



City of Naples celebrates its Blue Zones work site designation.

BLUE ZONES PROJECT

# CITY OF NAPLES becomes Blue Zones worksite

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Employees with the city of Naples are trying to make sure they stick around for a long time.

The municipality is the latest to join the Blue Zones Project in Southwest Florida as a work site to help its more than 400 employees be healthier and work toward improved longevity.

The city's ribbon-cutting celebration for becoming a Blue Zones work site — held Oct. 5 — was expected, ever since the Naples City Council passed a resolution in 2014 to support the well-being initiative coming to Southwest Florida.

To earn its Blue Zones work site designation, the city needed to formalize policies for practices that have been in existence for quite some time, which promote good health habits, said Lori McCullers, the city's risk manager who oversees health and wellness.

"We didn't have to do a whole lot because we already have a significant wellness culture," she said.

The Blue Zones project fits with the city's vision of maintaining a high quality of living for both employees and residents.

For instance, employees have had the option for a while of switching to stand-up desks to get away from being sedentary, and employees are encouraged to volunteer in the community, she said.

Both existing practices were penned into formal policy to assist with the 19-page Blue Zones work site application, McCullers said.

The city has always followed federal law in terms of providing lactating mothers with a place to pump milk for their newborns, and that needed to be formalized in a policy, she said.

The city is the second public entity work site to become Blue Zones recognized; the first was the Florida Department of Health in Collier County in August. The public health department has 177 employees.

The Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida was introduced to the region two years ago based on the



CITY OF NAPLES

City of Naples employees show off "food cart Friday," part of the city's Blue Zones project.

world 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 NCH Healthcare System is underwriting the Blue Zones initiative in Collier and south Lee counties.

The community-wide undertaking over the next eight years involves voluntarily making health-focused changes in workplaces, schools, government entities, restaurants, grocery stores and physical settings so healthier choices are easier and become a way of life.

One new program that developed in the city with the Blue Zones Project came from Naples Mayor Bill Barnett and his wife, Chris Barnett, to revamp a push cart, stock it with healthy foods and move it from one department to another every Friday, McCullers said.

It's called "food cart Friday" and it takes off on the "pay it forward" movement, where people are encouraged to commit acts of kindness to strangers and spread good will, McCullers said.

"He was the first to stock it, and he moved it to human resources," she said.

The food cart has made the rounds to the water department, solid waste department and a few other departments in the two to three months since the food cart has been on a roll.

Each department is responsible for stocking the cart with healthy meals or snacks for the next department, she said.

About a half-dozen employees take part in a Saturday morning walking group, which fits the Blue Zones mission, yet walking programs have always been part of the city's well-being culture for a long time, she said.