



Mark Wilson, president and CEO of London Bay Homes, works at a stand-up desk at his Naples office. JimJett.com

Like many top executives, Mark Wilson has had the benefit of a preventive health program at the exclusive Canyon Ranch.

"I was very lucky to have access to lots of information," says Wilson, the trim 56-year-old president and CEO of Naples-based luxury residential builder London Bay Homes, who loves to bike and hike. "But the employees and the team didn't have the same exposure."

So three years ago Wilson embarked on a healthy mission: he introduced a wellness program to the company. And more recently, London Bay Homes was one of a handful of private companies to join the Blue Zones Project, a program sponsored by Naples-based NCH Healthcare System to boost well-being in Southwest Florida.

The Blue Zones application took several months to complete and involved on-site visits, says Sabra Smith, vice president of London Bay Homes. "It's hard to achieve," she says.

But does going healthy make for a better business?

Wilson acknowledges it's hard to measure the results on the company's financial statements. Healthier employees are more productive, he reasons, but he says he can't point to any bottom-line results for the \$50,000 a year he spends to help the company's 120 employees stay healthy. So far, London Bay doesn't get a break on its health insurance expenses because the company is part of a

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larger group plan.

But Wilson thinks bigger with the health push. "It's something I personally believe in," he says. "It's dear to my heart."

Benefits of the Blue Zones program include physician evaluations, lectures by experts on healthy habits and free gym memberships. London Bay Homes gives each employee a \$100 Fitbit activity tracker and Wilson encourages everyone to participate in weekly fitness challenges, such as taking the stairs instead of the elevator.

But it's not all about working out at the gym. Mental and emotional well-being is a key to Wilson's program, too. For example, Wilson encourages managers and employees to take all the vacation they've earned, even if that means others have to pick up the slack.

"If you're a manager and you can't go away for a week, you're not a good manager, are you?" says Wilson, who enjoys skiing in the Alps and trekking in the Himalayas on his time off. He trains for the mountains by running up and down the stairs in Naples condo towers.

Besides the belief that healthier employees are more productive, Wilson says London Bay Homes' emphasis on well-being is a great recruiting tool. "What it does say is we care about our employees," he says.

Wilson engaged Dr. Corey Howard of Physicians Life Centers in Naples to evaluate employees who agreed to participate in the Blue Zones program. "I wanted to bring a doctor in to head it up," Wilson explains.

Some employees were surprised to find out that they had medical conditions that they didn't know were likely to be problems. As a result of lifestyle changes in exercise and diet, some have caught potential health issues early. "They literally changed their lives," Wilson says.

Of course, some employees are more eager to participate than others. "We can nudge, assist and educate," Wilson says.

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