



OSKALOOSA A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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





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

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

After launching Blue Zones Project®, our community saw a **23 percent increase in exercise levels since 2012**. This is thanks to improved walkability and investments in new streets, sidewalks, and the beautification of our community as a whole. Our community's resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of our residents first, is happening.

Oskaloosa 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 Oskaloosa one of the healthiest cities in the nation, where residents are living longer, better.

THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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A rural landscape in Iowa featuring a green field in the foreground, a large tree, and several buildings in the background.

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.

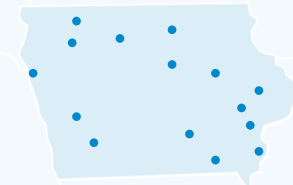
Wellmark knew that doing so would introduce an innovative approach that moves beyond diet and exercise regimens and applies the principles of behavioral economics to make healthier choices easier choices. The projected outcomes? Improved health and well-being for Iowans.

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

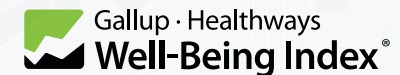
Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices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



”

BY IMPLEMENTING HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT CHANGES ACROSS THE COMMUNITY, OSKALOOSA HAS SHOWN THEIR DEDICATION TO WELL-BEING IMPROVEMENT. I AM THRILLED TO RECOGNIZE THE COMMUNITY'S ACHIEVEMENTS AND LOOK FORWARD TO FOLLOWING THE CONTINUED PROGRESS.

Dan Buettner

New York Times best-selling author

National Geographic Fellow

Blue Zones® founder

A photograph of three women walking on a paved path outdoors. The woman on the left is wearing a colorful patterned top and white pants. The woman in the middle is wearing a white patterned top and dark pants. The woman on the right is wearing a blue and white striped dress and a white jacket. They are all smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, there is a brick building with large windows and a sign that says "ENTRANCE ENTRANCE". There are also some cars parked in the background. The sky is blue with some clouds.

PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN OSKALOOSA

As a pioneer in innovation, Oskaloosa 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.



THE CHANGES
MADE IN
OSKALOOSA
THROUGH BLUE
ZONES PROJECT
HAVE BROUGHT
VIBRANCY AND
VITALITY TO OUR
COMMUNITY.

David Krutzfeldt
Mayor
Oskaloosa

All Trails Lead to Better Well-being in Oskaloosa

Oskaloosa's iconic town square is the backdrop for our community's well-being transformation.

From the Walk, Run, Ride Plan that makes bicycling and walking a way of life, to farmers markets with free yoga classes and fresh produce harvested straight from Iowa earth. This focus on well-being is paying off. Community-wide exercise levels increased 23 percent, from 51.4 percent in 2012 to 63.3 percent in 2015.

Our sidewalks are well maintained, and wayfinding signage directs you where you need to go. Energy is abundant as our kids walk to school along a recreation trail surrounded by nature. Firefighters, local police officers, and William Penn's Willy P mascot join them to make sure they are safe. This Walking School Bus allows kids to move naturally to school, enjoy fresh air, and connect socially so they arrive at school ready to learn.

Our hometown farmers market continues to grow as our community embraces a fresh, local food movement. When you feel like getting your hands dirty, rent a plot at one of our community gardens. In 2015, 23 garden plots were added for resident use, thanks to a new ordinance that allows community gardens on public property. Farmers markets and gardens support small farmers, serve as gathering places, and revitalize the downtown square. Our residents are more social, relaxed, active, and enjoying fresh produce. These and many more are the natural benefits of being a Blue Zones Community.



