

Bonita Bay joins Blue Zones Project campaign

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The sprawling Bonita Bay community has it all: a thousand acres or more of unspoiled land, waterways and nature for its thousands of residents to enjoy the outdoors.

The community in Bonita Springs can now add Blue Zones Project recognition to its list of accolades.

"It was a natural fit," Jennifer Moening, assistant director of community activities, said. "We have a very active lifestyle. We have pathways that go all around."

The Blue Zones Project is a local initiative to improve the health and longevity of Southwest Florida residents, by enlisting businesses, employ-

ers, restaurants and other entities to include healthier options in daily practices. The goal is that people will select the healthier option and it becomes a way of life.

The project was introduced to the region in 2015 by the NCH Healthcare System and is 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 "Power Nine" include moving naturally by being physically active, knowing your purpose in life, taking time to relax, having a healthy social

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BLUE ZONES PROJECT OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Bonita Bay residents celebrate Blue Zones Project recognition in May.

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network and putting loved ones first. A popular activity is to form walking groups, or walking moais, to use Blue Zones terminology.

More than 60 organizations have joined the Blue Zones Project in Collier and Lee counties.

Moening and the director of community activities at Bonita Bay, Elke Kauder, attended Blue Zones Project program events and were convinced it was right for the community, Moening said. The community has 6,000 residents in season, and one-fourth of them are year-round residents, she said.

Tavira at Bonita Bay, the luxury high-rise building with 90 residents, became the first community in Bonita Springs this past April to become Blue Zones-certified, where it undertook activities to promote a healthier lifestyle and where 20 percent of its residents to sign a Blue Zones pledge to select healthier options in daily activities.

Now the Bonita Bay Community Association has gained Blue Zones recognition, with nearly 800 residents signing the pledge, Moening said. The association has made tweaks to program offerings to elevate healthy living, Moening said.

There already are numerous groups for pickleball, bocce ball, golf, chair yoga, tai chi and other social activities. The association ramped up some of its life-long learning series to focus on staying healthy, and it is offering meal demonstrations that are plant-based to reflect the Blue Zones focus on healthy eating.