



IOWA CITY A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

The 14th certified Blue Zones Community® in the nation invests in well-being for a more livable, vibrant, and healthy future.





CONGRATS, IOWA CITY,
FOR PUTTING WELL-BEING
ON THE MAP!

We deserve a round of applause.
And maybe even a standing ovation.
Because we made it happen.

After launching Blue Zones Project®, our community saw a **15.5 percent decline in obesity rates since 2014 and an increase in exercise levels.** This is thanks to improved walkability, investments in new streets and sidewalks, and the beautification of the community as a whole. Our community's resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of our residents first, is happening.

Iowa City has always been a great place to live, work, and visit. And it's only getting better.

We did this together. By focusing on our personal and collective well-being, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. Here's to making Iowa City one of the healthiest cities in the nation, where residents are living longer, better.

THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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A rural landscape in Iowa featuring a green field in the foreground, a large tree, and several buildings in the background.

PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN IOWA

A GREAT STATE

What does it take to become a healthier state? What does that mean for those who live and work there? These were the questions on the minds of community leaders in 2011 when Governor Terry Branstad challenged Iowa to become the healthiest state alongside the Healthiest State Initiative. An answer came with Blue Zones Project, a community-wide initiative that united civic leaders, businesses, restaurants, schools, grocers, families, and others in an effort to enhance the community landscape and improve the overall well-being of Iowans. With this vision as a foundation, the Blue Zones Project partnership is bringing value to communities statewide — with things like improved health, a strong economy, and happier, healthier, and highly productive residents who spend more time living well.

AN INNOVATIVE SPONSOR

Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® chose to invest in the lives of Iowans by bringing Blue Zones Project to the state for what would be the cornerstone of Iowa's Healthiest State Initiative.

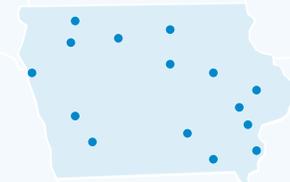
Wellmark knew that doing so would introduce an innovative approach that moves beyond diet and exercise regimens and applies the principles of behavioral economics to make healthier choices easier choices. The projected outcomes? Improved health and well-being for Iowans.

A Transformative Solution

Blue Zones Project helps transform U.S. communities like ours into Blue Zones Communities — areas where people live longer with a higher quality of life. The secrets to well-being and longevity are found in the Power 9® — nine common principles from the Blue Zones® longevity hotspots of the world. Blue Zones Communities are places where residents, employers, and others collaborate to create environments where healthy choices are easier for everyone.

The results?

Vibrant communities where residents are happier, healthier, and more engaged with each other. Iowa was among the first to embark on this journey to well-being. Fifteen communities and five years later, the results are undeniable.





IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHER WELL-BEING, WE HAVE FOUND THAT PEOPLE LIVE LONGER, HAPPIER LIVES AND BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES FLOURISH. A RELIABLE WELL-BEING METRIC PROVIDES COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS WITH THE DATA AND INSIGHTS THEY NEED TO HELP MAKE SUSTAINED TRANSFORMATION A REALITY. AFTER ALL, IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE IT, YOU CAN'T MANAGE IT.

Dan Buettner
New York Times best-selling author
National Geographic Fellow
Blue Zones founder

Measuring the Impact

Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices to become easy choices today and for many years to come.

From 2010 – 2015, according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index®, Iowa has outpaced the nation in overall well-being, improving at twice the rate of the national average.



GALLUP-HEALTHWAYS WELL-BEING INDEX

The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index is the most proven, mature, and comprehensive measure of well-being in the world. Measuring well-being gives policy, community, and business leaders the data to benchmark populations, understand gaps and opportunities, and then prioritize interventions to measurably improve well-being. Improving well-being has been shown to lower health care costs and increase worker productivity, in turn, enhancing organizational and community competitiveness.



15 Communities Commit to Well-Being

In October 2011, 84 Iowa communities submitted statements of interest to be selected for Blue Zones Project, and an elite 15 were chosen. Communities received support from national experts and thousands of community members.

Across the state, Blue Zones Project has seen:

520,000

Lives impacted by environmental changes designed to help people move naturally, eat wisely, develop the right outlook, and connect with others.

430,000+

Actions taken by individuals to improve well-being for themselves, their families, and friends.

610

Worksites, schools, grocery stores, and restaurants achieved Blue Zones Project designation.

