

More employers join Blue Zones

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A longstanding employer in Collier County has achieved the Blue Zones Project designation and so has a local government agency.

The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club, which has 450 employees, is the latest business to earn recognition from the Blue Zones that it offers options for its workforce to make healthier choices.

The Florida Department of Health in Collier County likewise has earned the recognition for its 177 employees.

The Blue Zones project is spearheaded and underwritten by the NCH Healthcare System to promote a series of "Power Nine" principles in daily life that Blue Zones founder Dan Buettner found are commonly shared among people with great longevity.

Buettner developed the principles after exploring the world for National Geographic and he wrote a book about the shared principles which became a New York Times bestseller.

The "Power Nine" include moving naturally by being physically active, knowing your purpose in life, taking time to relax, having a healthy social network and putting loved ones first.

Other principles include participating in a religious community, limiting alcohol consumption, eating a plant-slant diet and stopping to eat when you are 80 percent full.

To achieve work site designation, a business must get 25 percent of its workforce to sign the Blue Zones pledge that they commit to healthier decisions.

"We are the first hotel in Southwest Florida (to get the designation)," Liana Newell, human resources manager at the Beach Club, said. "It is so appropriate since we have been here since 1946."

About 125 to 130 employees signed the Blue Zones pledge that the hotel knows of, and some employees have taken it up on their own. The hotel started the certification process last

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The Naples Beach Hotel & Golf Club joins Blue Zones.



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August, she said.

The hotel has always offered healthy options in its employee cafeteria, so that was already in place, but it did publish walking routes so employees can get some exercise in during breaks. The routes include how many steps are involved from beginning to end, Newell said.

The hotel also launched a program to encourage employees to have lunch with a friend or someone new, and it will begin a recipe sharing program this fall, she said.

In September, employees will be offered biometrics screening to learn about their numbers, like cholesterol and blood pressure, and it was offered last year so they can start comparing their data and track changes, she said. The screening is offered regardless of whether employees use the hotel's insurance plan for health coverage.

"Blue Zones Project aligns well with

our mission since happy and healthy employees are the backbone of excellent customer service," Newell said.

At the health department, 67 employees signed the Blue Zones pledge, so the commitment came to 38 percent of the workforce, said Jennifer Gomez, director of community health promotion.

"A lot of the things we had already implemented," she said. "But the assessment is pretty grueling to substantiate everything you are doing."

The health department created a walking group for employees when

they take break: stalled to let the steps they are ta ment complex g department built she said.

There are "lu with a nutritioni experts to get b lifestyle measur ity, she said. Off chines were cha options and wor to learn about of ples, she said.