

ARTHREX EARNS BLUE ZONES DESIGNATION

LIZ FREEMAN

LIZ.FREEMAN@NAPLESNEWS.COM; 239-263-4778

Arthrex is officially a Blue Zones Project worksite, putting on paper what it's been doing in practice for years.

The global medical device manufacturing company headquartered in North Naples is the latest employer in Collier County to earn the Blue Zones worksite designation with policies and practices in place to help its 2,800 employees be healthier and happier.

The company submitted its Blue Zones application in December, detailing how it has instilled 74 out of 114 project parameters to earn the recognition, Monica Dubroja, the company's wellness coordinator, said.

With its global headquarters located at 1370 Creekside Boulevard in North Naples, Arthrex held a ribbon cutting March 3 to celebrate its Blue Zones achievement.

Employees enjoyed smoothies and could buy fresh produce from a farmers market. The plan is to host a farmers market for employees every other month on Fridays.

Arthrex has been a leader, both locally and nationally, for its exceptional workplace culture. The company already had many of the Blue Zones practices in place even before Blue Zones was introduced to Southwest Florida in 2015 by the NCH Healthcare System.

"The biggest challenge was getting the information in the documents," Dubroja said.

Repeatedly recognized by Great Places to Work and Fortune's 100 best companies, Arthrex offers comprehensive benefits to employees and other perks, which include a fully staffed primary care clinic for employees and their families. The company offers chef-prepared lunches for daytime employees in North Naples and Fort Myers and supper for the evening crew at the Ave Maria location.

Arthrex also was an early adopter of ergonomic workstation options of standing desks and head sets; offers quiet places for employees to take breaks; and has showers for employees who opt to bike to work, Dubroja said.

Dubroja began offering instructor-led fitness sessions at Arthrex a few years ago for employees after work, which is in addition to the company paying for employees' memberships to local gyms.

The Blue Zones project is a wellness and longevity initiative underway in Southwest Florida where businesses, government agencies, restaurants, grocery stores, churches, residential communities and other groups incorporate healthier options in daily practices so its audience base can make better choices.

The Blue Zones philosophy is that over time, healthier choices will become the easier choices, and each incremental step can improve health and well being. Offering fresh fruit and



Arthrex employees and guests pick up smoothies during a celebration of the company achieving the Blue Zones Project Approved worksite status March 3 in North Naples. More than 150 Arthrex employees and community leaders gathered Friday for the announcement as the company joins more than 54 Southwest Florida businesses engaged in the Blue Zones Project movement.

ARTHREX PHOTOS



Officials with NCH Healthcare System, Dr. Frank Astor, from left, Michael Riley and Dr. Paul Hobaica, along with Arthrex representatives John Schmedding and Monica Dubroja, cut a ceremonial ribbon to celebrate Arthrex's achievement in reaching Blue Zones worksite status.

bottled water instead of soft drinks and candy bars in employee break rooms is one example.

The Blue Zones project was started in 2010 by a former National Geographic explorer Dan Buettner, who recognized from his travels how people in certain parts of the world had great longevity because their lifestyle, and those habits became the basis for his "Power Nine" principles detailed in his book, *The Blue Zones*, which became a New York Times bestseller.

Southwest Florida is one of 37 com-

munities nationwide that is either working toward recognition as a Blue Zones community or that has achieved it by widespread adoption of the underlying principles.

The nine principles include moving naturally by being physically active, knowing one's 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.

Some programs Arthrex has added for its Blue Zones worksite designation include a walking challenge that will kick off March 13. Employees will be put in teams of four and encouraged to walk, and their daily steps will be tracked with a walk across America program, she said.

Arthrex has two California locations, in Santa Barbara and near Los Angeles, and the walking challenge will simulate employees walking from California to the Naples headquarters, Dubroja said.

The walking challenge will last six weeks and tie into the American Heart Association's national walking day April 5, she said. For several years, Arthrex has received the heart association's platinum award for being fit-friendly.

Arthrex chef, William Blum, has always offered healthy selections for employees and he has backed the company's pledge to the Blue Zones by adding plant-based entrees, she said.

Overall employees have embraced the Blue Zones project and recognize that eating healthier and exercising is good for themselves now and long term.

Most of them are open to looking at ways to be healthier and appreciate whatever resources that Arthrex is willing to offer them to help, she said.

"It's just more ammunition," she said.