

BLUE TIP: Plan meals with a “plant slant,” seeing that 95 percent of your food comes from a plant or a plant product, and limit animal protein to one small daily serving. Favor beans, greens, yams and sweet potatoes, fruits, nuts and seeds or whole grains. — **“The Blue Zone Solution”**



SUBMITTED

Linda Oberhaus, executive director of the Shelter for Abused Women, and Dr. Allen Weiss, president and chief executive officer of the NCH Healthcare System, celebrate the shelter becoming a Blue Zones worksite. NCH is sponsoring the local health initiative.

SHELTER ADDS NEW CAUSE

Shelter for Abused Women & Children becomes Blue Zones worksite

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The Shelter for Abused Women & Children has a new cause.

The nonprofit shelter has gained designation as a Blue Zones approved worksite, taking on the mission of improving the health and well-being of its 67 employees in Naples and Immokalee.

The shelter staff established a committee to develop ideas and programs for working toward the designation, where actions are taken to make healthier choices in daily living the easier choice.

The Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida was introduced to the region in 2015 based on the world travels of Dan Buettner, who identified communities worldwide where people share life-style 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 8 to 10 years involves voluntarily implementing 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.

ONLINE

» Learn more about Blue Zones: southwestfloridabluezones.com

» Learn more about Southwest Florida's commitment to become a Blue Zones community: collier.bluezonesproject.com naplesnews.com/bluezone

» Find the Blue Zones books at bluezones.com/resources/books

The shelter administration went smoke-free, and many employees began wearing Fitbits to track their daily steps, which fosters a cohesiveness among employees and even a sense of friendly competition.

The shelter is a role model in the community, and becoming a Blue Zones worksite is a natural fit with its mission to prevent, protect and prevail against domestic violence, Linda Oberhaus, executive director of the shelter, said in a statement.

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LINDA OBERHAUS

SHELTER FOR ABUSED WOMEN & CHILDREN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Shelter

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“When our shelter employees feel good and have increased health and well-being, they are better equipped to provide the life-transforming services needed to assist survivors with increasing their own well-being,” she said.

The shelter has been serving Collier for 26 years, and its emergency shelter presently has 19 adults in residence (18 women and one man), 14 children and two pets.

Rosa Leon, contracts and grants manager who helped oversee the committee, said the shelter added a bike rack for employees who want to pedal to work, designated two parking spaces

the farthest from the administration building as Blue Zones spaces to promote walking, and removed unhealthy chips and soda from the snack bar; now, only healthier nuts, protein bars and water are available.

Change is not always easy, but the project is catching on with employees.

“It is life-altering, but it doesn’t feel like it is,” Leon said.

Instead of a walking group that is a hallmark activity of Blue Zones work-sites, the shelter has a potluck salad bar that employees can volunteer to take part in weekly, Leon said.

The shelter does provide health insurance to its staff, and so many of the benefits, like gym memberships, helped the shelter with points necessary to fulfill the Blue Zones application to gain the worksite designation.

“We started last August,” Leon said.