

Blue Zones signs up 4 more groups

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The community-based Blue Zones Project has four more businesses that have earned recognition for taking steps to promote healthier options among its audience base.

The four receiving recognition are Sakura Hawaiian Grill, Moorings Park, Tidewater by Del Webb and I'm Simply Nutty.

Tidewater is a community in Estero for people aged 55 and older, and it earned the recognition by offering plant-based cooking demonstrations, organizing walking groups and other social activities, and offering educational programs so residents can enjoy better health.

The lifestyle offered at Tidewater reflects the nine principles for greater longevity from Blue Zones founder Dan Buettner, which include eating a plant-slant diet, moving naturally, enjoying a glass of wine, having purpose and being connected with others.

The Blue Zones Project is a wellness and longevity initiative where businesses, government agencies, restaurants, grocery stores, churches, residential communities and other groups incorporate healthier options in daily practices so its audience base can make better choices.

The philosophy is that over time, healthier choices will become the easier choice, and each incremental step can improve health and well-being. Offering fresh fruit and bottled water instead of soft drinks and candy bars in employee breakrooms is one example.

Southwest Florida is one of 37 communities nationwide that is either working toward recognition as a Blue Zones community or has achieved it by widespread adoption of the underlying principles.

Similarly, continuing care retirement community Moorings Park in Naples embraces the Blue Zones principles for its residents in many ways, from its integrated wellness program to its healthy menu options and vast socialization network on the campus. Moorings Park earlier earned designation as a Blue Zones worksite, where it incorporated measures so employees have healthier options during the work day.

Sakura Hawaiian added healthier options on its menu, acquires produce from a local farm and offers smaller portions at reduced prices for customers.

"As the only Hawaiian cuisine offered in Naples, Sakura Hawaiian Grill is excited to earn this distinction in helping our community to make healthy choices easier," owner Paul Chen said in a news release. "Creating Blue Zones inspired meals has been a fun way to be part of building a healthier community."

I'm Simply Nutty, a producer of all-natural almond milk products with no preservatives, wanted to participate in the Blue Zones Project to connect with other businesses with the same drive to help residents have healthier options.

With products sold at health food stores in Fort Myers and Estero, and at the Third Street South Farmers Market in Naples and the Coconut Point Farmers Market in Estero, the products offer fresh, non-sugary beverages, and its social media pages offer visitors with lifestyle tips to be healthier.