



SPIRIT LAKE A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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





CONGRATS, SPIRIT LAKE,
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 invested **\$1.2 million in upgrades to Memorial Park and saw nearly 200 people move naturally and enjoy the park every day.** This is thanks to improved walkability, investments in new streets and sidewalks, and the beautification of our community as a whole. Between 2014 and 2015, the City of Spirit Lake added more than 6,100 feet of new sidewalk and 3,850 feet of new trail. Our community's resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of our residents first, is happening.

Spirit Lake 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 Spirit Lake 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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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.

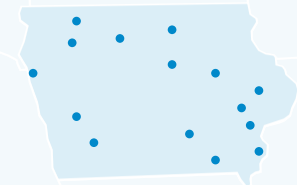
Wellmark knew that doing so would introduce an innovative approach that moves beyond diet and exercise regimens and applies the principles of behavioral economics to make healthier choices easier choices. The projected outcomes? Improved health and well-being for Iowans.

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

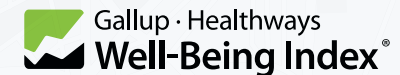
Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices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

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

Dan Burden
Walkability Expert
Blue Zones



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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LEADERS AND VOLUNTEERS IN SPIRIT LAKE HAVE EMBRACED THE BLUE ZONES MODEL AND WORKED TOGETHER TOWARD THIS COMMON GOAL FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS. WE APPLAUD THEIR EFFORTS AND LOOK FORWARD TO THE CONTINUED FOCUS ON WELL-BEING IMPROVEMENT.

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



PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN SPIRIT LAKE

As a pioneer in innovation, Spirit Lake 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.



I AM SO PROUD OF THE ENTIRE BLUE ZONES PROJECT SPIRIT LAKE TEAM. EVERY COMMITTEE MEMBER, VOLUNTEER, BUSINESS PARTNER, AND OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY WORKED TOGETHER TO BECOME A CERTIFIED BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY. IT IS CERTAINLY AN HONOR FOR SPIRIT LAKE TO ACHIEVE THIS GREAT MILESTONE.

Blain Andera
Mayor
Spirit Lake

High Spirits Lead to a Healthier Tomorrow in Spirit Lake

Spirit Lake is a vibrant community where well-being is a priority through a sense of community.

A walk or bike ride down Lake Street to Memorial Park offers a stunning view of the lake. Newly installed lighting makes the park safe at any time of day. In pleasant weather, families love to gather while kids play on the splash pad. **Nearly 200 people have enjoyed this gorgeous park every day since Spirit Lake invested \$1.2 million in its upgrade.**

Our kids are moving naturally by walking and biking to school. A Safe Routes to School project allows more students and families better active transportation opportunities to the campus while new bike racks were added to accommodate more students biking to school. At lunch, the cafeteria redesign makes healthy choices easy, and the result is an increase in fresh-fruit and vegetable consumption of 30 percent.

30%

Increase in fresh-fruit consumption

A sense of community is alive at Prairie Chick, with yoga classes, a restaurant where local foods are part of the culture, and outdoor dining that provides a unique opportunity to enjoy fresh air. At our community gardens, the city provides tools and water for gardening. After just one season of gardening, nearly 500 pounds of locally grown produce were donated to those in need.

No matter where you gather in Spirit Lake, your well-being is well tended in this Blue Zones Community.



A Community-wide Commitment to Blue Zones Project



4,840

Lives impacted

3,255

Individuals pledged to support well-being

3,807

Well-being actions taken by individuals

29

Organizations implementing well-being principles

1,079

Changes made by organizations to support living longer better

19

Organizations completing the pledge



11

Spirit Lake worksites that are Blue Zones Worksites®

3

Locally owned restaurants in Spirit Lake that are Blue Zones Restaurants®

2

Spirit Lake public schools that are Blue Zones Schools®

2

Spirit Lake grocery stores that are Blue Zones Grocery Stores®



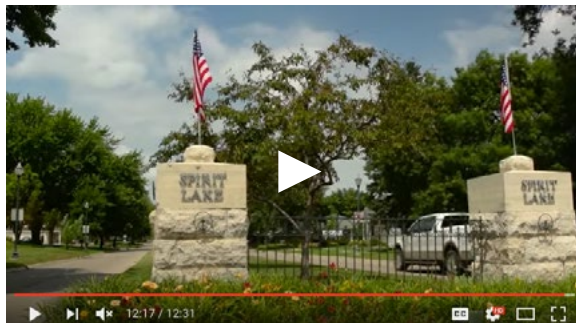
SEE IT IN ACTION

Blue Zones Project Highlight: Spirit Lake

Spirit Lake 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/SpiritLake



Media Coverage Places Spirit Lake 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



