ALL HAD GIFTS. THIS IS WHERE I ACTUALLY FOUND MY PURPOSE — IN ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO FIND THEIRS.

Gloria Seefeld  
Purpose Moai participant

## WHY CONNECTION MATTERS

Our connections to friends, family, and those around us are very powerful. They have the ability to shape our lives in more ways than we realize. Research shows that even your friends’ friends’ friends — people you don’t even know — have the ability to affect your health, happiness, and behaviors.<sup>29</sup>

### How Connectedness Impacts our Community

Spending time with people who positively influence one another is crucial. In Algona, we embrace the power of social connections to bring citizens together through groups, clubs, and faith-based organizations. Algona also encourages social connections throughout the community with our new community gardens and along new trails.

**More than 84 people have joined eight Walking Moais throughout the community,** building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.



#### BY THE NUMBERS

16

Walking Moais with more than 84 participants

12

Purpose Moais with 120 participants





## ORGANIZATIONS CONNECTING

There are many ways to promote connections in organizations throughout the community.

By providing these opportunities, everyone in the community feels like a part of something bigger.

### Worksites

The digitalization of the work day has done wonders for productivity but not much for social connectivity.

Americans change jobs more often than ever before, and working from home or in isolated conditions can further a lack of socialization among coworkers and peers.

**Our community saw 12 worksites complete actions** to help employees connect with one another socially, including things like offering “lunch with a co-worker” programs, flexible work schedules, strengths assessments, and Moais.

### Actions Completed by Worksites

- 1 Lunch with a co-worker programs
- 2 Flexible work schedules
- 3 Strength assessments
- 3 Moais

### Restaurants

Eating together fosters togetherness in all kinds of families, even those that are the size of whole communities. There is no better opportunity to connect than around a dining table. In March 2014, our community passed an ordinance that allows outdoor dining at restaurants. This is an excellent opportunity for people to socialize and boost well-being while enjoying healthy meals outdoors.





### FRIENDS ALWAYS SHARE

Friends provide more than good times, memories, and companionship — they also share health habits and other traits with one another. Did you know that if your friends are smokers, unhappy, or obese, you're more likely to adopt these same traits? You are twice as likely to be overweight if your three closest friends are overweight,<sup>30</sup> and inversely, you are 20 percent more likely to succeed at new behaviors if you do them with a buddy.<sup>31</sup>



## GOOD FRIENDS AND FAMILY MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER



### EAT TOGETHER BETTER

Adolescents who eat dinner with their family are 15 percent less likely to become obese. Additionally, a report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse points out that teens who eat dinner with their families more than three times a week are less likely to do poorly in school.<sup>33</sup>



### SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The amount of time you spend socializing each day has a direct impact on your well-being. To have a good day, a person needs around six hours of socializing. So, get socializing!<sup>32</sup>



### DON'T GO IT ALONE

It's getting harder to be connected. In 2004, 25 percent of Americans felt they had no one to confide in. A lack of social connectedness leaves people vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and other anti-social behaviors.<sup>34</sup> Social isolation and feelings of loneliness can increase the chance of premature death by 14 percent — nearly double the risk of premature death from obesity.<sup>35</sup>

# CONGRATS, ALGONA!

A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

**We did this together.** By putting our personal and collective well-being first, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone.

**Here's to making Algona one of the healthiest cities in the nation, where residents are living better, together.**





## APPENDIX

### Designated Organizations

#### Blue Zones Grocery Stores

Algona Fareway

Hy-Vee Algona

#### Blue Zones Schools

Bryant Elementary School

Lucia Wallace Elementary School

#### Blue Zones Restaurants

Café Boutique

Hy-Vee Algona

The Chocolate Season

#### Blue Zones Worksites

Algona Municipal Utilities

Hy-Vee Algona

I&S Group Inc

Iowa Lakes Community College — Algona

Iowa State Bank

Kossuth County

Kossuth Regional Healthcare

Northwest Bank

Pharmacists Mutual Insurance Company

Pioneer Production Plant — Algona

PMC Advantage Insurance Services Inc

Smithfield Hog Production Division-Midwest

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