



CEDAR VALLEY A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

Cedar Falls and Waterloo, the second and sixth certified Blue Zones Communities® in the nation, invest in well-being for a more livable, vibrant, and a healthy future.





CONGRATS, CEDAR VALLEY,
FOR PUTTING WELL-BEING
ON THE MAP!

We deserve a round of applause.
And maybe even a standing ovation.
Because we made it happen.

We are reaping the benefits of strategic city design that makes healthy choices easy and naturally boosts well-being. Since Blue Zones Project® launched, **exercise levels in Cedar Falls have increased by 34 percent. Waterloo residents are benefitting from 42 new miles of trails and 660 feet of new sidewalks that improve walkability**, while vending machines at sporting venues citywide offer new, healthy options.

The Cedar Valley 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 Cedar Valley one of the healthiest places 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.

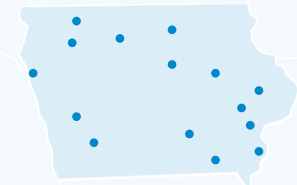
Wellmark knew that doing so would introduce an innovative approach that moves beyond diet and exercise regimens and applies the principles of behavioral economics to make healthier choices easier choices. The projected outcomes? Improved health and well-being for Iowans.

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

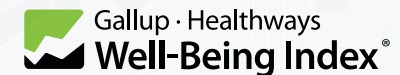
Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices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

”

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



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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CEDAR FALLS AND WATERLOO ARE THE CONSUMMATE EXAMPLES THAT AN AMERICAN CITY, GIVEN THE RIGHT TOOLS, CAN DRAMATICALLY INCREASE ITS OWN QUALITY OF LIFE BY TAKING AN ENVIRONMENTAL APPROACH TO WELL-BEING IMPROVEMENT.

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

A photograph of four people walking on a paved path in a grassy field under a clear blue sky. From left to right: a man in a purple cap and dark blue t-shirt, a woman in a grey t-shirt and black pants, a man in a dark blue striped polo shirt and khaki shorts, and a woman in a pink patterned shirt and blue jeans holding a white hat. The text 'PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN THE CEDAR VALLEY' is overlaid in large white letters across the middle of the image.

PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN THE CEDAR VALLEY

As a pioneer in innovation, the Cedar Valley (Cedar Falls and Waterloo) is leading the way for a movement that is now more than 26 communities strong nationwide.

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



BLUE ZONES PROJECT
HAS OPENED
MANY DOORS OF
OPPORTUNITY
FOR WATERLOO'S
CITIZENS TO LIVE
HEALTHIER, HAPPIER,
LONGER LIVES.

Buck Clark
Former Mayor
Waterloo

Great Design Means Healthier Living in the Cedar Valley

We are reaping the benefits of strategic city designs that make healthy choices easy and naturally boost well-being.

Since Blue Zones Project launched, **exercise levels in Cedar Falls rose from 49 percent in 2012 to 65.7 percent in 2016, a 34 percent increase. In Waterloo, residents are benefitting from 660 feet of new sidewalks that improve walkability**, while vending machines at sporting venues citywide offer new, healthy options.

Both of our communities boast two of the best Complete Streets policies in the U.S. and received the Smart Growth America award in 2014. Cedar Falls features a new pedestrian and bicycle bridge that connects the Industrial Park, where 7,000 people work, with the 5,000 residents who live on the other side.

660

Feet of new sidewalk to improve walkability in Waterloo

34%

Improvement in exercise levels across our community in Cedar Falls

42

Miles of trails added in Waterloo

In our places of worship and within civic groups, Walking Moais® offer members a chance to keep moving, to gather, and to socialize. Our employers make it easy to choose healthy options. Biometric screenings empower employees to understand their health status. Well-being activities have helped improve employee cholesterol levels, blood-sugar levels, and weight, which keeps insurance premiums stable.

At our schools, students are learning the importance of well-being. During recess, kids are encouraged to run rather than sit. In the afternoon, students use the Blue Zones Challenge to track their activity and nutrition. In just four weeks, **students at Lou Henry Elementary reported eating 33 percent more fruits and vegetables and moving 50 percent more than they did at the start of the challenge.** More students have a healthy BMI thanks to the efforts of our Blue Zones Schools.®

No matter their age, people in the Cedar Valley live Blue Zones principles every day, and nearly half of the adult population participates in Blue Zones Project. It's easy to follow a longer, better lifestyle inside these two Blue Zones Communities.