A Community-wide Commitment to Blue Zones Project



11,463

Lives impacted

73%

Community awareness

30%

People engaged

3,465

Individuals pledged to support well-being

10,590

Well-being actions taken by individuals

30%

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

39

Organizations implementing well-being principles

604

Changes made by organizations to support living longer, better

19

Organizations completing the pledge

13

Oskaloosa worksites that are Blue Zones Worksites®

25%

Of Oskaloosa's locally owned restaurants that are Blue Zones Restaurants®

33%

Of Oskaloosa's public schools that are Blue Zones Schools®

66%

Of Oskaloosa's grocery stores that are Blue Zones Grocery Stores®



SEE IT IN ACTION

Blue Zones Project Highlight: Oskaloosa, Iowa

Oskaloosa 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/Oskaloosa



Media Coverage Places Oskaloosa 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



Oskaloosa in the News

250

Total Mentions

6,212,589

Total Reach

\$55,097

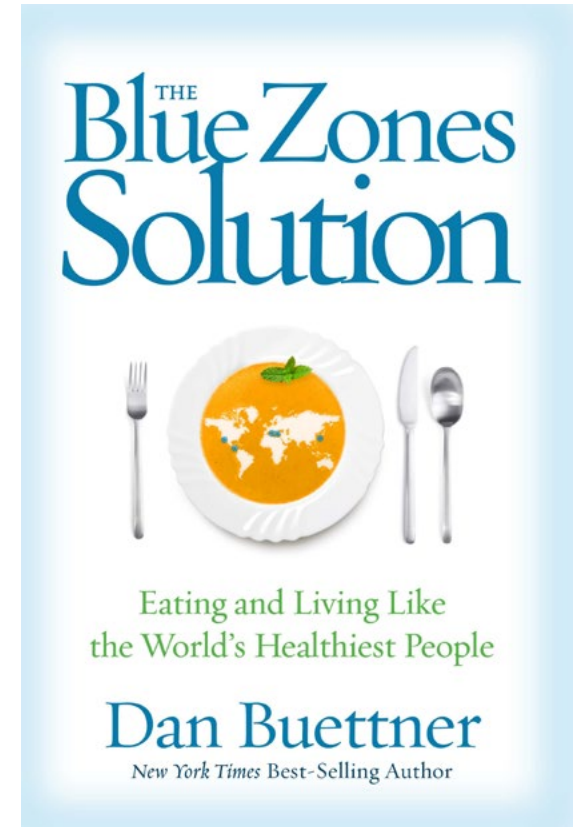
Total Publicity Value*

* Publicity value calculated using Cisionpoint Media Monitoring service.





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



In the News

Families learn about healthy lifestyles
Oskaloosa Herald

03.2.15

City Council Approves Supporting Blue Zones Project
Oskey News

06.17.14

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*.

An aerial photograph of a town square. In the center is a large, ornate brick building with a prominent white arched entrance. In the foreground, a circular paved area contains a gazebo with a dark, domed roof. The square is surrounded by lush green trees and other buildings in the background under a clear sky.

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.

Together, Oskaloosa residents are moving more, and more naturally. Since launching Blue Zones Project, Oskaloosa has seen a 23 percent increase in exercise levels.

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.

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 Oskaloosa 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:

144

Actions taken by organizations to move naturally

2,228

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

28

Walking Moai teams

216

Walking Moai participants

2

Walking School Bus Routes



WHAT'S A MOAI?

