



# SPENCER A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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









CONGRATS, SPENCER,  
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 an **11 percent improvement in fruit and vegetable consumption**. This is thanks to our community gardens and an increase in healthy offerings at restaurants and grocery stores. Our community's resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of our residents first, is happening. Our community is moving toward a place of well-being, and **more than 50 percent believe Blue Zones Project helped create this positive impact**.

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



# THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

6	PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN IOWA	25	RIGHT OUTLOOK
7	An Innovative Sponsor	26	Why Right Outlook Matters
7	A Transformative Solution	28	Outcomes
8	Measuring the Impact	29	Organizations with the Right Outlook
9	15 Communities Commit to Well-Being		
11	PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN SPENCER	30	EAT WISELY
12	Spencer Residents Thrive on Better Living	31	Why Eating Wisely Matters
13	A Community-Wide Commitment to Blue Zones Project	34	Organizations Eating Wisely
16	GUIDE TO THE POWER 9	37	CONNECT
19	MOVE NATURALLY	38	Why Connection Matters
20	Why Movement Matters	38	Organizations Connecting
21	Transforming Environments	41	APPENDIX
23	Organizations Moving Naturally	41	Designated Organizations
		42	Sources



# 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.

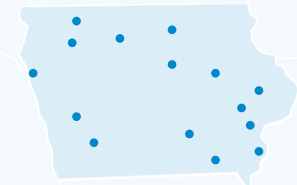
Wellmark knew that doing so would introduce an innovative approach that moves beyond diet and exercise regimens and applies the principles of behavioral economics to make healthier choices easier choices. The projected outcomes? Improved health and well-being for Iowans.

## 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

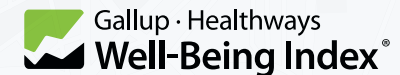
Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices 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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SPENCER'S REMARKABLE SUCCESS FURTHER DEMONSTRATES THAT WHEN COMMUNITIES WORK TOGETHER TO MAKE EVIDENCE-BASED CHANGES TO THEIR LIVING ENVIRONMENT, BOTH HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IMPROVE.

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



A group of children, mostly boys, are wearing blue t-shirts with a white circular logo that says "LIVE LONGER BETTER" and "bluezonesproject.com" below it. The word "SPENCER" is printed at the bottom of the t-shirt. One child in the foreground has his arms raised in a joyful gesture. The background shows a large indoor space with other people, including adults and children, some also wearing blue shirts. The setting appears to be a community event or a school gathering.

# PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN SPENCER

As a pioneer in innovation, Spencer 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.



BLUE ZONES PROJECT HAS DONE SO MUCH TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF WELL-BEING THROUGHOUT OUR TOWN.

Bob Fagen  
City Manager  
Spencer

## Spencer Residents Thrive on Better Living

Spencer has set a standard for well-being and residents are reaping the benefits. Our community has seen an 11 percent increase in fruit and vegetable consumption since 2014.

The number of residents who consider themselves to be “thriving” is on the rise. **More than half of all residents believe Blue Zones Project has positively impacted the community.**

No matter what time of day, movement is a part of our regular routine in Spencer. A Walking School Bus brings our kids to class ready to learn. In 2014, **more than 25 percent of elementary students moved naturally to and from school.** When they're in class, students celebrate birthdays with a class activity rather than with food.

Our workplaces also make health and well-being a priority. A well-being screening helps employees check on their health status throughout the year. Healthier employees are more productive, and since becoming Blue Zones Worksites®, many of our employers have seen a decrease in rates of metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions

associated with the development of type two diabetes and cardiovascular disease, among employees.

All around our community, people are moving more naturally and socializing at places like our community garden, where residents gather to relax and enjoy homegrown, plant-based foods. With our local paper and radio stations promoting activities to help us live longer, better, it's no surprise that **more than 82 percent of residents know about Blue Zones Project and 52 percent feel it has positively impacted the Spencer community.** In Spencer, our city is moving toward a place of well-being. It's an important benefit of being a Blue Zones Community.



## A Community-wide Commitment to Blue Zones Project



11,233

Lives impacted

82%

Community awareness

44%

People engaged

5,686

Individuals pledged to support well-being

12,349

Well-being actions taken by individuals

52%

Of people who believe Blue Zones Project has made a positive impact on the community

56

Organizations implementing well-being principles

802

Changes made by organizations to support living longer, better

24

Organizations completing the pledge

15

Worksites in Spencer that are Blue Zones Worksites

25%

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

60%

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

67%

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





## SEE IT IN ACTION

### Blue Zones Project Highlight: Spencer, Iowa

Spencer 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/Spencer](http://explore.bluezonesproject.com/Spencer)



## Media Coverage Places Spencer 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



## Spencer in the News

52

Total Mentions

61,134,022

Total Reach

\$49,564

Total Publicity Value\*

\* Publicity value calculated using Cisionpoint Media Monitoring service.



