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JESSICA CRANE, COMMUNITY POLICY LEADER WITH THE LOCAL BLUE ZONES PROJECT

Safety first for walkers, bicyclists

Walkability expert to share ideas with Bonita Springs

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Imagine walking out the front door and deciding to take an alternative mode of transportation for work or coffee without risking life or limb. The all-beloved automobile doesn't have to be king all the time.

Bonita Springs residents interested in shaping their surroundings to be more livable by adding walking and bicycling as options for getting around town will want to attend a workshop Thursday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Bonita Springs City Hall, 9101 Bonita Beach Road.

The workshop's leader will be Dan Burden, an expert on helping communities come together to decide how they can restructure streets to be usable and friendly for walking, bicycling and driving with safety in mind for all.

The lack of walkability along Bonita Beach Road will be discussed, in part because it has been identified as an issue among residents, according to Jessica Crane, community policy leader with the local Blue Zones Project. The major east-west corridor has been identified in “visioning” plans for the future of the city as critical for re-vamping to make it appealing to people on bicycles and safer for walkers.

“Their hope is to take Bonita Beach Road and make it more walkable,” she said. “That is going to be our focus area.”

Part of Burden's program will involve a walking tour, and he takes measurements of parking spaces and curbsides to show how feet can be taken from those existing spaces to add bike paths and bike stands, she said.

Burden has 40 years of experience in the field and has been working with Blue Zones projects in communities where people want to incorporate healthier choices in the workplace, schools and social activities.

The Blue Zones Project was introduced to Southwest Florida in 2015. It is based on longevity principles developed by Dan Buettner, a world traveler for National Geographic. He identified communities worldwide where people share lifestyle traits and live to 100 or older. He wrote a New York Times bestseller about the nine principles of longevity.

Blueprint plans have been drawn up with committees of citizens and civic leaders to foster changes based on the longevity principles.

The community-wide undertaking in Southwest Florida involves voluntarily implementing health-focused changes in workplaces, schools, government entities, restaurants, grocery stores and physical settings so healthier choices are easier and become a way of life.

The local project is being underwritten by the NCH Healthcare System over several years; NCH declines to say how much it is investing in the project.

The “built environment” workshop with Burden will be similar to one held in April 2015 in downtown Naples, where he engaged residents and civic leaders on ideas for reshaping key streets in downtown Naples to be “complete streets.”

Part of the focus at the Naples workshop was on Central Avenue, Third



BLUE ZONES PROJECT OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

Dan Burden, left, leads a group in Naples last year on a walking tour to talk about ways to make streets more walkable.

Avenue South from Sixth Street South to Goodlette-Frank Road.

He also led the Naples group on a walk last year during which he talked about parking, sidewalks, intersections and the interplay of the different elements, and how design concepts can be added to foster calmer traffic flow, which in turn can create appeal for walkers and bicyclists.

Burden is a national expert on walkable communities. The League of American Bicyclists named him one of the 25 most significant leaders in bicy-

cling and Time Magazine in 2001 named him one of the six most important civic innovators in the world.

He has helped more than 3,500 communities worldwide become more livable and walkable since 1996.

He served for 16 years as the first bicycle and pedestrian coordinator for the Florida Department of Transportation.

To reserve a spot for the workshop event in Bonita Springs, call 239-404-4924 or send an email to BlueZonesProjectSWFL@Healthways.com.

ONLINE

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southwestfloridabluezones.com

» Learn more about Southwest Florida's commitment to become a Blue Zones community:
collier.bluezonesproject.com
naplesnews.com/bluezone

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