A Community-wide Commitment to Blue Zones Project



88,296

Lives impacted

29,370

Individuals pledged to support well-being

81,312

Well-being actions taken by individuals

39%

Believe Blue Zones Project® has made a positive impact on the community

243

The number of organizations implementing well-being principles

3,257

Changes made by organizations to support living better, together

104

Organizations that have completed the pledge

67

Cedar Valley worksites that are Blue Zones Worksites®

36%

Of the Cedar Valley's locally owned restaurants that are Blue Zones Restaurants®

31%

Of the Cedar Valley's public schools that are Blue Zones Schools

33%

Of the Cedar Valley's grocery stores that are Blue Zones Grocery Stores®



SEE IT IN ACTION

Blue Zones Project Highlight: Cedar Valley

The Cedar Valley 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/CedarValley



Media Coverage Places the Cedar Valley 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



WCF COURIER.COM
THE CEDAR VALLEY'S HOMEPAGE



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ANYTIME A COMMUNITY CAN RAISE AWARENESS OF THE BENEFITS OF HEALTHIER LIVING, THAT'S A WIN; IF YOU FIND IT ASSISTS WITH THE CITY'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PROSPERITY, THAT'S A WIN-WIN.

Jim Brown
Mayor
Cedar Falls



In the News

Cities commit to changes that promote healthy lifestyles

Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier

11.24.12

Author Dan Buettner describes communities as 'perfect environment'

Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier

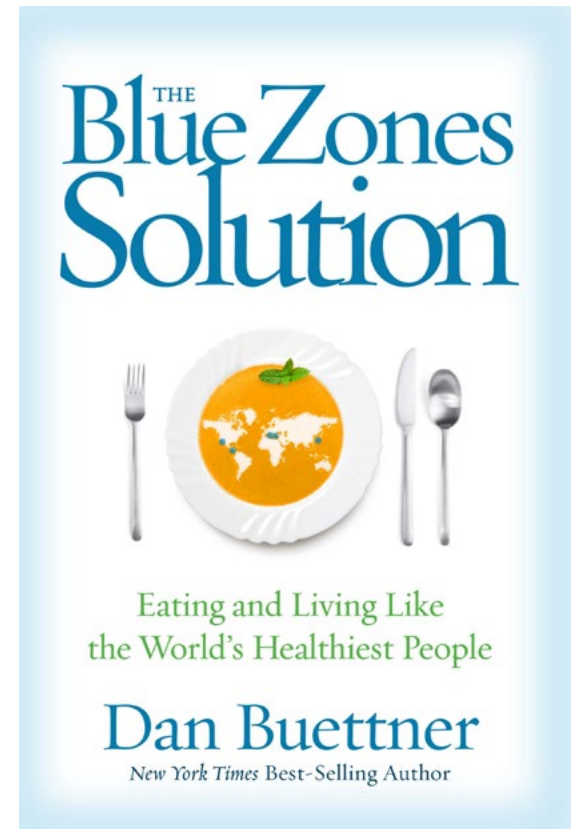
11.27.12



Local Blue Zones efforts recognized at state summit

Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier

06.07.15



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.31

Eat Wisely

 Eat until 80 percent full.

 More veggies, less meat and processed food.

 Drink a glass of red wine each day.

P.38

Connect

 Create a healthy social network.

 Connect or reconnect with religion.

 Prioritize family.

