

The background of the cover is a photograph of two Great Egrets perched on the branches of a mangrove tree. The birds are white with long necks and long bills. The tree has thick, gnarled trunks and dense green foliage. The sky is a clear, bright blue.

# **EN** compass

July/August 2020

East Naples' Community Magazine™

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## Five Years Later: BlueZones Project Southwest Florida Continues Making a Big Impact on Community Well-Being

**M**aintaining our own well-being and that of our community is essential in order to thrive. We have witnessed this not only in times of crisis but also in everyday life. Thanks to NCH's sponsorship and commitment to the health and well-being of Southwest Florida, Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida has been successfully improving the community's well-being by impacting the environment where we work, eat, shop, play, pray, educate and live. In addition, their sponsorship of this comprehensive well-being initiative has also brought leaders and organizations together to collaborate on the common mission to help people live healthier, happier and longer lives. In fact, just eight years ago Gallup ranked us 73rd in the nation for well-being and yet as we all work together to help make healthy choices easier, we have seen the well-being of Naples-Immokalee-Marco area skyrocket to becoming the healthiest place in the nation for four consecutive years.

Five years into the project, Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida has impacted the well-being of more than 225,000 individuals, and nearly 700 organizations from worksites, schools, and restaurants to homeowner associations and faith-based organizations. This is done by making healthy choices easier using National Geographic research that found nine commonalities (the Power 9®) among people around the world who live the longest and healthiest.

We know that environment is a key factor in promoting good health. Our beautiful weather and beaches that allow our community to enjoy the outdoors and move naturally

is just part of the equation. Having pride in your community that includes feeling safe is one of the five key elements that is measured in the well-being index measured by Gallup. With the support of our leaders and policy makers, Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida has helped attract more than \$14.5 million additional grant dollars to SWFL, primarily for safe routes to school and built environment projects.

Financial, another key element that is measured for well-being index has also proven to make its mark over the last four years. Per Boston University's analysis of Well-Being Index survey results for every zip code in our project areas, SWFL project area's medical and productivity savings has accrued to more than \$40 million.

It is no secret that Southwest Florida's restaurant scene has continued to blossom, and Blue Zones Project has been working with them in making healthy choices easier for consumers. Over 40 restaurants are now collectively offering 329 Blue Zones Inspired (plant-based) dishes on their menus giving patrons healthy choice options while increasing sales and profitability for the restaurants.

"Being able to work with restaurants on implementing Blue Zones best practices is doubly rewarding," says David Longfield-Smith, Restaurant and Grocery Store Lead at Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida. "Not only do I get the satisfaction knowing that customers have access to healthier options, I also get to see the restaurants increase their bottom line by creating a few simple additions. Also, ▶

our service to them is completely free!"

A large impact is also seen in our local schools. To date, twenty-five schools are participating in the project to help provide healthier opportunities for our youth. Blue Zones champions in schools are helping youth connect and build friendships by incorporating buddy benches, gardens, purpose workshops, legacy projects and other extracurricular activities for well-being. Elementary students in Blue Zones Approved schools added an average of 2.5 hours of additional physical activity before, during and after school. Also, Collier County is the only county in Florida to see its adolescent obesity rate decline in both middle and high schools.

"As sponsor of Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, we are grateful to everyone who is making this well-being initiative happen in our community," said Paul Hiltz, President and CEO of NCH. "It is a 'we' project that takes collaboration towards a common mission with powerful results."

Learn how you can participate by visiting [SouthwestFlorida.BlueZonesProject.com](http://SouthwestFlorida.BlueZonesProject.com). ■



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Local Business News

## Now Open On Radio Road The Pineapple House



The Pineapple House at Sapphire Lakes by Concierge Senior Living is now open at 7901 Radio Road.

The Pineapple House features an array of state-of-the-art amenities in a luxurious, resort-style setting. Onsite nursing is available as well as the availability of a fitness studio, wellness center, refined dining and transportation services. Assisted living floor plans include studio, one and two bedroom residences. Staff photo.