In the News

Blue Zones Project spurs lifestyle shift in Spirit Lake

KTIV

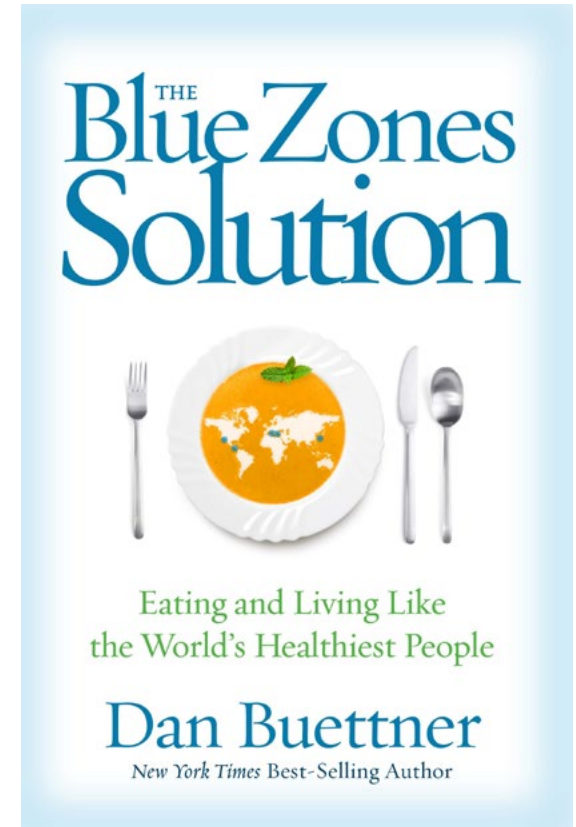
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PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN SPIRIT LAKE



Spirit Lake 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.29

Eat Wisely

 Eat until 80 percent full.

 More veggies, less meat and processed food.

 Drink a glass of red wine each day.

P.36

Connect

 Create a healthy social network.

 Connect or reconnect with religion.

 Prioritize family.



MOVING NATURALLY

Together, Spirit Lake residents are moving more, and more naturally. Between 2014 and 2016, Spirit Lake added more than 17,100 feet of new sidewalk and 3,850 feet of new trail.

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.¹

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.²

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.³ 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 Spirit Lake residents move naturally. Our communities have emerged as a leader for street and community design that nudges people to healthier daily habits. Here is a big reason why:

4

Walking Moai teams

45

Walking Moai 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.

TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTS

A community resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of residents first, is happening in Spirit Lake. Our community of nearly 5,000 is investing in making this a place where people can move naturally.

In 2014, the Spirit Lake city council passed a Complete Streets policy. Complete Streets policies ensure roads are safe for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Positive built-environment projects are popping up all across the city, including our many new trails and sidewalks that encourage community members to move naturally.



A \$1.2 million investment in Memorial Park.

Our community invested a total of \$1.2 million in upgrading Memorial Park, a destination for 200 people daily. Upgrades included a walking path around the entire park, enhanced lighting, and a new splash pad. These updates promote a sense of safety and encourage people to enjoy the fresh air, all of which helps boost well-being.

Investments in walking trails and sidewalks.

Between 2014 and 2016, Spirit Lake added more than 17,100 feet of new sidewalk and 3,850 feet of new trail, connecting Spirit Lake to neighboring Lakes Region municipalities and recreational spaces. This investment encourages higher levels of physical activity because people are able to bike and walk to the places they live, work, and play. By designing a community where it's easy to move, Spirit Lake is supporting well-being as a way of life.

Safe Routes to School. A new eight-foot-wide trail extends half of a mile and links neighborhoods to the school campus. This allows children and families to travel safely by foot or bicycle to and from school.

In The News

Spirit Lake considering bike boulevard
Dickinson County News

10.09.13

Spirit Lake schools to host Healthiest State Walk

Dickinson County News

10.09.13

ORGANIZATIONS MOVING NATURALLY

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

Organizations across Spirit Lake 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.⁸

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.²



With so much time spent at work, it's important that these environments are set up to help people move more. **Our community saw 11 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 lead to huge results for the average person over the course of a career.

