

# Blue Zones adds Naples bank, country club eatery

**Liz Freeman** Naples Daily News  
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The restaurant for residents of Vanderbilt Country Club has set a standard for adding healthier fare to its selections and garnering Blue Zones Project recognition.

It is the first country club restaurant in the region to earn Blue Zones status for taking steps to be aligned with the health and wellness initiative underway in the region.

"As a chef, one of my goals has always been to provide menu options for our

members that afford them the opportunity to make healthy choices," Mitchell Excell, the club's executive chef, said.

The club has added four dishes for adults that are plant-based that are inspired by the Blue Zones and added two new menu items that are targeted for children.

"We see that future food trends are including more plant-based items — dishes that include beans, grains, and meat and fish in smaller servings," Excell said. "I'm pleased to now offer healthier choices on our menu, so our members may work towards a more ac-

tive and healthy lifestyle."

In addition, the restaurant has added information about the Blue Zones health initiative on guest receipts.

The Blue Zones project was introduced to Southwest Florida in 2015 based on the travels of Dan Buettner, who identified communities worldwide where people share lifestyle traits and live to 100 or older. He wrote a New York Times best-seller about the nine principles of longevity.

The "Power Nine" include moving naturally by being physically active, eating a plant-slant diet, knowing your

purpose in life, taking time to relax, having a healthy social network and putting loved ones first. A popular activity is to form walking groups at work sites, which gets people active and engaging with one another.

The NCH Healthcare System is underwriting the costs of the project locally, where consultants from ShareCare, a partner with the national Blue Zones Project in Minneapolis, works with communities that are pursuing the Blue Zones lifestyles.

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# Blue Zones

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## **Estero bank gains Blue Zones recognition**

FineMark National Bank and Trust in Estero has joined the initiative as a worksite that has taken steps to help employees become healthier.

“The Blue Zones Project aligns well with FineMark’s vision statement, ‘to make a positive impact on the individuals, families and communities we serve while being good stewards of FineMark’s resources,’” Harlan C. Parrish, Lee County president of the bank, said in a press release. “We believe providing a happy and healthy environment for our clients and associates at FineMark can improve their overall well-being.”

The bank branches located in Coconut Point, Bonita Bay and Bentley Village have adopted Blue Zones policies to be healthier by forming walking groups and hosting pot luck meals, which help employees get to know each other better on a personal level that helps with people having healthy connections to others.

FineMark has 24 employees combined at the three branches who are taking part in the Blue Zones, said Stacey Ross, who became the point person at the bank for the project.

The bank started working on its Blue Zones application about one year ago, she said.

In addition, FineMark encourages employees to take micro-breaks to stretch or move every hour, and it promotes plant-based snacks and encourages employees to use the stairs instead of the elevator.