

BLUE TIP: “Eat your vegetables, have a positive outlook, be kind to people, and smile - Kamada Nakasato, 102-y/o-female from Okinawa” — **Dan Buettner**



Fiddler's Creek residents celebrate joining the Blue Zones Project initiative.

BLUE ZONES PROJECT STAFF

FIDDLER'S CREEK, GREATER NAPLES FIRE IN BLUE ZONES

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When a new activity makes you feel good, why stop?

That's how many residents of Fiddler's Creek feel about a walking group that was formed as part of an initiative through the Blue Zones Project. The group will continue in the activity even though the initial walking campaign has come and gone.

"Each week we would embark on a half hour walk throughout our community, and after the walk we invited our group to enjoy a glass of wine at one of Fiddler's Creek's dining venues," Tracy Heimerl, director of fitness and wellness at Fiddler's Creek, said.

"At the conclusion of the 10-week program, the members saw no reason to end what, for many, had become the highlight of their week," she said. "Blue Zones Project inspired our residents to continue to enjoying new friendships alongside a healthful activity."

How quickly an activity for improving one's health can become a good habit is part of the Blue Zones Project frame of mind: Give people healthier options in daily practices and they become habits.

The Club & Spa at Fiddler's Creek is the latest group to be recognized as a Blue Zones Project community for instilling practices that promote the



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Greater Naples Fire Rescue has joined the Blue Zones Project campaign.

initiative's "Power 9" principles of longevity. Fiddler's Creek is located off Collier Boulevard on the way to Marco Island.

The Greater Naples Fire Rescue District also has gained recognition as a Blue Zones Project organization. In total, 65 other organizations in Southwest Florida have embraced the wellness initiative.

The fire department serves East Naples, Golden Gate, Isles of Capri, Ochopee, Everglades City, Port of the Islands and Chokoloskee, and has 219 employees. Of that about 175 to 180 are fire fighters.

The fire department began exploring

the idea of pursuing the Blue Zones recognition four to six months ago and the health and safety committee took it on, Fire Chief Kingman Schuldt said.

Some changes have involved skipping doughnuts at meetings in favor of fresh fruit, and removing vending machines that don't offer healthier options. New vending machines will be brought in with better choices, he said.

Some of the administrative staff formed a walking group and parking spaces at the far end of lot has been earmarked for Blue Zones to encourage employees to park as far away as possible to add more steps into their activity, he said.

The department's resident chef, Capt. Craig Weinbaum, is including healthy, plant-based recipes in the department's newsletter, he said. Even before the Blue Zones, the chef has been focused on healthy meals, Schuldt said.

"It's grass roots stuff, just trying to get people out of their chair," he said.

The Blue Zones project is a wellness and longevity initiative underway 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 wellbeing. 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.

The Blue Zones Project was introduced to the region in 2015 based on the world travels of Dan Buettner, who identified communities worldwide where people share lifestyle traits and live to 100 or older.