



Faculty at Waves of Wonder Montessori school in North Naples join NCH Healthcare System leaders for Blue Zones recognition recently.

BLUE ZONES / SUBMITTED

# Montessori school and boutique hotel go Blue

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Sugary snacks like cupcakes won't make it far inside Waves of Wonder Montessori School in North Naples.

A note will get attached to the goods and sent back into parents' hands.

The private school at 7740 Preserve Lane has been practicing the Blue Zones lifestyle even before joining the health and longevity initiative.

Earning official recognition is the non-icing on the carrot for the school with 67 kids, from infants through sixth grade.

Also earning Blue Zones recognition is Hotel Escalante, a boutique hotel with 10 rooms at 290 Fifth Avenue South in downtown Naples, officials with the local project, said.

The Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida launched in 2015 based on the world travels of Dan Buettner, who identified communities worldwide where people share lifestyle traits and live to 100 or older.

He wrote a New York Times best-seller about the nine principles of longevity.

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.

With 67 children enrolled in Waves of Wonder, director Jennifer Bartolomeo is proud to say the school is the first Montessori school in Southwest Florida to get the Blue Zones recognition. She also believes it is the first nationwide to get the recognition.

Besides its longtime policy of promoting healthier food choices at lunch and snack time, the school has begun a Moai walking group where younger students get together with older students and faculty for

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» Learn more about Blue Zones:  
[southwestfloridabluezones.com](http://southwestfloridabluezones.com)

» Learn more about Southwest Florida's commitment to become a Blue Zones community:  
[collier.bluezonesproject.com](http://collier.bluezonesproject.com)  
[naplesnews.com/bluezone](http://naplesnews.com/bluezone)

» Find the Blue Zones books at  
[bluezones.com/resources/books](http://bluezones.com/resources/books)

walks, she said.

Besides the physical exercise, the concept of a Moai is to foster connections with one another, which dovetails into Blue Zones principles.

"And we will do walks with all our families," she said.

Another new development for the recognition entails having older kids share with the younger ones why they are eating fruit or vegetables at lunch, she said.

"Peer learning is definitely very important at Montessori," she said.

Parents sign up to bring healthy snacks and now there's going to be

sessions with parents to dig deeper into good nutrition, recipe sharing and other group events, she said.

At Hotel Escalante and Veranda E restaurant, salt has been removed from tables, there is greater use of herbs and vegetables from the restaurant's on-site garden, and greater emphasis on using local produce. In addition, the hotel and restaurant are tobacco free.

"The goals and vision of Blue Zones Project are directly in line with the practices and vision of Hotel Escalante and our restaurant," Kristine Duke, owner of the hotel and restaurant, said in a news release. "With the help of Blue Zones Project, we were able to implement simple practices that will increase vitality, longevity, and good health for guests of our restaurant and hotel."

Currently, 27 communities in seven states have joined the Blue Zones Project, which is affecting the lives of 1.7 million Americans.

For more information about the Blue Zones project, go to [bluezonesproject.com](http://bluezonesproject.com).

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