21,164

(And counting) Actions taken by those organizations to make healthy choices easier, helping residents, employees, and patrons live longer, better lives.

180,245

Total feet of bike lanes, trails, and sidewalks built to encourage people to move more naturally.

142

Walking School Bus routes created to encourage students to move naturally.

15

All 15 communities passed new Complete Streets policies to enable safe access for all users — drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

”

IT'S CELEBRATING WHAT THE PEOPLE OF AMERICA ARE NOW WAKING UP TO, AND REALIZING WHAT THEY WANT. IT'S GOING TO HAPPEN IN IOWA FIRST.

Dan Burden
Walkability Expert
Blue Zones



WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO BE A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY?

Worksites, schools, grocery stores, and restaurants complete various **action items** on a **pledge** in order to earn their Blue Zones Project **designation**.



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IOWA CITY HAS PUT A STRATEGIC EMPHASIS ON IMPROVING WELL-BEING ACROSS THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. THEY ARE LEADING THE WAY ON MANY KEY DETERMINANTS OF A LONG, HEALTHY LIFE, AND I APPLAUD THEM FOR THIS ACHIEVEMENT.

Dan Buettner
New York Times best-selling author
National Geographic Fellow
Blue Zones founder

A photograph of a tree-lined sidewalk in Iowa City, Iowa. The scene is captured from a low angle, looking down a paved path made of cobblestones. On the left, there are several trees with lush green leaves, and a person is walking away from the camera. On the right, there are more trees and a person walking towards the camera. The sun is shining brightly from behind the trees, creating a large, starburst-like flare in the center of the image. The overall atmosphere is bright and sunny.

PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN IOWA CITY

As a pioneer in innovation, Iowa City is foremost in a movement that is now more than 26 communities strong.

Our neighbors, teachers, and community leaders have made tremendous strides in optimizing the places where we all live, work, learn, and play.



WE ARE HONORED TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A CERTIFIED BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY. IOWA CITY IS CONTINUALLY INNOVATING TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF OUR CITIZENS, AND THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN A CATALYST, STIMULATING NEW IDEAS AND EFFORTS.

Jim Throgmorton
Mayor
Iowa City

Locals Enjoy a New Kind of Well-Being in Iowa City

Iowa City is charting a clear path to community well-being through innovative approaches across the city.

Obesity rates in Iowa City have decreased 15.5 percent, from 18.7 percent in 2014 to 15.8 percent in 2015, while exercise levels are on the rise.

Iowa City is home to many premier employers that invest in our workforce's well-being. For example, the University of Iowa campus is alive with residents strolling the pedestrian mall, biking to class, and cheering on the Hawkeyes. As the largest employer in Iowa, the University of Iowa is proud of its emphasis on well-being. The campus became tobacco-free to protect the rights of all people to breathe fresh air.

Just off campus is our revitalized downtown, which features many new amenities designed to boost well-being. As part of "Move Naturally to the Market," our residents who walk and bike to the farmers market are rewarded with coupons to purchase produce. Community members can enjoy outdoor dining at one of 38 restaurants, and a new ordinance allows for rooftop dining, too. Don't be surprised to see restaurants update their menus several times throughout the year to reflect the local, seasonal produce.

In July 2015, Iowa City passed the state's first ordinance to ban the use of e-cigarettes in all areas where state and local laws prohibit smoking tobacco products. A year-over-year measure showed a 2 percent decline in smoking from 2014 to 2015. **Iowa City boasts a low smoking rate of just 10 percent of the population, compared to 19 percent nationally.**

An edible forest at Wetherby Park is full of fruits, nuts, herbs, and flowers, all free for the taking. The provision of free local fruits and vegetables increases equal access to food while gathering our community together. **In total, five edible landscapes can be found covering 77,622 square feet in Iowa City.**

Our kids are learning the importance of a healthy and active lifestyle, too. At Lincoln Elementary, students harvested 40 pounds of potatoes during science class and donated them to a local nonprofit organization. Food is moving straight from local farms to the table at home.

In Iowa City, a healthy path has been laid for you. It's just another benefit of being a Blue Zones Community.