Look for our  
8 page spread,  
"Paving the Path  
for Better Living"  
in Diabetic Living's  
Summer 2016 issue!



## In the News

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**Spencer named first Iowa Blue Zones Community**  
**The Daily Reporter**  
11.19.13

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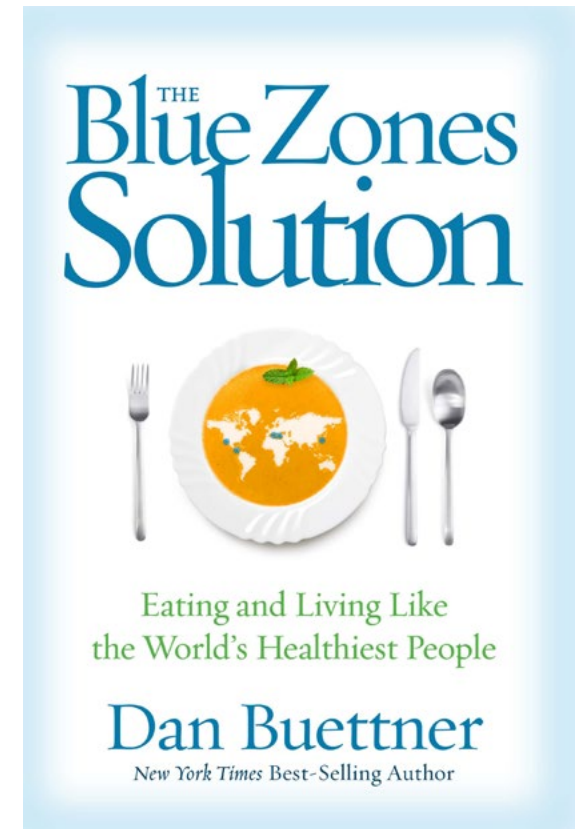
**Spencer seeks more changes in becoming a healthier community**  
**KCAU**  
11.29.13

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**Spencer makes plans to stay 'blue'**  
**The Daily Reporter**  
11.29.13



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



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.25

### 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.





Together, Spencer residents are moving more, and more naturally. Our community invested more than \$600,000 in improving walking routes to schools, new sidewalks, and trails to make it easy to be active.

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.

**MOVE  
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 Spencer 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:

181

Actions taken by organizations to move naturally

9,607

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

50

Walking Moai teams

382

Walking Moai participants

6

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.



BLUE ZONES PROJECT PROVIDES A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO SHOWCASE SPENCER'S EFFORTS TO IMPROVE OUR WELL-BEING. OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY HAS COME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT THIS INITIATIVE BECAUSE WE KNOW THAT IMPROVED WELL-BEING LEADS TO LOWER HEALTH CARE COSTS, HIGHER PRODUCTIVITY, AND INCREASED ECONOMIC VIABILITY.

Alison Simpson  
Blue Zones Project

## TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTS

A community resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of residents first, is happening in Spencer.

In 2013, the Spencer 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 our city, including many new trails and sidewalks that encourage residents to move naturally.

**A \$200,000 investment in sidewalks.** Spencer invested \$200,000 in new sidewalk construction, which led to 200 citizen applications for new sidewalks. Policy now requires sidewalks be included with future construction plans. This is a commitment to give our community a safe place to walk.

**Trail expansion.** In 2014, 0.72 miles of trails were added to our community, which increases opportunities for our residents to bike and walk to the places where they live, work, and play. By designing a community where it's easy to move, Spencer is supporting well-being as a way of life.

**Safe Routes to School.** More than \$400,000 will be used to address improved walkability to schools thanks to a strong partnership between Spencer Schools and the City of Spencer.



### BY THE NUMBERS

\$200,000

Investment in sidewalks

0.72

Miles of trail added

\$400,000

To be used to address improved walkability to schools





## ORGANIZATIONS MOVING NATURALLY

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

Organizations across Spencer 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 15 worksites complete actions to help people move more, including providing bicycle storage, sharing walking routes, and offering stretch breaks and fitness classes.**

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

Insurance-paid claims at Spencer Hospital increased by only 1.4 percent between 2011 and 2012, compared to the national trend of 7 percent and its own trend of 15 percent over the previous five years. In 2013, wellness screenings revealed that more than half of those screened eliminated one or more risk factors for cardiovascular disease and diabetes.

