

BLUE ZONES

“I found that when you are depressed, that’s when you do something for somebody else.” – Dan Buettner

Celebrate Cycling with ‘Bike There Day’ on Feb. 12

Robin DeMattia
Special to Naples Daily News
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Hop on ‘Bike There Day’ to celebrate all the benefits of cycling. You may even get a free new helmet.

Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida is hosting Bike There Day as an alternative to its Bike to Work Day that is held twice a year. With so many people working from home during the pandemic, the event has expanded to encourage cycling not only to the office but to visit the grocery store and run other errands.

“We’re trying to promote the safety and pleasure of biking,” said Megan Greer, worksite and policy co-lead. “We want to make biking a more common activity and more visible mode of transportation.”

Blue Zones Project staff and partners will be at eight locations in Collier County and two in southern Lee County (see list) from 6:30 to 9 a.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, to celebrate Bike There Day. They will distribute free bicycle helmets selected by certified bicycle helmet fitters and free bicycle lights, all while supplies last. They will also serve refreshments.

Partners include Bikes for Tykes, City of Bonita Springs, Collier Area Transit (CAT), Florida Bicycle Association, Friends of the River of Grass Greenway, Lee-Tran, NCH Healthcare System, NaplesVelo, and Naples Pathways Coalition.

At a similar event last Fall, more than 150 people participated.

The program focuses on people who are “bike-bound,” such as those in downtown Bonita Springs, Immokalee, Golden Gate City and East Naples, who ride a bike to work. Blue Zones Project works with Collier Area Transit (CAT) and LeeTran to encourage people to ride their bicycle to mass transit for the rest of a longer journey.

But the day is an opportunity for everyone to bike somewhere. Blue Zones Project promotes finding healthy options and opportunities, like biking, within everyone’s “life radius” of 10 miles of their home, where they generally work, shop and take children to school.

As part of Blue Zones Project’s overall efforts, the group works with local governments and other stakeholders to create bike lanes, improve safety of existing bike lanes, and educate drivers to be careful around cyclists, all in an effort to keep safe and healthy through bike riding.



Two men are taking the bike to ride to the office to start their working day instead of taking the car. SUBMITTED

“There’s a mentality that our streets aren’t safe and people are afraid to ride,” said Jodi Walborn, worksite and policy co-lead. “But there’s a paradoxical event that happens. When you have more bicycle riders on the road, drivers become more aware of them and look out for cyclists, so the roads become safer.”

Blue Zones Project worked with Collier County on bike lanes as part of Central Avenue’s redevelopment a few years ago and on multi-use paths when Terry Street in Bonita Springs was recently enhanced.

“Seeing more people out riding bikes encourages other people to ride,” Walborn said. “It’s healthier for people and for the environment, because we need less road space when we have fewer cars.”

Blue Zones Project is particularly concerned about people in the service industry who bike in the dark to or from work at grocery stores, hotels and restaurants.

“Safety is a very important component of health,” said Greer. “If you don’t feel safe moving in your environment, you’re not going to move your body through that environment, whether it’s biking or going for a walk. We want to make the healthiest option the easiest one.”

Greer hopes that Bike There Day inspires people to

bicycle more often. “It’s not just this one day,” she said. “We want people to fall in love with cycling, the fresh air, the movement and feeling alive on that bike.”

How to participate in Bike There Day

Register at biketherebp.eventbrite.com to enter a drawing for a free Blue Zones Project restaurant gift card.

Visit these Collier County stops on Bike There Day:

- (Formerly) Del’s 24 Market, 2802 Thomasson Dr., Naples
- CAT stop at SW Corner of US 41 and Vanderbilt Beach Road, 8939 Tamiami Trail N., Naples
- Golden Gate Community Center, 4701 Golden Gate Parkway, Naples
- Zocalo Park, 107 North 1st Street, Immokalee
- CAT Transfer Center, 13355 Tamiami Trail E., Naples

Visit these Lee County stops on Bike There Day:

- Liles Hotel History Center, 27300 Old 41 Road, Bonita Springs
- LeeTran stop Coconut Point Mall (in front of Best Buy), 23106 Fashion Dr., Estero

Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc., 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.bluezones-project.com.

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