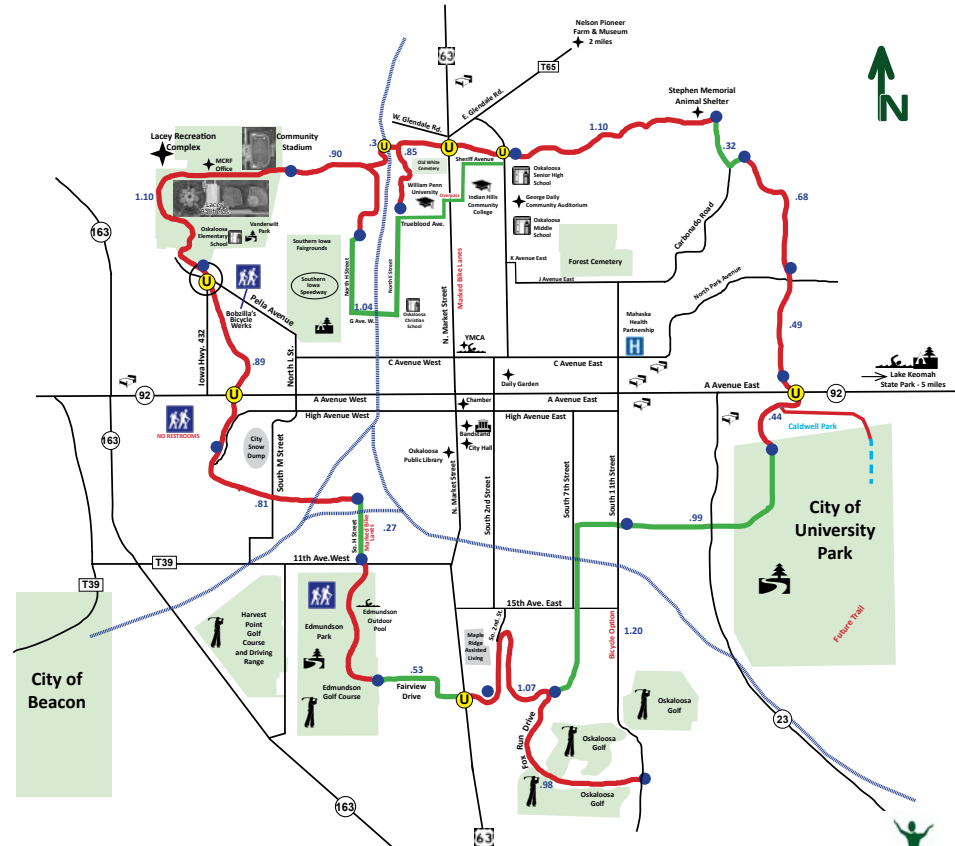
Moai is a concept from Okinawa, Japan, that roughly means coming together for a common purpose. When you find your Moai, you find your personal board of directors — a committed group of individuals supporting each other and working collectively to improve well-being, for life.

”

WE WANTED TO WORK ON A PLAN THAT REALLY MADE WALKING AND BIKING AN IMPORTANT MODE OF TRANSPORTATION HERE IN OSKALOOSA. THERE ARE A LOT OF AMENITIES FOR VEHICLES AND WE WANT TO START CREATING THOSE FOR BIKING AND WALKING, SUCH AS BICYCLE PARKING, BETTER CROSSWALKS, SIDEWALKS THAT ARE CONTINUOUS, AND OPTIMAL ROUTES.

Dylan Mulfinger
Former City Management Analyst

Mahaska Community Recreation Trail Oskaloosa, Iowa



Trail Markings & Legend:

- Trailhead (Restrooms, Parking)
- University/College
- Camp Grounds
- Park
- Courthouse
- School
- Place of Interest
- Lodging
- Hospital
- Golf Course
- Swimming
- US Highway
- County Route
- State Highway
- Railroad
- Completed Trail
- Street Access
- 1.07 Trail Mileage
- Underpass
- Under Development

Mahaska Community Recreation Foundation

Phone: 641.672.2499 • Emergency: 911
www.mcrf.info

Trail Tram Tours are available May through October. Call MCRF (641.672.2499) to make your reservation.

Note: Map is not to scale • Updated Spring 2016



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

TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTS

A community resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of residents first, is happening in Oskaloosa. Our community of nearly 11,500 is investing in infrastructure that makes it easy for people to move naturally throughout the day.

In 2015, the Oskaloosa 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 throughout the city, as evidenced by our many new trails and sidewalks, which encourage residents to move naturally.

Walk, Run, Ride Active Transportation Plan. In 2015, our city council passed a **\$6.2 million active transportation plan.** This project includes way-finding signage, bike racks, and sidewalk repairs, among others. The goal of the plan is to improve our community's infrastructure so that walking, biking, and other forms of active transportation become the easy choice for residents.

A \$34,000 investment in sidewalks.

