

BLUE ZONES

“A healthy attitude is contagious but don’t wait to catch it from others. Be a carrier.” – Tom Stoppard

Blue Zones Project grocery stores help shoppers make healthy choices



Wynn's Market offers healthy alternatives. SUBMITTED

Robin F. DeMattia

Special to Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Shoppers today want more from grocery stores than a convenient location and ample parking.

Savvy shoppers and healthy eaters are looking for organic items, locally-sourced foods, and easy-to-read nutrition labels with information about calories, saturated fat, sodium and sugar. They also want products that fit their diet, including lactose-free, gluten-free, heart-healthy, and vegan.

According to a 2018 survey by L.E.K. Consulting, 93% of consumers want to eat healthy at least some of the time, and 63% try to eat healthy most or all of the time.

This trend has increased during the pandemic, as consumers look for foods that can help boost immunity and prevent illness.

Some communities are making it easier for supermarket shoppers. Berkeley, California, will become the first U.S. city to require large grocery stores to stop selling junk food and candy in checkout aisles when its “Healthy Checkout Ordinance” goes into effect in March.

Wynn’s Market in Naples didn’t need regulation to help its customers make healthy choices. The family-owned grocery is celebrating its fifth anniversary as a Blue Zones Project-certified store. Wynn’s Market was the first grocery store in Southwest Florida to participate with the Blue Zones Project.

“Being part of Blue Zones has been a great benefit for us,” said Jeff Wynn, president of Wynn’s Properties. “We have always been on the cutting edge of offering healthy foods.”

To receive Blue Zones Project approval, grocery stores make several easy changes. These include placing sugar-laden cereals

targeted to children at higher levels out of their line of sight, eliminating sugar-sweetened beverages from checkout lane coolers, and placing a produce display near the front entrance of the store.

Rather than taking away sales, these changes result in increased sales. For example, when Wynn’s emphasized bottled water over soda, its sales of water increased 105% in about two years and became 34% of all beverage sales.

Jeff Wynn said produce sales increased 12% the first year and continue to grow.

The store also added more plant-based grab-and-go items, such as zucchini poblano pepper bisque, Beyond meatballs with vegan marina sauce, quinoa bowl with sweet potato and black beans, and a Chipotle burrito bowl with roasted tofu. Blue Zones Project emphasizes plant-based eating, one of the Power 9 principles shared by the healthiest and longest-lived people in the world.

“I always tell people it’s good to get involved in these types of things,” Wynn said. “It helps your bottom line, and it helps our customers live healthier lives.”

The Wynn family helped the LeGrand family when they needed to rebuild LeGrand Caribbean Market in Immokalee after Hurricane Irma. Wynn’s discussed the positive changes they made that helped their bottom line.

Blue Zones Project provided LeGrand with 22 feet of fresh produce displays and 8 feet of produce coolers that are located at the front of the store. After making these changes, LeGrand doubled its profits from produce sales from 20% to 40% of their total business.

Blue Zones Project also connected LeGrand with Feeding Florida, Florida’s food bank network. They are now working together on a program called Fresh Access

Bucks which matches SNAP dollars with free Fresh Access Bucks to spend on Florida-grown fruits and vegetables.

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc. and Blue Zones, LLC, Blue Zones Project is a vital part of Southwest Florida’s well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com. To learn about becoming a Blue Zones Project-certified grocery store, contact David Longfield-Smith, Retail Food Lead, Blue Zones Project—SWFL, at 239-248-9154 or david.longfieldsmith@sharecare.com. Learn more about Blue Zones at bluezones.com.

Online Power Nine activity of the week

The Holidays, especially Thanksgiving can be a time when many over-indulge in the wrong kinds of foods.

As you begin to plan your Thanksgiving menu this year, we want to encourage you to find creative ways to incorporate more healthy foods during your celebration. It could be something as simple as swapping your candied yams with marshmallows for roasted sweet potatoes or skipping the canned cranberry sauce for a homemade cranberry relish. You could also go with whole-grain breads instead of white rolls.

Tell us the ways you intend to make your Thanksgiving meal healthier by commenting or by tagging us on Facebook @Blue Zones Project – Southwest Florida, or you can email us at bluezonesprojectswfl@sharecare.com to be entered in our prize drawing for a gift card from one of our Blue Zones Project Approved Restaurants.