A Community-wide Commitment to Blue Zones Project



67,862

Lives impacted

46%

Community awareness

22%

People engaged

15,077

Individuals pledged to support well-being

42,017

Well-being actions taken by individuals

20%

Believe Blue Zones Project has made a positive impact on the community

103

Organizations implementing well-being principles

1,771

Changes made by organizations to support living longer, better

50

Organizations completing the pledge

17

Iowa City worksites are Blue Zones Worksites®

26%

Of Iowa City's locally owned restaurants are Blue Zones Restaurants®

40%

Of Iowa City's public schools are Blue Zones Schools®

26%

Of Iowa City's grocery stores are Blue Zones Grocery Stores®



SEE IT IN ACTION

Blue Zones Project Highlight: Iowa City, Iowa

Iowa City is making well-being a way of life. Hear from our leaders and neighbors about how an emphasis on well-being makes our community a better place to live.

Watch the video:

explore.bluezonesproject.com/IowaCity



Media Coverage Places Iowa City on National Stage

Blue Zones Project in Iowa has attracted local and national recognition, with more than 1,600 media stories to date.

Since the launch in 2012, Blue Zones Project in Iowa has been heralded for innovative approaches to population health management in notable publications such as **O, The Oprah Magazine**.

Iowa City in the News

107

Total Mentions

12,712,849

Total Reach

\$20,868

Total Publicity Value*

* Publicity value calculated using Cisionpoint Media Monitoring service.

The Des Moines Register



The Gazette

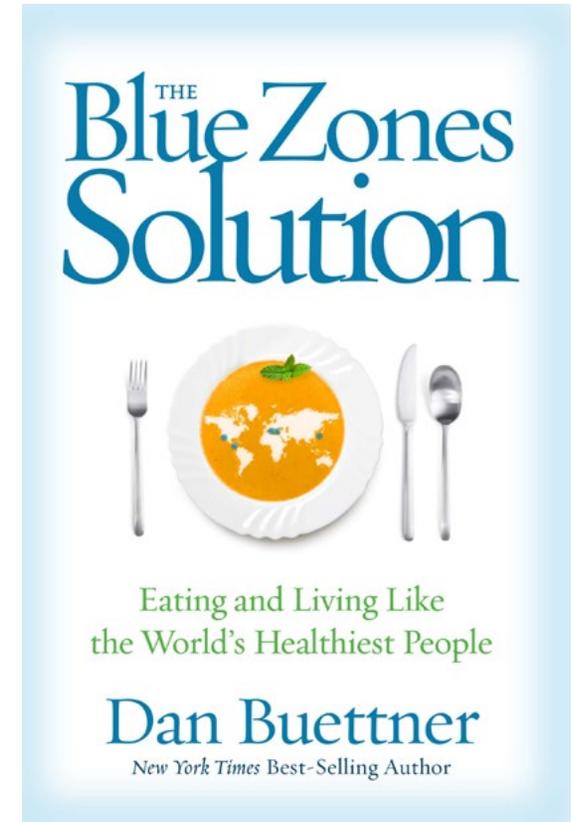
The Daily Iowan

NEWSPAPER • ONLINE • TELEVISION





Iowa City Blue Zones Project leaders meet with Governor Branstad, May 2015



In addition to great media stories covering our efforts, Iowa's story is featured prominently in Dan Buettner's latest *New York Times* best-selling book, *The Blue Zones Solution: Eating and Living Like the World's Healthiest People*.

In the News





GUIDE TO THE POWER 9

The landscape for well-being in America cannot be improved without committed partnerships. That's why leaders across many sectors joined forces to take action and positively impact our residential and business communities. This broad, holistic approach is making healthy choices easier.

Using the secrets to longevity as our guide — **the Power 9** — businesses and residents have taken actions to make well-being a way of life.

THE POWER 9

P.19

Move Naturally

 Make daily physical activity an unavoidable part of your environment.

P.26

Right Outlook

 Know your purpose.

 Downshift: work less, slow down, and take vacations.

P.31

Eat Wisely

 Eat until 80 percent full.

 More veggies, less meat and processed food.

 Drink a glass of red wine each day.

P.38

Connect

 Create a healthy social network.

 Connect or reconnect with religion.

 Prioritize family.



Together, Iowa City residents are moving more and more naturally. Since launching Blue Zones Project, Iowa City has seen a 15.5 percent decline in obesity rates as exercise levels are on the rise.

We generally exercise too hard or not at all. However, the world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons, or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them to move naturally. They live in places where they can walk to the store, a friend's house, or places of worship. Their houses have stairs. They have gardens in their yards. It's not just about moving, it's about moving naturally.

