

BLUE ZONES

“Calm mind brings inner strength and self-confidence, so that's very important for good health.” – Dalai Lama

Celebrate safe biking as transportation with Bike to Work Day



Whether it is for sport, traveling to work, saving money on gas, losing weight, supporting cleaner air, or getting fit, there are a multitude of reasons people should get on a bicycle. SUBMITTED

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Many people can remember getting their first bike as a kid and the feeling of freedom and care-free excitement that came along with it. The possibilities were endless; trips to the park, going to a friend's house, riding to school, or simply taking a stroll around the neighborhood.

If you were lucky enough, you even had your bike decorated with that mini license plate you found in your cereal box.

Somewhere along the way, from childhood to adolescence, the magic of bike riding gets lost for so many. Whether it's concern for safety as neighborhoods and streets become more crowded with cars, or simply trading the bike in for a car the moment you get your driver's license, people tend to hit the pause button on bicycling along with all the benefits that go along with it.

All hope is not lost as bicycling tends to take on new meaning later in life. Whether it is for sport, traveling to work, saving money on gas, losing weight, supporting cleaner air, or getting fit, there are a multitude of reasons people should get on a bicycle. The most recent statistics according to census.gov show that about 872,000 people, or 0.6% of all workers in the United States bike to work.

Also, from 2000 to 2013, bicycle commuting rates in large bicycle friendly communities or BFC's increased 105% — far above the national average of 62% and more than double the rate in non-BFCs (31%).

Among the growing number of cyclists in Southwest Florida is Eric from STARability Foundation, a local nonprofit and Blue Zones Project Organization dedicated to transforming the lives of individuals with disabilities

through social, vocational and educational connections to the community, while strengthening awareness and respect for individual abilities.

Eric, who uses a bicycle as his main form of transportation, recently rode from his home on Bayshore Drive all the way to Pine Ridge Road to receive his trophy at the STARability Bowling Trophy Drive Thru event.

“Eric called me before the event so excited to say he was coming,” said Caroline Randall, Office Manager at STARability. “I asked him if he had found a ride and he said he didn't need one since he would be riding his bike instead. I responded, ‘Wow Eric, that is a really long way to ride your bike.’ His response to me was, ‘Oh that's no problem, I ride that far all the time. I have even ridden to Immokalee Road!’”

To help celebrate and support people like Eric from STARability, and continue the momentum of safe bicycle riding in Southwest Florida, Blue Zones Project is partnering with Naples Pathways Coalition, Naples Botanical Gardens, Naples Velo, Fit & Fuel Café, Frogg, Bikes for Tykes, and the Florida Bicycle Association to celebrate Bike to Work Day on Tuesday, Sept. 22, 7-9 a.m.

Community members are encouraged to leave their cars at home and hop on a bicycle to get to work or to the grocery store or running errands. There will be four Bike to Work Day stops where commuters can celebrate with free coffee and a light breakfast snack.

- Fit & Fuel/Naples Cyclery — 819 Vanderbilt Beach Road, Naples, FL 34108
- CAT Transfer Station at the Government Complex — 3355 U.S. 41 E., Naples, FL 34112
- Naples Botanical Gardens — 4820 Bayshore Drive, Naples, FL 34112
- Zocalo Park, Immokalee — 107 North

First Street, Immokalee, Florida 34142

Helmets, bike lights, safety information and maps will also be provided. For those unable to make it to the designated stop locations, Naples Pathways Coalition and Bikes for Tykes will also be setting up tents east of the Gordon River Bridge to provide helmets and lights.

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.

Online Power Nine Activity Of The Week

Bike riding is a low impact aerobic exercise that offers a wealth of benefits that include decreased stress levels, improved posture and coordination, strengthened bones, and increased cardiovascular fitness.

This week we encourage you to safely ride your bike instead of using your car to get to work or run an errand. What was your experience? Is this something you would consider doing more often?

Share with us 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.

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