



## BLUE ZONE

# Small Golden Gate homeschool, other companies join Blue Zones project



Senior Housing Solutions officials joined Blue Zones Project staff to celebrate received Blue Zones recognition recently. The company offers healthy options at their seminars and networking events, where the intent is helping seniors age with purpose and staying physically and socially active. Submitted photo

*By Liz Freeman of the Naples Daily News*

Posted:



Some of the children attending Camp Discovery in Golden Gate prefer vegetables over a cupcake.

That's an achievement that pleases the homeschool's director, Catherine Breen-Thomas, to no end.

The homeschool, based in a classroom at her residence with 12 children, has earned Blue Zones recognition for taking steps to promote healthier choices and habits.

"I am a big advocate for trying to fight childhood obesity," Breen-Thomas, 30, said.

The Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida was introduced to the region in 2015 based on the world travels of Dan Buettner, who identified

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of longevity.

The "Power Nine" principles include eating a plant-slant diet, moving naturally by walking, biking or similar activity, having a sense of purpose, limiting alcohol intake, putting family first, belonging to a social group and more.

At Camp Discovery, which opened in 2010, with Breen-Thomas and two other part-time teachers, the group was promoting healthier choices even before gaining the Blue Zones recognition in late May.

But additional steps for participating include having the children plant and care for a garden, help prepare meals that are healthier, and the families get together once a month to take walks together, she said. The educational programs promote vegetables and fruits to the children and how they are beneficial, she said.

Now some of her parents say their children are choosing vegetables over a cupcake, Breen-Thomas said.

"We always talk about the healthy options," she said, adding that they would never tell the children to shun cup cakes entirely.

Others earn Blue Zones recognition

Two more companies, Edible Arrangements and Senior Housing Solutions, have received Blue Zones recognition recently.

Both have exhibited dedication to helping employees and residents be healthier.

"We are all about healthy snacking and gifting for everyone, everywhere, every day," Jennifer Palma, owner of Edible Arrangements, said in a press release.

Senior Housing offers healthy options at their seminars and networking events, where the intent is helping seniors age with purpose and staying physically and socially active, said Bruce Rosenblatt, owner of Senior Housing Solutions.

"The more people embrace these principles, the less likely they will need extended long-term care as they age," he said.

The NCH Healthcare System is underwriting the Blue Zones initiative in Collier and south Lee counties.

The community-wide undertaking over the next 8 to 10 years involves voluntarily implementing health-focused changes in workplaces, schools, government entities, restaurants, grocery stores and physical settings so healthier choices are easier and become a way of life.



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