Between 2014 and 2015, our community added approximately **1,200 feet of sidewalk to city roads, a project valued at \$34,000.**

Adding sidewalks provides a safe place for people to walk or bike and encourages the community to move naturally to the places they live, work, and play.

In the News

Complete Streets Policy Passes City Council

Oskaloosa News

01.22.15

City Council Approves Plan for More Sidewalks, Bike Lanes

CRI News

04.24.15

ORGANIZATIONS MOVING NATURALLY

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

Organizations across Oskaloosa 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. **Our community saw 13 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.

Actions Completed by Thirteen Worksites

- 1 Adding standing desks
- 2 Sharing walking routes
- 3 Offering stretch breaks and fitness classes



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 10-minute activity breaks on a daily basis can promote improvement across these areas by up to 20 percent.

Our community saw one school complete actions to help students get moving, including adding two Walking School Buses, brain breaks, and additional recess and physical education time.

Oskaloosa High School students, with help from the school and city leaders, **built a custom bike rack sculpture**, which they placed outside a Blue Zones Restaurant in order to encourage more residents to ride their bikes.

Restaurants and Grocery Stores

Grocery stores in Oskaloosa remind shoppers that parking further away is one way to easily add more activity in 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 Oskaloosa.



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.

SEE IT IN ACTION

Oskaloosa Students Build Custom Bike Rack to Improve Bikeability

Watch the video:

explore.bluezonesproject.com/



In the News

Oskaloosa Students Form 'Walking School Bus' for Healthier Life

WHO TV

03.25.15

1,576+

volunteer hours have been logged by 550 volunteers in Oskaloosa, adding \$35,066 in value to our community.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

RIGHT OUTLOOK



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 who did not.¹³



How Right Outlook Impacts Our Community

Through volunteering, Purpose Workshops, and Purpose Moais, Oskaloosa encourages individuals to discover their innate gifts. We help our community members find opportunities to match their passion and commitment through volunteer experiences to deepen their sense of purpose.

Oskaloosa is thriving. More than half of all residents fall into the “thriving” category when reflecting on their life evaluation, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.



THRIVING

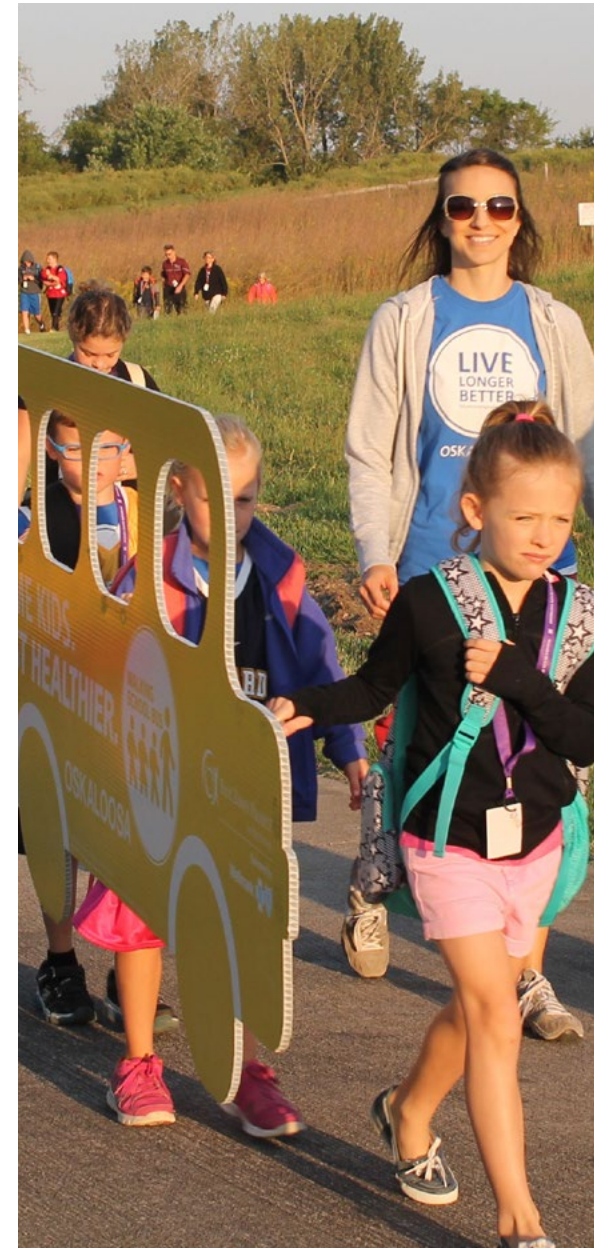
Well-being that is strong, consistent, and progressing in a particular element.