**MOVING
NATURALLY**

WHY MOVEMENT MATTERS

About 69 percent of the American population can be classified as overweight or obese.²

Our children's life expectancy is projected to be shorter than that of their parents for the first time in history. Obesity is not just a health problem, it's an economic one, too. The estimated annual health care costs of obesity-related illness are a staggering \$190 billion, or nearly 21 percent of annual medical spending. Childhood obesity alone is responsible for \$14 billion in direct medical costs.³

The good news is there is a solution for this growing issue. **Increasing simple movements like standing, walking, stretching, and bending can help burn an extra 350 calories a day.** Studies show that just by making our communities more walkable, the prevalence of obesity can decrease by more than 10 percent.⁴ That adds up to even bigger possibilities like lowered incidences of heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory issues and increased productivity, vitality, and years of quality life.

How Moving Naturally Impacts Our Community

City planners, schools, worksites, and organizations across our community have come together to create environments and support programs that help Iowa City residents move naturally. Our city has emerged as a leader for street and community design that nudges people to healthier daily habits. Here are some reasons why:

336

Actions taken by organizations to move naturally

9,312

Actions taken by individuals to move naturally, like getting a bike or a dog to encourage regular movement

75

Walking Moai teams with 2,643 participants

5

Walking School Bus routes



WHAT'S A MOAI?

Moai is a concept from Okinawa, Japan, that roughly means coming together for a common purpose. When you find your Moai, you find your personal board of directors — a committed group of individuals supporting each other and working collectively to improve well-being, for life.

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HEALTH IS THE STATE OF PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL, AND SOCIAL WELL-BEING AND NOT JUST THE ABSENCE OF DISEASE. THE DESIRE FOR THIS STATE OF WELL-BEING IS ONE OF THE STRONGEST HUMAN NEEDS AND IS A KEY TO HAPPINESS. BLUE ZONES PROJECT GOES BEYOND FOCUSING ON WHAT THE INDIVIDUAL CAN DO TO CHANGE HIS OR HER OWN WELL-BEING; IT PROVIDES AN APPROACH TO CHANGING OUR COMMUNITY SO THAT ALL INDIVIDUALS ARE SURROUNDED BY A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT.

Ron Reed
Former President and CEO
Mercy Hospital



TRANSFORMING ENVIRONMENTS

A community resurgence, anchored in putting the well-being of residents first, is happening in Iowa City.

In 2015, the Iowa City city council passed a Complete Streets policy. Complete Streets policies ensure roads are safe for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists. Positive built-environment projects are popping up all across our city, including the many new trails and sidewalks that encourage our residents to move naturally.

A \$2.1 million investment in walking trails and sidewalks. Iowa City and the Iowa Department of Transportation invested \$2.1 million in a new pedestrian bridge — the Dubuque Street Pedestrian Bridge — which completes the 12-mile Iowa River Trail by spanning 540 feet over Interstate 80. This trail provides a safe route for bike commuters and links several parks for recreational use.

Safe Routes to School. Updates along Iowa City's Sycamore Street include two new roundabouts, an additional 1.2 miles of sidewalk, and an extra mile of bike lanes to improve pedestrian access to Alexander Elementary School. Blue Zones Project has increased the safety of children walking and biking to school, which helps parents feel more comfortable letting their children travel to school independently. By designing a community where it's easy to move, Iowa City is supporting well-being as a way of life.

In the News

Iowa City forum to focus on bike facilities in new street projects

The Gazette
04.22.15

City plans 'road diet' for First Avenue, Mormon Trek

Press Citizen
07.24.15

Blue Zones Project, parents start 'walking school bus' program in Iowa City

The Gazette
11.30.14

ORGANIZATIONS MOVING NATURALLY

The health of our community is directly related to the health and vitality of our people.

Organizations across Iowa City have recognized their responsibility to create environments that support their employees and patrons in moving more.

Worksites

We spend about one third of our waking hours at work. Over the last 50 years, the percentage of jobs requiring moderate physical activity has fallen from 50 percent in 1960 to 20 percent today.⁹

This means four out of five jobs are sedentary or only require light activity. This decline in physical activity translates to Americans burning 120–140 fewer calories each day, which results in burning 12–15 fewer pounds each year.

As waistlines expand so do our medical costs. Annually, obesity-related illnesses cost more than \$190 billion in health care costs and \$153 billion in lost productivity, annually.³

With so much time spent at work, it's important that these environments are set up to help people move more. **Our community saw 17 worksites complete actions to help people move more.**

These are small changes that can lead to huge results for the average person over the course of a career.