MOVING NATURALLY

Together, Cedar Valley residents are moving more, naturally. Since launching Blue Zones Project, Cedar Falls has seen a 34 percent increase in exercise levels while Waterloo has added more than 660 feet of 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.²

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.³

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.⁴ 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 Cedar Valley residents move naturally. Our communities have emerged as a leader for street and community design that nudges people to healthier daily habits. Here are some reasons why:

665

Actions taken by organizations to move naturally

16,003

Actions taken by individuals to move naturally, like getting a bike or a dog to encourage reugular movement

76

Walking Moai teams with 489 participants



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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CEDAR FALLS HAS ENJOYED EXCELLENT ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE IN THE LAST YEAR, INCLUDING A REDUCTION IN UNEMPLOYMENT TO LESS THAN 3 PERCENT, THE CREATION OF MORE THAN 200 NEW JOBS — MANY OF THEM HIGH TECH — NEARLY \$80 MILLION IN BUILDING PERMITS, AND AN INCREASE IN THE SALES PRICE OF SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING OF 8.6 PERCENT. WE FEEL STRONGLY THAT THIS PERFORMANCE TREND WILL ONLY BE ENHANCED BY CONTINUED BLUE ZONES PROJECT WORK IN CEDAR FALLS. A HEALTHIER COMMUNITY MAKES US A MORE ATTRACTIVE PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK.

Jon Crews
Former Mayor
Cedar Falls

TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTS

A community resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of our residents first, is happening in the Cedar Valley. The city councils in Cedar Falls and Waterloo passed Complete Streets policies that were nationally recognized as among the top 15 policies in the country by the National Complete Streets Coalition in 2014.

Complete Streets policies ensure roads are safe for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Positive built-environment projects are popping up across the city, with new trails and sidewalks that encourage residents to move naturally.

The Mayor's Bridge connects 7,000 workers in an industrial park to 5,000 residents on the other side to facilitate safe, alternative methods of transportation, like walking and cycling.

An investment of \$500,000 in new biking and walking trails and sidewalks in Cedar Falls is helping to connect more of the community than ever before. Sidewalks along Angie Drive from Third Street to Crescent Drive make walking to and from school easier and safer than ever before.

Waterloo added 42 miles of trails and new sidewalks were completed, including 660 feet constructed to enable Waterloo residents to walk safely from their homes to two key city locations. A new sidewalk along Logan Avenue provides residents and workers with connections between key amenities, including a grocery store, hospital, and residential area.

By designing a community where it's easy to move, the Cedar Valley is supporting well-being as a way of life.

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BLUE ZONES PROJECT IS MORE THAN A PROGRAM, IT'S A WAY OF LIFE. SINCE BEING SELECTED AS A DEMONSTRATION SITE, WE HAVE SEEN OUR COMMUNITY CHANGE. WATERLOO HAS CHANGED FROM BEING A REACTIVE COMMUNITY WITH REGARDS TO HEALTH INTO A PROACTIVE HEALTH-CONSCIOUS CITY. FROM OUR VAST TRAIL SYSTEMS FOR BIKING AND WALKING, TO OUR GYMS AND ATHLETIC FACILITIES, WE HAVE SET A STANDARD FOR QUALITY OF LIFE. THIS STANDARD HAS ALSO FACTORED INTO OUR RECORD GROWTH IN HOUSING AND BUSINESS RELATED INITIATIVES. WATERLOO IS NOW A CERTIFIED BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY THAT IS ON THE MOVE.

Quentin Hart
Mayor
Waterloo

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INVESTMENT
IN ACTIVE
TRANSPORTATION
OF THIS LEVEL
CAN INCREASE
LAND VALUES
EXPONENTIALLY. IT
WILL DIFFERENTIATE
CEDAR FALLS
AND WATERLOO
FROM CITIES THAT
ARE FOCUSING
RESOURCES ON
INCREASING VEHICLE
CAPACITY ALONE.

Dan Burden
Walkability Expert
Blue Zones

ORGANIZATIONS MOVING NATURALLY

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

Organizations across the Cedar Valley 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.⁹

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.³

With so much time spent at work, it's important that these environments are set up to help people move more. **Actions were completed by 67 worksites 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

Street Smarts: Blue Zones Project aimed at safer roads for all users
Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier
09.23.12



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.¹⁰

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

13 schools completed actions to help get students moving, including adding four Walking School Buses, brain breaks, and additional recess and physical education time.

Orange Elementary students logged 3,428 miles in their first year of promoting physical activity through classroom movement and recess.