Actions Completed by Eleven 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.⁹

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 two schools complete actions to help get students moving, including a bike rodeo, year-end bike ride, brain breaks, and additional recess and physical education time.

Our Blue Zones Schools added a bike curriculum that includes safety, education, and a bike rodeo. At the end of the school year, fourth-grade students celebrate with an 11-mile bike ride around the west side of the lake on the Dickinson County Trails.

After the completion of the Safe Routes to School project, new bike racks were added to accommodate more students biking to school. Now, more students are biking to school and using the new bike racks than ever before.

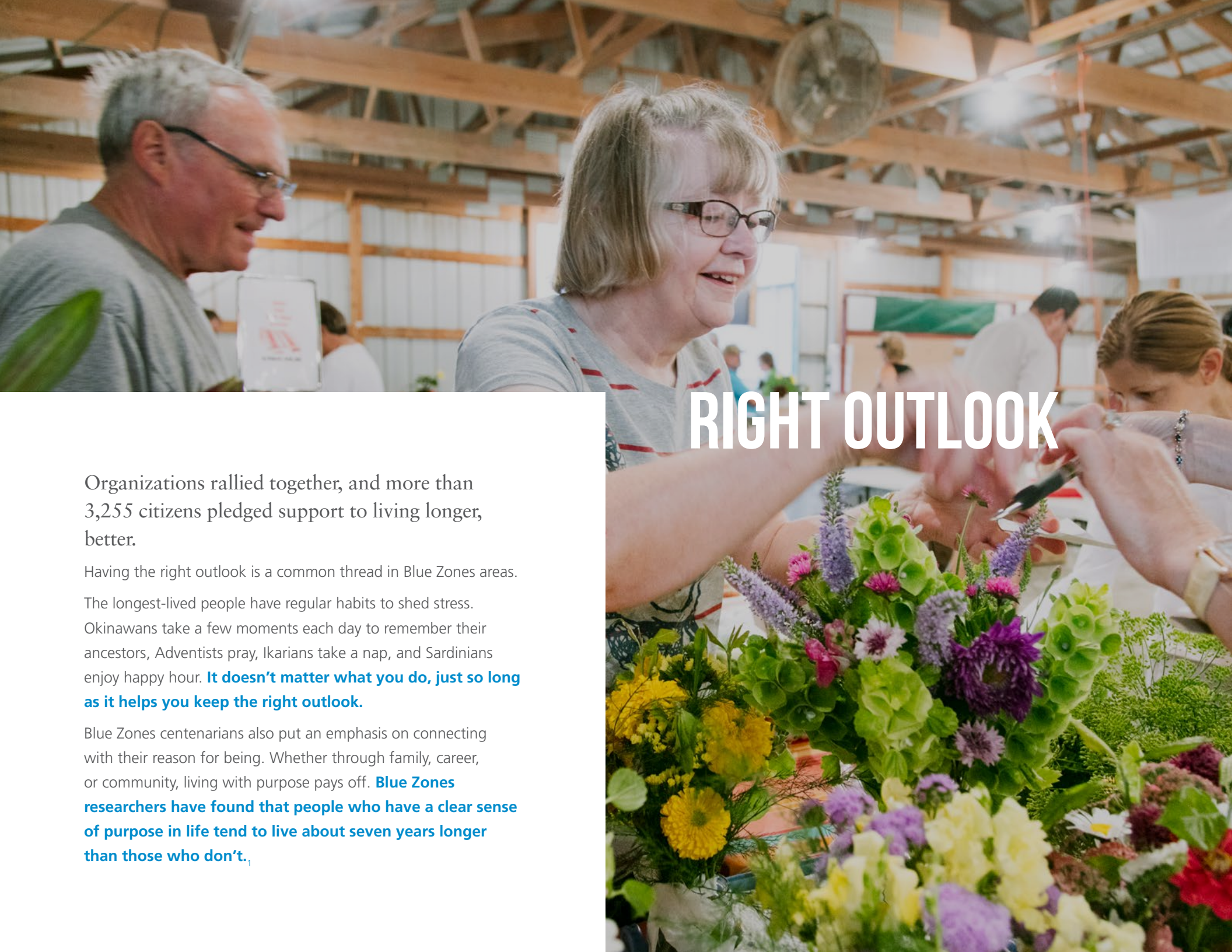
Restaurants and Grocery Stores

Grocery stores in Spirit Lake 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 Spirit Lake.



