

"It's hard to reach (the age of) 100. We're not programmed for longevity. We are programmed for something called procreative success." - Dan Buettner, author of "The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest"



Employees of Eagle Creek Golf & Country Club celebrate joining the Blue Zones Project. SUBMITTED

Several more groups join Blue Zones Project

Liz Freeman Naples Daily News | USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

What do three residential communities and a yoga studio have in common?

It's not a trick question; all have adopted healthier lifestyle principles put forth by the Blue Zones Project in Southwest Florida.

Naples Lakes Country Club, Countryside Golf & Country Club, and Eagle Creek Golf & Country Club are now participating in the health and wellness initiative known as the Blue Zones Project.

Eagle Creek, off Collier Boulevard, recently gained approval as a Blue Zones work site by adopting practices that encourage employees to be healthier. The community has 458 residences.

The community has been hosting seminars to urge employees to change their habits and employees have started to play soccer after lunch each week. In addition, they have started a wine sampling to encourage more socializing. Another move was to designate 20 parking spaces farther away from the building to encourage more walking during the day.

"For Eagle Creek, it goes back to our core values," Don Madalinski, general manager, said. "People are more productive and happier when they are healthy and fit. Also, it sets a good example for our members to live a healthy lifestyle."

The Blue Zones project was introduced to Southwest Florida in 2015 based on the 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 "Power Nine" includes moving naturally by being physically active, eating a plant-slant diet, knowing your purpose in life, taking time to relax,

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having a healthy social network and putting loved ones first. A popular activity is to form walking groups at work sites, which gets people active and engaging with one another.

The philosophy is that making policy and practical changes at businesses, government offices, schools, restaurants and elsewhere that promote healthier choices in daily life will become habit.

The NCH Healthcare System has been sponsoring the Blue Zones Project for the past three years. NCH president and chief executive officer, Dr. Allen Weiss had been talking about it for a year or longer before leading the campaign that will span 8 to 10 years.

To date, more than 200 businesses in Southwest Florida have joined the Blue Zones Project.

Naples Lake Country Club, off Collier Boulevard with 731 residences, added bicycle racks around the community for everyone to use, and it hosts plant-based cooking classes and well-being programs. It is discouraging the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.

"Since implementing Blue Zones Project best practices at the Naples Lakes Country Club fitness-wellness department, we've increased fitness membership participation," Laz Rua, fitness director, said. "As a result, our community is more active and more engaged in activities that promote relaxation and destressing."

Countryside, off Davis Boulevard in



Love Yoga Center celebrates recognition by the Blue Zones Project. SUBMITTED

East Naples with more than 1,100 residential units, has changed its employee meal to be a more socially engaging event by encouraging employees to eat with people they don't normally eat with. They are encouraged to take part in ice-breaker questions posted at each table to get to know different colleagues. It also has added physical engagement activities.

"Countryside's mission is to provide our members with an enjoyable and valued living experience with quality amenities, services and facilities," Joe

Smith, general manager, said. "Participating in Blue Zones Project elevates our member offerings through social Moai®, plant-based meal offerings and physical well-being initiatives."

Love Yoga Center, on U.S. 41 in Naples, is recognized by the Blue Zones Project because it holds plant-based potluck events with employees and its yoga community, as well as promoting volunteerism, offering healthy snacks and having bike racks to promote more physical activity.

"We are dedicated to improving the

health and well-being of the community and we are excited to be a Blue Zones Project organization since our teachers and so many of our clients are committed to the foundations of yoga which align with the Blue Zones Power 9® principles," Lahoma Nachtrab, owner of Love Yoga, said.

Love Yoga says it is dedicated to teaching yoga in a noncompetitive and safe environment, along with providing a variety of workshops, community events and a comprehensive teacher training program.