SEE IT IN ACTION

Orange Elementary: A Blue Zones School

Watch the video:

explore.bluezonesproject.com/CedarValley

Restaurants and Grocery Stores

Grocery stores in the Cedar Valley remind shoppers that parking further away is one way to easily add more activity into their day. Restaurants are installing bicycle racks to encourage people to consider active transportation to common destinations (and work up a healthy appetite, too). Small efforts like these make moving naturally easier than ever before in the Cedar Valley.



WALKING HELPS KIDS

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



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I CANNOT THINK OF A MORE POWERFUL MOVEMENT OR A WAY TO TRANSFORM AMERICA THAN THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT.

Teri Trask
Former Principal
Orange Elementary



RIGHT OUTLOOK

With more than 60,440 hours logged by 11,592 individuals, volunteers in the Cedar Valley added \$1,344,790 in value to our communities.¹

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.**²



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.¹³



How Right Outlook Impacts Our Community

Through volunteering, Purpose Workshops, and Purpose Moais, the Cedar Valley supports individuals in discovering their innate gifts. We help our community members find opportunities that match their passion and commitment to deepen their sense of purpose.

Since 2012, our residents' outlook is on the rise. More than half of all residents fall into the "thriving" category when reflecting on their life evaluation. From 2015 to 2016, we increased our Purpose Well-Being scores by 2.8 points and 3.2 points, respectively, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.



THRIVING

Well-being that is strong, consistent, and progressing in a particular element.

STRUGGLING

Well-being that is moderate or inconsistent in a particular element.

SUFFERING

Well-being that is very low and at high risk in a particular element.



BY THE NUMBERS

335

Actions taken by organizations to build strong connections

22,177

Actions taken by individuals to practice having the right outlook, like designating a space at home for meditation or prayer, learning a new hobby, or discovering their purpose

5

Purpose Workshops with 655 participants

9

Purpose Moais with 83 participants

785

Volunteers with Blue Zones Project logging 3,927 hours

11,592

Volunteers in the Cedar Valley logging 66,440 hours

OUTCOMES

With more than 60,440 volunteer hours logged by 11,592 volunteers, volunteers in the Cedar Valley added \$1,344,790 in value for the community.

To prepare for Blue Zones Project work in the community, the Volunteer Center of the Cedar Valley first began tracking volunteer hours in 2013. The database is a place for our residents to find opportunities to volunteer and to report their volunteering hours. Since tracking began in 2013, the database grew by nearly 800 volunteers — an increase of 7 percent.

Additionally, more than 655 people sought to discover their gifts and deepen their sense of purpose through Purpose Workshops and the creation of nine Purpose Moais with 83 participants.

Volunteer Fever

- 1 60,440 volunteer hours logged in the Cedar Valley
- 2 11,592 Cedar Valley volunteers
- 3 \$1,344,790 in value for the community

SEE IT IN ACTION

Purpose Testimonial:

Meet Tammy

Watch the video:

explore.bluezonesproject.com/CedarValley



ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE RIGHT OUTLOOK

Organizations across the Cedar Valley are creating environments and practices that encourage the right outlook. By keeping this top of mind throughout the community, everyone is enjoying more health and vitality.

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.¹⁴

First National Bank established a fundraising committee that raises money from all employees and then determines what charities they want to support with those funds. To date, First National Bank employees have assisted more than 50 local organizations.

Actions Completed by 67 Worksites

- 1 Creating designated quiet spaces
- 2 Posting company mission
- 3 Encouraging volunteering
- 4 Offering Purpose Workshops

In the News

**In search of
life's purpose**
**Waterloo Cedar Falls
Courier**
08.22.13

**Blue Zones
enlists senior
volunteers**
**Waterloo Cedar Falls
Courier**
02.20.13





EAT WISELY

From community gardens on vacant lots to water bottle filling stations and healthy options in restaurants, eating wisely is the popular choice in the Cedar Valley.

Lou Henry Elementary saw a 15 percent increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables after implementing a farm to school program. 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.¹⁵

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.¹⁶

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.**¹⁷ 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.¹⁸ Blue Zones Project helps people choose wisely. Cedar Falls and Waterloo 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 added gardens and farm to school programs for students to try new, fresh foods.