WALKING HELPS KIDS

Children who walk to school are more alert and ready to learn, strengthen their social networks, and develop lifetime fitness habits.^{10,11} A Walking School Bus allows a group of children to walk to school under the supervision of two or more adults.



RIGHT OUTLOOK

Organizations rallied together, and more than 3,255 citizens pledged support to living longer, better.

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.**



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.¹²

How Right Outlook Impacts Our Community

Through volunteering, Spirit Lake helps individuals discover their innate gifts. We help our community members match their passions to volunteer opportunities to deepen their sense of purpose.

OUTCOMES

Our community rallied together to collect more than 700 Blue Zones Personal Pledges through a community-wide challenge. Northwest Bank and Bank Midwest were major partners in the success of the challenge.



ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE RIGHT OUTLOOK

Organizations across Spirit Lake 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.¹³

Our community saw 11 worksites complete actions to help improve outlook and purpose among employees, including creating designated quiet spaces, posting the company mission or vision, and encouraging volunteering.

From 2012 to 2014, following the formation of a wellness committee, Lakes Regional Healthcare increased YMCA memberships from 22 percent of employees to 45 percent; improved employee cholesterol, blood glucose, and blood pressure levels; and increased productivity by 30 percent. When employees and leaders are active in developing well-being programs, employees tend to participate and be more engaged.

Bank Midwest encourages employees to volunteer, and saw 24 employees volunteer more than 1,700 volunteer hours in 2014.

”

A SIGNIFICANT MESSAGE IN NATIONAL HEALTHCARE REFORM IS TO MOVE FROM A ‘TREATING SICKNESS’ MODEL TO ONE OF ‘IMPROVEMENT OF WELL-BEING AND PREVENTION’. THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT STRATEGY THAT SAYS CHANGE YOUR ENVIRONMENT IN WAYS THAT ALLOW THE HEALTHY CHOICE TO BE THE EASY CHOICE IS A KEY STRATEGY IN GETTING US THERE. AS A HEALTHCARE PROVIDER, WE ARE EXCITED TO EMBRACE A STRATEGY THAT WE BELIEVE FITS WITH OUR MISSION TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE IN THE IOWA GREAT LAKES REGION.

Jason Harrington
CEO
Lakes Regional Healthcare

Healthy eating is on the rise in Spirit Lake with a 30 percent increase in fresh-fruit and vegetable consumption by students.

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.¹⁴

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.¹⁵

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.**¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ Blue Zones Project helps people choose wisely. Spirit Lake 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.

4 gardens: two community gardens, one school garden, one garden at a worksite



BY THE NUMBERS

Since the early 1900s plate sizes have grown from

9.5 INCHES
TO
12.5 INCHES,¹⁷

We've increased how much we eat by

27%¹⁷



”

I FEEL LIKE WE AS A CULTURE ARE FORGETTING WHAT HOMEMADE FOOD IS. WE PULL A BOX OFF THE SHELF AND POP IT IN THE OVEN AND IT IS MISSING SOMETHING FOR ME AND THAT'S WHAT I WANTED TO BRING TO THE AREA.

Chris Murphy
Owner
Prairie Chick

Community Gardens

With **two community gardens springing up each season**, Spirit Lake is literally growing well-being. New city policies are paving the way for healthy eating by encouraging the development and use of farmers markets and community gardens. The policies enhance the health and well-being of our residents through physical, spiritual, and nutritional benefits. Gardens empower people to grow fresh, local food, and in many cases to donate it to local food banks. **Produce from our community gardens is often donated to the new food pantry at Good News Community Church.** In 2014 alone, nearly 500 pounds of produce was donated to those in need.

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.

Second grade students planted shade trees around the ballpark, beautification trees along the building, and a mini-orchard featuring apple, pear, and plum trees in the back field. The mini-orchard will be used for scientific study as well as taste-testing events with the possibility of the fruit landing on the school lunch fruit bar.

Pure Fishing now hosts employee gardens and plans to transform six-and-a-half acres of company-owned land to native prairie and a pond, which the entire community can enjoy. The on-site garden not only encourages physical activity, but it also encourages social connection with community members working together on a common goal.

In the News

Community garden plans announced

Dickinson County News

04.19.16



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 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 seeing noticeable business benefits. Hey, Good Cookies! now offers half-size portions, an option that represents more than half of lunch sales and encourages customers to eat right-sized portions. Prairie Chick added a quinoa bowl full of vegetables, plant-based proteins, and whole grains to their menu, and it has become the most popular item during the lunch hour.