### Actions Completed by 15 Worksites

- 1 Providing bicycle storage
- 2 Sharing walking routes
- 3 Made positive changes to the work environment



## 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.

**Our community saw three schools complete actions to help get students moving,** including adding Walking School Buses, brain breaks, and additional recess and physical education time. For example, in 2014 **more than 25 percent of all elementary students moved naturally by foot or bicycle to and from school.**

## Actions Completed by Three Schools

- 1 Adding Walking School Buses
- 2 Adding brain breaks
- 3 Movement incorporated into the everyday classroom activities

## Restaurants and Grocery Stores

Grocery stores in Spencer 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 Spencer.



### 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

43,000+

With more than 43,263 volunteer hours logged by 6,919 individuals, volunteers in Spencer added \$962,602 in value for 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.**

When people connect with a sense of purpose and wake up to live with it each day, they have lower rates of heart disease, lower healthcare costs, weigh less, and even report higher levels of happiness. Yet 46 percent of men and 40 percent of women say they're still trying to figure out the meaning and purpose of life.<sup>13</sup>

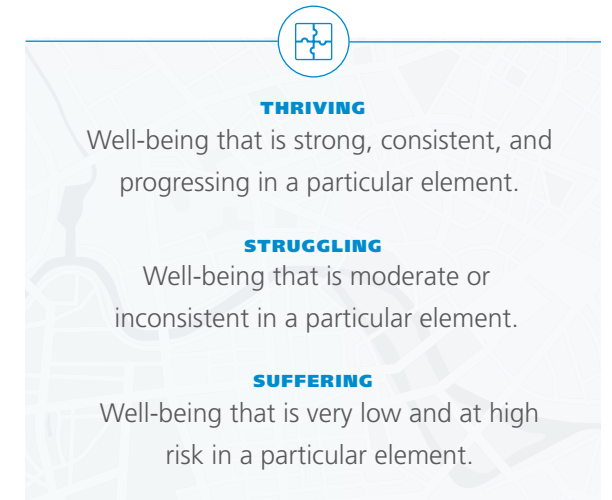


## How Right Outlook Impacts Our Community

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



Spencer is thriving. Our outlook on purpose — an important element of well-being — is improving, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. More than **74 percent of residents use their strengths every day, up nearly nine percent since 2014.**





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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.

## OUTCOMES

With more than 43,263 volunteer hours logged by 6,919 individuals, volunteers in Spencer added \$962,602 in value for the community.

Our community continues to benefit from the Volunteer Network of Clay County. Blue Zones Project has been a partner with this organization since its inception, working to present volunteer opportunities and attract volunteers. This is the system that continues to track community-wide volunteer engagements.

Our community is less stressed. The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index indicates that **stress levels have dropped more than 17 percent since 2014**. Additionally, more than 310 people sought to discover their gifts and deepen their sense of purpose through Purpose Workshops. **Another Purpose Workshop engaged 157 high-school students** to help them prepare for the next stage of their lives.



## SEE IT IN ACTION

Blue Zones Project Iowa Testimonial:  
[Meet Deb](#)

Watch the video:  
[explore.bluezonesproject.com](http://explore.bluezonesproject.com)



## ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE RIGHT OUTLOOK

Organizations across Spencer 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

Our community saw **15 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 promoting Purpose Workshops.