804 actions taken by organizations to support eating wisely

18,170 actions taken by individuals to eat wisely, like joining a Potluck Moai, adding healthy items to their grocery list, or growing a garden

88 cooking classes with 436 participants who are bringing healthier cooking home to their families

12 Plant-Based Potluck Moais with 61 participants

29 gardens: 17 community gardens, 12 school gardens



BY THE NUMBERS

Since the early 1900s plate sizes have grown from

9.5 INCHES
TO
12.5 INCHES¹⁸

We've increased how much we eat by

27%¹⁸



In the News

Community garden seeds bear more than fruit

Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier

06.24.14

Vacant lot blooms as Burmese Community Garden

Waterloo Cedar Falls Courier

06.12.14

Community Gardens

A once-vacant lot is now producing abundantly for some of Waterloo's newest residents. A large community garden along "Church Row" was first planted in 2013 by Burmese immigrant families. One young girl described the garden as a way to connect with her family's heritage. Her grandmother, now 100 years old, still gardens in Burma. Her mother learned techniques from her mother and is now passing these along to younger generations.



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

Our community saw 21 restaurants complete actions 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.

Restaurants are seeing noticeable business benefits. Laughing Tree Café began offering half-sized portions of all sandwiches, which now represents more than one-third of sales.

The University of Northern Iowa improved the on-campus dining experience that serves 10,000–11,000 meals per day. The cafeteria features healthy dishes and boasts an environment that nudges people towards healthy choices. A spice station replaces salt on tables and encourages students to consume less sodium and discover new spices.



BY THE NUMBERS

1,000 CALORIES

in a typical American entree in a restaurant²²

2 EXTRA POUNDS

gained a year by eating one meal away from home a week²³

5.5% INCREASE

in same-store sales at restaurants that increased their better-for-you/low-calorie servings between 2006 and 2011²³

5.5% DECREASE

in sales at restaurants that did not increase their better-for-you/low-calorie servings²³

Grocery Stores

The actions we take to determine what we eat begin at the grocery store. Many grocery stores currently lead people to unhealthy foods in the way they are designed, the deals they promote, and the packaging of the food they sell.²⁴ Our community is taking the lead in taking the grocery store back.

Eight grocery stores completed actions to make healthy food choices easier — things like sharing healthy recipes, offering cooking classes, 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.

60%

of the food we purchase is highly processed, fatty, salty or sugary.²⁵

One Hy-Vee grocery store opened a special Blue Zones checkout lane to help customers make healthier choices by discouraging the impulse purchase of non-nutritious food and drinks. In just three months, healthy beverage sales increased by 122 percent. The store also saw produce sales increase by 15.8 percent and sales of fruits and vegetables from the salad bar increase by 25 percent. Offering healthy options allows consumers to make healthy choices more easily in the Cedar Valley.

SEE IT IN ACTION

Iowa Community Gardens:
Growing Well-Being

Watch the video:

explore.bluezonesproject.com/CedarValley



122%

Increase in healthy beverage sales in just three months using a special Blue Zones checkout lane

15.8%

Increase in the sales of produce

25%

Increase in the in sales of fruits and vegetables from the salad bar



Worksites

Seventy percent of Americans eat at their desks several times a week, which can lead to distracted, disengaged, and mindless overeating.²⁶

In the Cedar Valley, 67 worksites completed actions to make healthy food choices easier

— things like starting worksite gardens and improving cafeteria options.

John Deere PEC installed three new water bottle filling stations to make healthy drink choices easy and accessible for employees. Since the installation, more than 200,000 water servings have been dispensed. At the University of Northern Iowa, 45 water-bottle filling stations make the healthy choice easier, pumping out more than 8,000,000 ounces in one semester.

Schools

With childhood obesity at 17 percent, there's never been a more important time to examine what students are eating at school.²⁷

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

All 13 Blue Zones Schools made healthy choices easier for students through new lunchroom design — a simple strategy to help students eat healthier foods.

Lou Henry Elementary saw a 15 percent increase in the consumption of fruits and vegetables after implementing simple changes to lunchroom design.

They also launched a farm-to-school program to bring healthy foods from local farms to the school for experiential learning.