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.





WELL-BEING SAVES EVERYONE MONEY



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.



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.



IT PAYS TO BE 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.

OUTCOMES

With more than 1,576 volunteer hours logged by 550 volunteers, volunteers in Oskaloosa added \$35,066 in value to the community.

As part of preparing for Blue Zones Project work in the community, United Way set up the first online volunteering database in Oskaloosa. The database is a place for residents to find opportunities to volunteer and to report their volunteering hours.

Additionally, more than **300 people** sought to discover their gifts and deepen their sense of purpose through Purpose Workshops and the creation of **five Purpose Moais with 40 participants**. William Penn University hosted a Purpose Workshop to engage students in developing their purpose during a transitional life stage.

55

Actions taken by organizations to build strong connections

2,621

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

3

Purpose Workshop with 300 participants

5

Purpose Moais with 40 participants

425

Volunteers with Blue Zones Project logging 2,084 hours

550

Volunteers in Oskaloosa logged 1,576 hours

”

I REALLY LOVED THE PURPOSE WORKSHOP. I'VE ALWAYS FELT LIKE I KNEW MY PURPOSE, BUT THE PURPOSE WORKSHOP TOOK IT ONE STEP FURTHER BY MAKING MY PURPOSE NOT ONLY KNOWN, BUT ALSO SUPPORTED. THIS WAS ONE OF MY FAVORITE BLUE ZONES PROJECT EVENTS!

Charlene Ryan
Participant



ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE RIGHT OUTLOOK

Organizations across Oskaloosa 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 that invest in making work meaningful for their employees are more likely to see production rise and turnover decrease.¹⁴

Our community saw **13 worksites** complete actions to help improve outlook and purpose among employees, including creating designated quiet spaces, posting the company mission or vision, encouraging volunteering, and offering Purpose Workshops.

Worksites are helping employees focus on what really matters, rather than worrying about health concerns.

Mahaska Health Partnership experienced a 12 percent increase in health-risk assessment participants, a 15 percent increase in biometric screening participants, and a 171 percent increase in wellness program offerings.

Schools

Mindfulness is paying attention to the here and now with kindness and curiosity.

Research suggests that teaching mindfulness skills to students increases attention and improves social skills while decreasing test anxiety. It also creates a sense of calm connection to nature and improves sleep. These skills allow children to better cope with the stress and noise in life.¹⁵

One Oskaloosa school implemented mindfulness programming to support the community's youngest minds. Research shows that students who participate in similar programs improved in the areas of empathy, perspective taking, optimism, emotional control, and mindfulness. They also were more likely to show improvements on trustworthiness, helpfulness, and sharing while showing less rule breaking and starting fewer fights than the control group.¹⁵

In the News

Workshop Designed to Help People Lead and Live with Purpose and Passion
Oskaloosa News

03.1.15





Well-being is literally growing in Oskaloosa thanks to a new ordinance that allows community gardens to be planted on public property.

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.**

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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷

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.**¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ Blue Zones Project helps people choose wisely. Oskaloosa 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.