### In the News

#### **Searching for Purpose**

**The Daily Reporter**

04.25.13

#### **Volunteers coordinate safety for Tiger Trails**

**The Daily Reporter**

09.17.14

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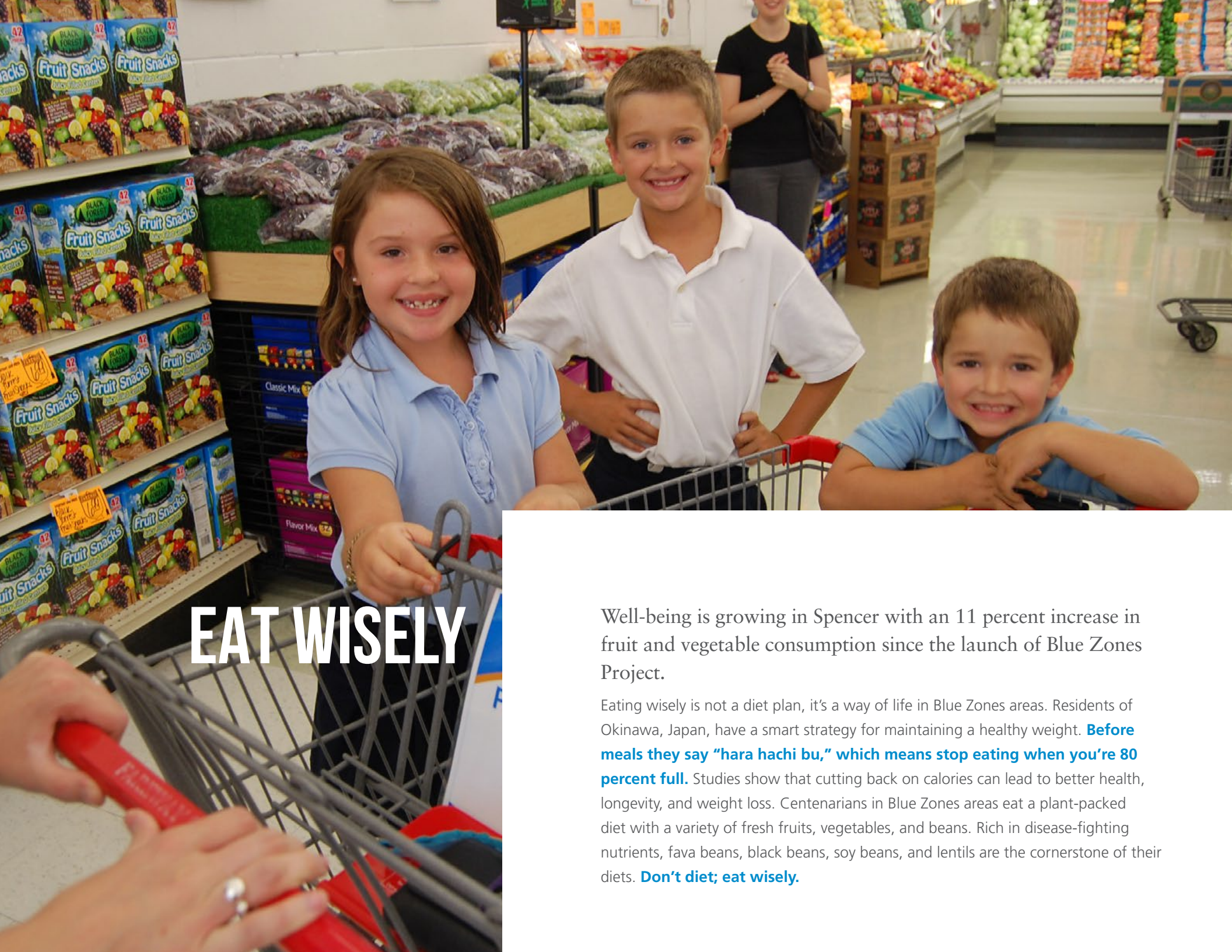
CULTURAL CHANGES TAKE TIME, BUT SPENCER IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK, AND BLUE ZONES PROJECT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF SPENCER BEING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE LIVE LONGER AND BETTER LIVES.

Sheriffa Jones

Blue Zones Project volunteer







# EAT WISELY

Well-being is growing in Spencer with an 11 percent increase in fruit and vegetable consumption since the launch of Blue Zones Project.

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>14</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>15</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>16</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>17</sup> Blue Zones Project helps people choose wisely. Spencer 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.

220

Actions taken by organizations to support eating wisely

7

Cooking classes with 182 participants bringing healthier cooking home to their families

3

Plant-based Potluck Moais with 24 participants

5

Gardens; four community gardens and one school garden



### BY THE NUMBERS

Since the early 1900s plate sizes have grown from

9.5 INCHES  
TO  
12.5 INCHES,<sup>17</sup>

We've increased how much we eat by

27%<sup>17</sup>



## Growing Well-Being

With 141 plots across four community gardens springing up each season, Spencer is literally growing well-being.

A separate community potato garden has also been planted to supply the food bank. Garden potluck parties are fun events where families connect, build bonds, and share fresh, home-grown meals.

Our schools are taking part, too, with **a garden at Fairview Elementary School tended by students**. The produce is used in nutrition education.



## In the News

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**Community garden opportunities continue to grow**

**The Daily Reporter**  
04.21.14

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**Community encouraged to get 'growing'**

**The Daily Reporter**  
05.4.13







## 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>21</sup> For the average adult, eating one meal away from home each week translates to gaining roughly two extra pounds per year.<sup>22</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>22</sup>

Our community saw **four 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 seeing noticeable business benefits. **Weasy's saw vegetable sales increase by 50 percent** after servers were trained to offer healthy options as a default side dish.

