

NAPLES HERITAGE, VILLAGE WALK AND THE LOCAL JOIN BLUE ZONES PROJECT



Naples Heritage Golf & Country Club celebrates becoming recognized as a Blue Zones Project community.

BLUE ZONES PROJECT OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA

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Have a chef showcase a cooking demonstration, and attendance is a sure thing, along with the idea of getting on board with the longevity initiative the Blue Zones Project.

Naples Heritage Golf & Country Club did just that with a cooking demonstration of recipes promoted by the Blue Zones, and 80 residents came, said Joanne Huml, a resident who helped introduce the initiative to residents.

After that, the East Naples community hosted a “purpose” workshop with Blue Zones leaders present to help people zero in on interests and causes that can be enriching, she said.

From there, management was sold to become Blue Zones-recognized, where instilling healthier options for daily activities are available, Huml said.

Also new to Blue Zones recognition is Village Walk of Naples, and The Local has become a Blue Zones-approved restaurant.

Naples Heritage formed walking groups, made the pool deck and clubhouse smoke-free, and installed bike racks to promote exercise. The community hosts plant-based cooking classes and promotes volunteerism.

Village Walk, off Vanderbilt Beach Road in North Naples, likewise has a walking group that reached out to expand participation and hosted a purpose workshop, said Joni Dickens, who serves on the community’s Blue Zones



Jeff Mitchell, right, owner and chef of The Local, holds its recognition as a Blue Zones Project restaurant. At left is Dr. Allen Weiss, president and chief executive officer of the NCH Healthcare System. He introduced the health and wellness initiative to the community.

BLUE ZONES PROJECT STAFF

committee. Village Walk added bike racks and hosts potlucks with healthier food offerings.

The committee plans to approach the chef at the restaurant at Village Walk about incorporating some Blue Zones recipes on the menu, she said.

“I think we are a very tight community,” she said. “Everybody is just trying to do the right thing to take less pills and stay healthy. It’s a way of life.”

The Blue Zones project is a wellness and longevity initiative underway in Collier County in which businesses, government agencies, restaurants, grocery stores, churches, residential communities and other groups incorporate healthier options in daily prac-

tices. The goal is making healthy choices easier so they become habit-forming.

The Local, at 5323 Airport-Pulling Road, is a natural for the Blue Zones because of its focus on supporting local and organic agriculture, plant-based and healthy meals.

“Blue Zones Project is a natural fit for The Local, as we love being able to improve the well-being and healthy eating of our community,” said Jeff Mitchell, owner and chef of the restaurant.

The Local serves farm-to-fork vegan recipes and salads and uses fresh local produce.

The Local is Naples’ first farm-to-table and sea-to-table restaurant specializing in locally sourced ingredients.

The Blue Zones project was started in 2010 by a former National Geographic explorer, Dan Buettner, who recognized from his travels how people in certain parts of the world had great longevity because their lifestyle. Those habits became the basis for his “Power Nine” principles detailed in his book, “The Blue Zones,” which became a New York Times best-seller.

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.

So far, more than 60 local organizations, from residential communities to businesses, have become engaged in the initiative.