Actions Completed by Three Restaurants

- 1 Offering half-size portions
- 2 Serving food on smaller plates
- 3 Serving healthier sides as the default option



BY THE NUMBERS

1,000 CALORIES

in a typical American entree in a restaurant.²¹

2 EXTRA POUNDS

gained a year by eating one meal away from home a week.²²

5.5% INCREASE

in same-store sales at restaurants that increased their better-for-you/low-calorie servings between 2006 and 2011.²²

5.5% DECREASE

in sales at restaurants that did not increase their better-for-you/low-calorie servings.²²

Grocery Stores

Americans go to the grocery store more than twice a week. 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.²³ Our community is taking the lead in taking the grocery store back.

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.

Actions Completed by Two Grocery Stores

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

Sales of whole grains and ancient grains at Hy-Vee increased by nearly 10 percent, and nuts are beginning to outsell chips. Sales of water in checkout lane coolers increased by almost 10 percent. Offering healthy options allows consumers to make healthy choices more easily in Spirit Lake.

60%

Of the food we purchase is highly processed, fatty, salty or sugary.²⁴



”

FAREWAY IS EXCITED TO BE A PART OF BLUE ZONES PROJECT AND BECOME A GROCERY STORE DESIGNED TO HELP PEOPLE MAKE HEALTHIER CHOICES. WE ARE PRESENTING CUSTOMERS WITH DIFFERENT OPTIONS. IT'S MADE ME MORE AWARE.

Marie Stricker
Store Director
Fareway





INSTEAD OF HAVING A DONUT DAY, WE'LL HAVE A FRUIT DAY. WE'VE WORKED WITH OUR LOCAL VENDING COMPANY TO OFFER DIFFERENT THINGS IN OUR VENDING MACHINES SO MORE HEALTHY OPTIONS ARE AVAILABLE.

Shelly Krause
Pure Fishing
Spirit Lake

Worksites

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

In Spirit Lake, 11 worksites completed actions to make healthy food choices easier — things

like starting healthy potlucks and worksite gardens, improving cafeteria options, and adding healthy choices in vending machines.

City Hall added a water-bottle filling station to make drinking water an easy choice. In the first six months after installation more than 910 eight-ounce servings were dispensed.

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 two schools 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.

The K–8 Healthy Snack Cart Program, which encourages smart snack choices, has helped our schools realize a 30 percent increase in fruit and vegetable consumption. Offering healthy snacks improves nutrition and changes perceptions about snacking in a positive way. Our students are learning at a young age that snacks can taste good and be healthy.

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.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 lunchroom design tripled salad sales, doubled fruit sales, doubled sales of healthy sandwiches, and reduced the purchase of ice cream.**¹⁷ By optimizing the school environment, students are nudged towards healthier choices.



A young girl with curly hair, wearing a blue swimsuit, is playing in a water fountain. She is smiling and splashing water with her hands. The background is a blurred water fountain with green pipes.

CONNECT

Four Walking Moais encouraged 45 people to build strong relationships with new friends and neighbors.

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 14 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 Spirit Lake, we embrace the power of social connections to bring people together through groups, clubs, and faith-based organizations. We encourage social connections in our community through our new community gardens, at outdoor dining parklets, and along trails.

More than **45 people have joined four 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 11 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.

Restaurants

Eating together fosters togetherness in all kinds of families, even those that are the size of whole communities. There is no better opportunity to connect than around a dining table. Outdoor dining options are available at Hey, Good Cookies! and Prairie Chick, providing more opportunities for people to connect deeply with their neighbors and community while enjoying a healthy meal outside.



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,³¹ and inversely, you are 20 percent more likely to succeed at new behaviors if you do them with a buddy.³²



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.³⁴



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!³³



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.³⁵ 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.³⁶



CONGRATS, SPIRIT LAKE!

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 Spirit Lake 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 Schools

Spirit Lake Elementary School

Spirit Lake Middle School

Blue Zones Restaurants

Hey, Good Cookies!

Hy-Vee Kitchen

Prairie Chick

Blue Zones Worksites

Bank Midwest

Central Bank

Dickinson County

Grapetree Medical Staffing

Hamm Chiropractic Clinic

Hy-Vee

Lakes Regional Healthcare

Northwest Bank

Pure Fishing

State Bank

YMCA of the Okoboji's

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