Produce is often sourced from the restaurant's on-site garden. **Terrazzo added Blue Zones Project Approved™ options to its menu, and these choices are selected more than 30 percent of the time.**

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IT'S REALLY  
MEANINGFUL  
TO US TO  
SUPPORT  
THE HEALTH  
OF THE  
COMMUNITY  
AND THE  
INDIVIDUAL.

Leann Jacobson  
Owner and Operator  
The Bear



## Grocery Stores

Our community saw two grocery stores complete 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.

For example, **water sales at Fareway increased by 50 percent in store aisles and by 36 percent in checkout lanes.** Offering healthy options allows consumers to make healthy choices more easily in Spencer.

### Actions Completed by Grocery Stores

- 1 Sharing healthy recipes
- 2 Ensuring water is available in checkout lanes
- 3 Offering healthy foods on end caps and in special displays



## SEE IT IN ACTION

Blue Zones Grocery Store Successes in Iowa

Watch the video:  
[explore.bluezonesproject.com](https://explore.bluezonesproject.com)



”

ANYTHING THAT'S GOOD FOR THE COMMUNITY IS GOOD FOR OUR STORE. WE CAN POINT OUT THE HEALTHY OPTIONS AND HOPEFULLY MAKE THAT DECISION A HEALTHY ONE.

Carl Levisay  
Store Manager  
Fareway

## Worksites

Seventy percent of Americans eat at their desks several times a week, which can lead to distracted, disengaged, and mindless overeating.<sup>23</sup>

In Spencer we want to reverse that trend. As a result, **15 worksites completed actions to make healthy food choices easier** — things like starting healthy potlucks and worksite gardens, improving cafeteria options, and adding healthy choices to vending machines.

### Actions Completed by 15 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>24</sup> 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 **three schools complete actions to make healthy food choices easier for students** — things like growing gardens, Blue Zones Challenge curriculum, 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.

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>25</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>17</sup>

By optimizing the school environment, students are nudged towards healthier choices.

### Actions Completed by Three Schools

- 1 School gardens
- 2 Blue Zones Challenge curriculum
- 3 Healthier vending machines
- 4 Redesigning lunchrooms
- 5 Implementing new policies for celebrations and fundraising with food



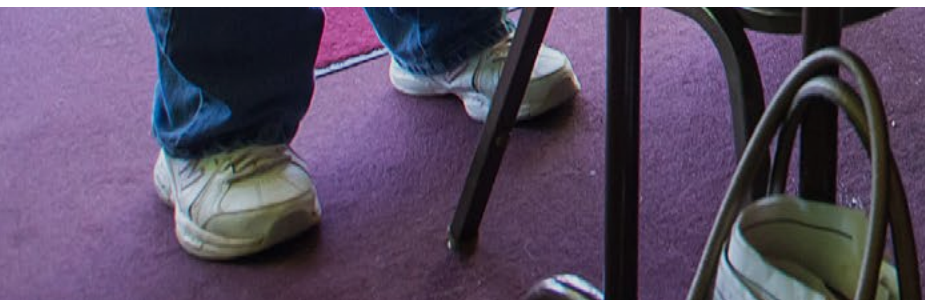
The number of people who report having someone in their life who encourages them to be healthy increased by 15.8 percent according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index. At the same time, 382 people built strong relationships with new friends and neighbors in Walking Moais.

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>26</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>27</sup>



**CONNECT**





## 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>28</sup>

### How Connectedness Impacts our Community

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

According to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index, **73 percent of our community reports having someone in their life who encourages them to be healthy**, which is a 15.8 percent improvement since 2014.



**More than 382 people have joined 50 Walking Moais throughout the community,** building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.

## 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 15 worksites complete actions to help employees connect,** including things like “lunch with a co-worker” programs, flexible work schedules, offering strengths assessments, and implementing Moais.

### Actions Completed by 15 Worksites

- 1 “Lunch with a co-worker” programs
- 2 Pervasive branding for healthy and well-being programs
- 3 Work station furniture for flexibility to sit or stand at work





# CONGRATS, SPENCER!

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 Spencer 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

The Bear Coffeehouse and Wine Bar

Terrazzo Coffeehouse

Weasy's

#### Blue Zones Schools

Fairview Elementary School

Johnson Elementary School

Lincoln Elementary School

#### Blue Zones Worksites

Avera Medical Group Spencer

City of Spencer

Community Bank & Insurance

Design Masters Salon and Day Spa

Farmers Trust & Savings Bank

Iowa Lakes Community College, Spencer

MWI Components

Northwest Bank, Spencer

NWIA Bone, Joint & Sports Surgeons

Spencer Elementary Schools

Spencer Family YMCA

Spencer Hospital

Spencer Municipal Utilities

Spencer Schools Central Administration Office



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