3,169

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

21

Cooking classes with 703 participants bringing healthier cooking home to their families

16

Plant-based Potluck Moais with 188 participants

5

Community gardens



BY THE NUMBERS

Since the early 1900s plate sizes have grown from

9.5 INCHES
TO
12.5 INCHES¹⁹

We've increased how much we eat by

27%¹⁹



Growing Well-Being

With community gardens springing up each season, Oskaloosa is literally growing well-being. In 2015, 23 additional plots were added for residents to use, thanks to an ordinance that allows gardens on public property. Gardens empower people to grow fresh, local food that is often donated to food banks. For example, the Future Farmers of America Learning Garden donates 100 percent of its produce to the local food pantry.

Schools are taking part, too, with one Blue Zones School featuring a garden tended by students. The produce is used in nutrition education and some makes its way onto plates in the lunchroom as salads, sides, and entrees.

In the News

City Council approves farmers' market, community garden measures
Oskaloosa Herald

02.3.15



Blue Zones Project teamed up with the Iowa State University Extension and Outreach office of Mahaska County and Master Gardeners to teach families about gardening. Oskaloosa Community Gardens hosted “grow-n-go” stations at community events. Children could plant tomato seeds while parents learned about community gardens. The seedlings grow in a greenhouse until they are transplanted into a garden.

Food brings cultures together
Oskaloosa Herald

01.12.16



COMMUNITY GARDENS



PEAS IN A POD

People who garden tend to eat more fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. In a survey of home and community gardeners in San Jose, California, participants doubled their vegetable intake and consumed the nationally recommended daily servings of vegetables. Another study from Denver, Colorado showed gardeners ate more fruits and vegetable than non-gardeners.²⁰



HOME IS WHERE THE GARDEN IS

An American Community Gardening Association report showed community gardens can increase home prices for residences near the garden as much as 9.4 percentage points within five years. The report also showed community gardens contribute to a reduction in violent and non-violent crime in the neighborhood and an overall increase in the feeling of safety.²¹



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Schools are taking part, too, with gardens at all Blue Zones Schools tended by students. The produce is being used in nutrition education and some is even making its way onto plates in the lunchroom as salads, sides, and entrees.

Students who have access to school garden programs score significantly higher on science achievement tests than students who are taught by strictly traditional classroom methods.²²

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!²³ For the average adult, eating one meal away from home each week translates to gaining roughly two extra pounds per year.²⁴ 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.²⁴

Our community saw **three 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.

Our Blue Zones Restaurants are realizing noticeable business benefits from the healthy changes they have implemented. **Hunters Café** has seen healthy-item sales increase: 45 percent for lentil soup, 15 percent for the grilled cheese and pear sandwich, and 5 percent for the carrot walnut sandwich. **Grate Expectations Cafe** has experienced an increase in healthy-item sales, including a 29 percent increase in sales of the berry mandarin salad and an 11 percent increase in customers opting for the healthier side of fruit. **On The Green** introduced a house-made black bean burger to its menu, and they have since seen sales of this option increase by 20 percent. Furthermore, Blue Zones Worksites are utilizing these restaurants for catering, which has opened new avenues for business and brand exposure.





WE ARE HAPPY BLUE ZONES PROJECT HAS INSPIRED COMMUNITIES TO GET HEALTHY. PAYING ATTENTION TO GOOD INGREDIENTS, SUCH AS NATURAL AND ORGANIC, HAS ALWAYS BEEN IMPORTANT TO US. AND HAVING GOOD FOOD IS WHAT IS IS ALL ABOUT.

Shirley Hunter
Owner
Hunter's Café

Grocery Stores

Our community saw two grocery stores complete 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.

By optimizing its environment with the Blue Zones Project Grocery Store Pledge, **Fareway** experienced a 28 percent increase in produce sales, a 17 percent increase in frozen produce sales, a 38 percent increase in water sales, and a 2 percent decrease in soda sales. At **Hy-Vee**, quinoa sales have increased by 49 percent, and sales of goat products (cheese, milk, and yogurt) have increased by 1,873 percent.

