

# STATEWIDE

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Naples held a community kickoff for the Southwest Florida Blue Zones Project.



## Singing the Blues

One community has embraced a project that attempts to spread healthy-living practices.

**At the Dock at Crayton Cove**, a seafood restaurant in Naples, you can still order a fried grouper sandwich with French fries. But these days there's also the "island in banana leaf," a Caribbean dish with plantains, black beans, rice and pineapple salsa. Dessert is a honey-poached pear with berries, yogurt and granola. Executive chef Corey

Heath added the items as part of a new menu featuring plant-based, vegetarian, gluten-free and low-sodium options.

The change wasn't random: Around Naples, restaurants, civic centers, churches, grocery stores and schools are joining an effort to make the area a "blue zone" — a community focused on diet and lifestyle

practices that produce longer, healthier lives.

The blue zones concept originated in research done by National Geographic fellow Dan Buettner, who identified places in the world where residents live unusually long and happy lives, calling them "blue zones."

Buettner highlighted the traits shared by those



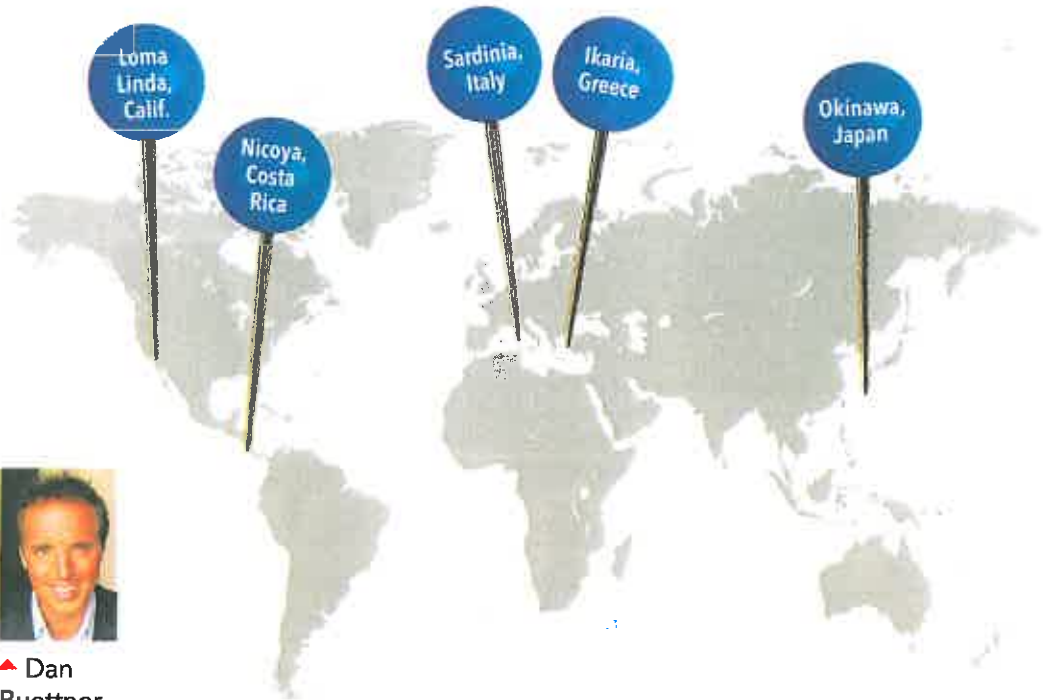
▲ Deb Millsap Logan heads Naples' blue zones project

## ➔ Longer Lives

The blue zones project originated in research conducted and published by National Geographic fellow Dan Buettner. In 2004, Buettner identified five “blue zones” — places with the highest concentrations of centenarians in the world: Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, Calif.; Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan, and Nicoya, Costa Rica. Buettner identified traits common to those areas and started the project to get other communities to adopt healthy-living practices. Southwest Florida aims to be Florida’s first blue zone.



▲ Dan Buettner



communities and created the blue zones project to try to get other communities to adopt healthy living practices.

NCH Healthcare System launched the blue zones project in Naples a year ago — the first such effort in Florida — through a partnership with Healthways, a Tennessee-based wellness program provider.

So far, about 50 public and private institutions in Collier and southern Lee counties have made enough changes to qualify as contributors to the blue zone.

Deb Millsap Logan, director of the Southwest Florida Blue Zones Project, says the goal is to get up to 20% participation within the community by 2022. Then, she says, “you’ve changed the culture.”

Ultimately, the community hopes the effort will lower its health care costs and make it a more attractive place to live, work and play, says NCH President and CEO Allen Weiss.

## Keys to Longevity

The blue zones project employs nine strategies to help people improve their health and well-being.

### ▶ Purpose

Starting each day with a sense of purpose can extend a person’s life by years.

▶ **Local Tactic:** Lisa Gruenloh is an organizational development consultant and leadership coach who facilitates “purpose” workshops for homeowners associations and other local groups. Businesses bring her in to boost employee engagement and productivity.