Students who attend schools that sell foods with low nutrient density and sugar-sweetened beverages have a lower intake of fruits, vegetables, and milk at lunch and higher daily percentages of calories from total fat and saturated fat.²⁸

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 lunchroom design tripled salad sales, doubled fruit sales, doubled sales of healthy sandwiches, and reduced the purchase of ice cream.**¹⁸ By optimizing the school environment, students are nudged towards healthier choices.

Actions Completed by 67 Worksites

- 1 Worksite gardens
- 2 Improved cafeteria options
- 3 Healthier vending machine choices
- 4 New policies for celebrations and fundraising with food

Actions Completed by 13 Schools

- 1 School gardens
- 2 Farm-to-school programs
- 3 New policies for celebrating and fundraising efforts with non-food opportunities



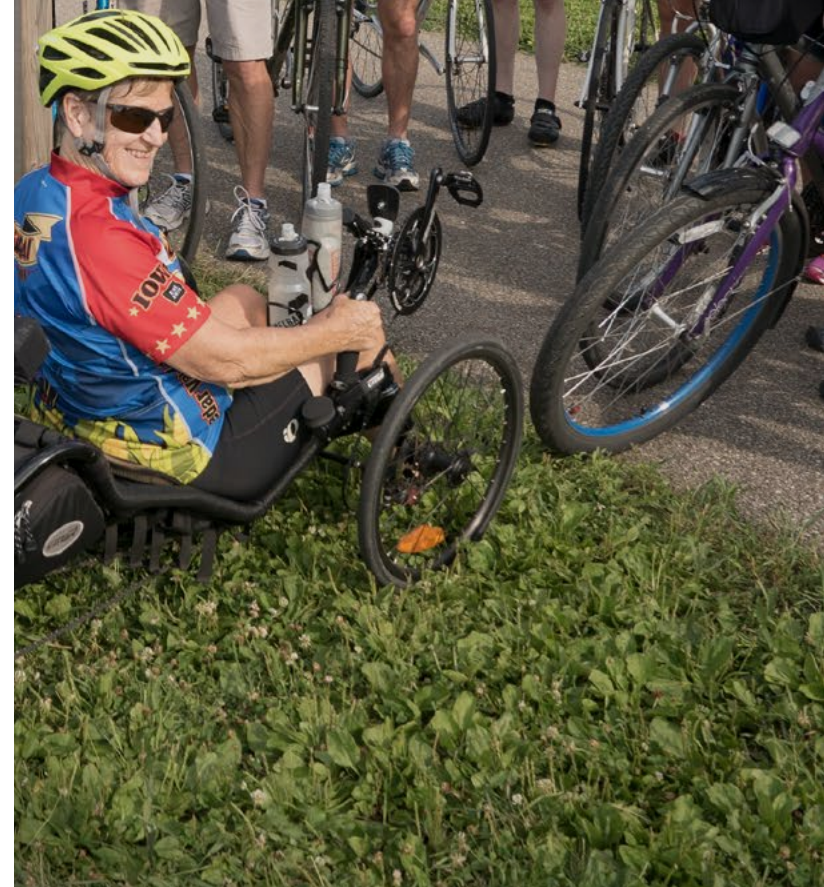


Nearly 500 people joined 76 Walking Moais throughout the community, building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.

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.²⁹ 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.**³⁰



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 — people you don't even know — have the ability to affect your health, happiness, and behaviors.³¹

How Connectedness Impacts our Community

Spending time with people who positively influence one another is crucial. In the Cedar Valley, we embraced the power of social connections to bring citizens together through groups, clubs, and faith-based organizations.

The Cedar Valley area also encourages social connections throughout the community with our community gardens, at outdoor dining areas, and along miles of new trails.

Nearly 500 people joined 76 Walking Moais throughout the community, building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.



BY THE NUMBERS

305

Actions taken by organizations to build strong connections

14,501

Actions taken by individuals to connect, like designating regular family dinner nights, joining a Moai, or volunteering

76

Walking Moais with more than 489 participants

9

Purpose Moais with 83 participants

12

Plant-Based Potluck Moais with 61 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.

In the News



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.

Actions were completed by 67 worksites to help employees connect and boost social connections, including things like “lunch with a co-worker” programs, flexible work schedules, offering strengths assessments, and implementing Moais.