28%

Increase in the sales of produce at Fareway

49%

Increase in the sales of quinoa at Hy-Vee

1,873%

Increase in the sales of goat products at Hy-Vee

Worksites

Seventy percent of Americans eat at their desks several times a week, which can lead to distracted, disengaged, and mindless overeating.²⁵

In Oskaloosa, 13 worksites completed actions to make healthy food choices easier — things like starting healthy potlucks and worksite gardens, improving cafeteria selections, and adding healthy snack options to vending machines. For example, after updating all of its vending machines in 2014 to include healthier options, **MidwestOne Bank observed that employee soda consumption decreased by 32 percent and water consumption increased by 176 percent.**



Schools

With childhood obesity at 17 percent, there's never been a more important time to examine what students are eating at school.²⁶

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

Our community saw one school complete actions to make healthy food choices easier for students — things like growing gardens and starting farm-to-school programs, stocking vending machines with healthier options or limiting access throughout the day, redesigning lunchrooms to nudge students toward healthier foods, and implementing new policies for celebrations and fundraising with food. For example, Oskaloosa Elementary School's 1,200 students celebrated National Food Day and committed to a healthier lifestyle with each student eating an apple that day.

School food budgets are often a significant barrier to providing healthy and appealing school meals. To increase students' access to nutritious food, the Oskaloosa Community School District has added an additional \$7,000 to its food budget for healthy fruits and vegetables.

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.²⁷

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.**¹⁹

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

In the News

Elementary students eat apples for National Food Day

Oskaloosa Herald
10.25.14

MHP encourage more herbs, less salt in your diet

Oskaloosa Herald
08.22.14



CONNECT

A new outdoor dining pilot parklet brought neighbors together at a local restaurant, while 216 people built strong relationships with new friends and neighbors through Walking Moai groups.

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.²⁸ 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 fourteen years longer than those who don't.**²⁹



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.³⁰

How Connectedness Impacts our Community

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

More than 243 people have joined 31 Walking Moais throughout the community, building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.

In 2016, Oskaloosa piloted a parklet program to increase the vibrancy of our downtown dining options. The outdoor dining 'parklet' decks fit into the size of a parking spot and promote an active streetscape, economic and social vitality, and pedestrian- and retail-friendly activity.

Residents are connecting regularly through the Blue Zones Book and Cook — a cooking-class-meets-book-club group. Each quarter, attendees gather for a three-week discussion around Blue Zones Project principles while sampling cuisine from that area and learning new recipes from a local chef.



BY THE NUMBERS

61

Actions taken by organizations to build strong connections

1,911

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

31

Walking Moais with more than 243 participants

5

Purpose Moais with 40 participants

16

Plant-based Potluck Moais with 188 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 13 worksites complete actions 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.³¹

To bolster real, human interaction, Oskaloosa 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.

Restaurants

Eating together fosters togetherness in all kinds of families, even those that are the size of whole communities. There are no better opportunities to connect than around a dining table. Outdoor dining options were added at Hunter’s Café, providing more opportunities for people to connect deeply with their neighbors and community while enjoying a healthy meal outdoors.

In the News

Explore, experience, enjoy Oskaloosa

Oskaloosa Herald

06.13.16

Spice it up with ‘Book and Cook’ this summer

Oskaloosa Herald

05.26.16



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,³² and inversely, you are 20 percent more likely to succeed at new behaviors if you do them with a buddy.³³



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.³⁵



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!³⁴



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.³⁶ 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.³⁷



CONGRATS, OSKALOOSA!

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 Oskaloosa one of the healthiest cities in the nation, where residents are living better, together.

APPENDIX

Designated Organizations

Blue Zones Grocery Stores

Fareway

Hy-Vee

Blue Zones Restaurants

Grate Expectations Café

Hunters Café

On the Green

Blue Zones Schools

Oskaloosa Elementary School

Blue Zones Worksites

Bank Iowa

City of Oskaloosa

Clow Valve

Crisis Intervention Services

Mahaska

Mahaska Communications Group

Mahaska County YMCA

Mahaska Health Partnership

MidWestOne Bank

Musco Sports Lighting, LLC

TD&T CPAs and Advisors

The Oskaloosa Herald

TruBank

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