▲ Lisa Gruenloh

“We help people figure out how they can use their unique gifts to make a difference and serve others in meaningful ways,” says Gruenloh, founder and president of Purpose Journey, a business consultancy in Naples.

### ▶ De-Stress

Chronic stress can lead to a host of health problems. Taking time to relax and de-stress is key to longevity.

▶ **Local Tactic:** The city of Naples offers employees free yoga classes at various times of the year. It also reimburses up to \$20 a month for the cost of fitness classes and supports work-life balance through flexible scheduling, says Lori McCullers, the city’s risk manager.



### ▶ Wine at Five

Sardinia has the world’s highest concentration of male centenarians. One explanation: Their drinking habits — most Sardinians enjoy several small glasses of wine a day. Moderate drinking with friends and food has both social and health benefits.

▶ **Local Tactic:** Wyndemere Country Club in Naples holds “wine at five” events to give members a chance to socialize and meet people.

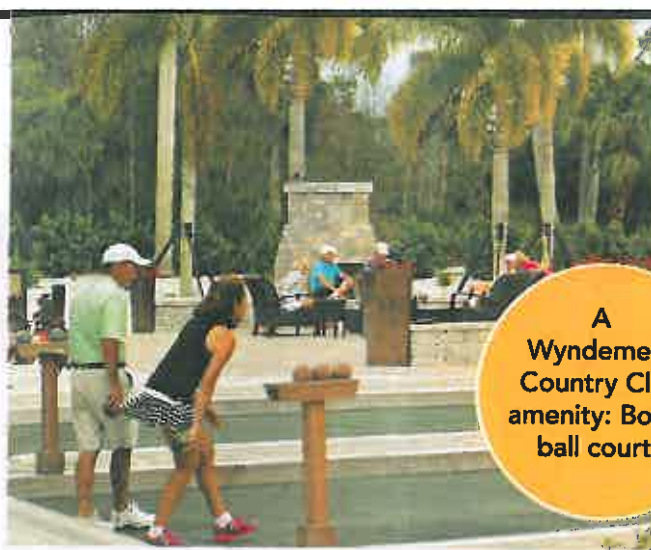


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## ► Networks

People who live the longest choose or create social networks that support healthy behaviors.

► **Local Tactic:** Wyndemere Country Club hosts weekly walks and cycle rides, organizes bird-watching tours and offers bocce and pickleball courts (in addition to golf and tennis). It also applies blue zones principles to the workplace — employees recently received Fitbits to help them reach their fitness goals, says general manager Jimmy Lynn.



A  
Wyndemere  
Country Club  
amenity: Bocce  
ball courts



The Dock at Crayton Cove offers healthy options like a caribbean dish with plantains, black beans, rice and pineapple salsa.

## ► Plant Slant

Centenarians in the world's blue zones usually eat plant-based diets high in complex carbohydrates and beans. This doesn't mean going vegetarian, but it does mean embracing fruits and vegetables.

► **Local Tactic:** The cafeteria at Naples Community Hospital displays fresh fruits and salads near the entrance, where people are more likely to see them; cheeseburgers are less prominent. "The healthy stuff's up front," says NCH President and CEO Allen Weiss. The cafeteria no longer offers sugary sodas.



▲ Allen Weiss

## ► Belong

Regularly participating in religious services can add up to 14 years to your life. "It can often mark the difference between surviving and thriving," says Rev. Diane Scribner Clevenger, pastor at Unity of Naples.

► **Local Tactic:** The non-denominational church, which has between 250 and 500 members, hosts yoga and tai chi classes and purpose-building workshops.

## ► Portion Control

Okinawans recite the mantra *hara hachi bu* before each meal to remind themselves to stop eating when they feel 80% full. That 20% gap can be the difference between gaining weight or losing it.

► **Local Tactic:** Wynn's Market in Naples has a refrigerated "blue zone" where prepared meals come in containers that are half the size of traditional options. "They're smaller portions, but they fill you up," says Jeff Wynn, president of Wynn Properties, the real estate arm of the family-owned grocery.

## ► Move It

Being healthy doesn't mean hitting the gym every day. Long-lived people tend to incorporate physical activity naturally into their daily lives.

► **Local Tactic:** Bonita Springs Charter School provides students in kindergarten through fifth grade 30 minutes of recess once a day and regular "brain breaks" — bursts of exercise during classroom instruction. The school also encourages children to walk more by tracking and logging their daily steps.



▲ Students help tend Sea Gate Elementary's garden.

## ► Family First

Staying committed to a partner and spending quality time with loved ones can increase your life span by six years.

► **Local Tactic:** The Moorings Park retirement community in Naples takes a broad view of family relationships. "We try to create an environment where other residents feel like family," says President and CEO Dan Lavender. The community has book clubs and bridge groups and even a woodworking shop. 