Schools

Students will tell you that they’re connected with their classmates, but, they mean that they’re connected by their cell phones, which children receive at the age of six, on average.³² To bolster real, human interaction, Cedar Falls and Waterloo got students to plug in differently. Schools embraced connecting students to the world around them by establishing the **Legacy Project**, a program that encourages students to interact with and share stories with older adults.



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,³³ and inversely, you are 20 percent more likely to succeed at new behaviors if you do them with a buddy.³⁴



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.³⁶



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!³⁵



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.³⁷ 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.³⁸

CONGRATS, CEDAR VALLEY!

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 the Cedar Valley one of the healthiest communities in the nation, where residents are living better, together.**

To get involved with Blue Zones Project in the Cedar Valley,
email cedarvalleybluezonesproject@gmail.com



APPENDIX

Designated Organizations

Blue Zones Grocery Stores

Ansborough Hy-Vee

Cedar Falls Fareway

College Square Hy-Vee

Crossroads Hy-Vee

Hometown Foods

Logan Hy-Vee

University Hy-Vee

Waterloo Fareway

Blue Zones Schools

Blessed Maria Assunta Pollota Catholic

Middle School

Blessed Sacrament School

Cedar Heights Elementary School

Columbus Catholic High School

Hansen Elementary School

Irving Elementary School

Kittrell Elementary School

Lincoln Elementary School

North Cedar Elementary School

Orange Elementary School

Sacred Heart School

Saint Edward School

Blue Zones Restaurants

Ansborough Hy-Vee

Beck's Sports Brewery

Brown Bottle — Cedar Falls

Brown Bottle — Waterloo

Bryan's on 4th

College Square Hy-Vee

Cottonwood Canyon

Crossroads Hy-Vee

Ferrari's

Ginger Thai Cuisine

Jameson's Public House

Laughing Tree Café

Montage

Newton's Paradise Café

Pita Pit

Thai Bowl

The Pump Haus

Soho Sushi Bar and Deli

University Hy-Vee

Blue Zones Worksites

Allen Memorial Hospital

Ansborough Hy-Vee

ASI Computer Systems, Inc.

Bergan, Paulsen & Company, P.C.

Bertch Cabinet Mfg., Inc.

Black Hawk County Conservation

Black Hawk County Court House

Black Hawk County Health Department

Black Hawk County Sheriff's Office

Bossard North America

CBE Companies, Inc.

City of Cedar Falls

City of Waterloo

Community Bank & Trust

ConAgra Foods

Country View

Covenant Medical Center
Crossroads Hy-Vee
DISTek Integration, Inc.
Exceptional Persons, Inc. (EPI)
Family YMCA of Black Hawk County
Ferguson Enterprises
First National Bank
Friendship Village
Hawkeye Community College
Hawkeye Valley Area Agency on Aging
Hy-Vee
Hy-Vee College Square
Hy-Vee Logan
INVISION Architecture LTD
Iowa Legal Aid, Waterloo
Isle Casino Hotel Waterloo
John Deere Drivetrain & Service Parts
Organization
John Deere Engine Works
John Deere Foundry
John Deere Product Engineering Center
John Deere Tractor Cab Assembly Operations

Kaplan University — Cedar Falls Campus
Kimball and Beecher Family Dentistry Cedar Falls
Kosama Cedar Falls
Kryton Engineered Metals, Inc.
Martin Bros. Distributing
ME&V
MidWestOne Bank, Cedar Falls
MidWestOne Bank, Waterloo
MODUS
Mudd Advertising
NewAldaya Lifescapes
Northeast Iowa Family Practice Center
Orange Elementary
Pathways Behavioral Services
PDCM Insurance
Peoples Clinic
Principal Financial Group Cedar Falls
Ramada Hotel & Convention Center
Sartori Memorial Hospital
The Courier
Tyson Fresh Meats, Waterloo
UICCU Cedar Falls Cedar Heights

University Ave. Hy-Vee
University of Northern Iowa
Veridian Credit Union
Viking Pump
Waterloo Blue Zones Project
Waterloo Crossroads Hy-Vee
Western Home Communities
YWCA

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