Restaurants and Grocery Stores

Grocery stores in Iowa City remind shoppers that parking further away is one way to easily add more activity in their day. Restaurants are installing bicycle racks to encourage people to consider active transportation to common destinations (and work up a healthy appetite, too). Small efforts like these make moving naturally easier than ever before in Iowa City.

Actions Completed by 17 Worksites

- 1 Standing desks
- 2 Sharing walking routes
- 3 Stretch breaks
- 4 Fitness classes



”

WALKING WITH YOUR KIDS TO SCHOOL GIVES YOU A QUALITY MOMENT. YOU END UP HAVING THIS GREAT HALF HOUR WITH YOUR CHILDREN THAT NORMALLY DOESN'T EXIST. IT'S FILLED WITH FRESH AIR AND LAUGHTER.

Julie Dancer
Walking School Bus Coordinator
and Volunteer

Schools

Every day, children are learning habits they will carry for the rest of their lives.

Establishing healthy habits like moving naturally is so important in the early stages of life. Physical activity and stretch breaks during the school day can improve grades, increase concentration, and improve math, reading, and writing test scores.¹⁰

Additionally, research shows that including 10-minute activity breaks on a daily basis can promote improvement across these areas by up to 20 percent.



Our community saw six schools complete actions to help get students moving, including adding five Walking School Buses, brain breaks, and additional recess and physical education time.

With the help of Blue Zones Project, the Iowa City Community School District is making healthy choices easy for students. The district's efforts have been successful: in the spring of 2015, 67 percent of girls and 63 percent of boys had a healthy Body Mass Index, up from 65 percent and 60 percent, respectively, in the fall of 2014.



WALKING HELPS KIDS

Children who walk to school are more alert and ready to learn, strengthen their social networks and develop lifetime fitness habits.^{11,12} A Walking School Bus allows a group of children to walk to school under the supervision of two or more adults.



With more than 39,909 hours logged by 3,365 individuals, volunteers in Iowa City added \$887,975 in value to the community.¹

Having the right outlook is a common thread in Blue Zones areas.

The longest-lived people have regular habits to shed stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors, Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap, and Sardinians enjoy happy hour. **It doesn't matter what you do, just so long as it helps you keep the right outlook.**

Blue Zones centenarians also put an emphasis on connecting with their reason for being. Whether through family, career, or community, living with purpose pays off. **Blue Zones researchers have found that people who have a clear sense of purpose in life tend to live about seven years longer than those who don't.**²

RIGHT OUTLOOK

WHY RIGHT OUTLOOK MATTERS

No matter where we live, stress and the pressures of daily life can weigh us down.

Practicing regular methods to downshift from everyday stress and understand our purpose can improve well-being. **Stress leads to chronic inflammation, which is tied to every major age-related disease.**

Research shows that those who connect with a sense of purpose and wake up to live with it each day outlive those who don't. In fact, those with a sense of purpose had a 15 percent lower rate of death than those who did not.¹³



How Right Outlook Impacts Our Community

Through volunteering, Purpose Workshops, and Purpose Moais, Iowa City supports individuals in helping them discover their innate gifts. We help our community members find opportunities that match their passion and commitment in order to deepen their sense of purpose.

In July 2015, Iowa City passed the state's first e-cigarette ordinance, which bans e-cigarette use in those places where laws prohibit smoking tobacco products. This ordinance demonstrates Iowa City's leadership in protecting community members from the dangers of tobacco products and upholding a general standard of health.

Iowa City residents are becoming happier. Since 2012, our residents' outlook is on the rise. When reflecting on life evaluation, **91.6 percent of all residents report feeling happy**, a metric that is up more than five percent since 2012 according to the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index.



BY THE NUMBERS

94

Actions taken by organizations to build strong connections

7,949

Actions taken by individuals to practice having the right outlook, like designating a space at home for meditation or prayer, learning a new hobby, or discovering their purpose

2

Purpose Workshops with 127 participants

33

Purpose Moais with 190 participants

1,610

Volunteers with Blue Zones Project logging 2,421 hours

3,365

Volunteers in Iowa City logging 39,909 hours

OUTCOMES

With more than 39,909 hours logged by 3,365 volunteers, volunteers in Iowa City added \$887,975 in value to our community.

Additionally, more than 127 people sought to discover their gifts and deepen their sense of purpose through Purpose Workshops and the creation of 33 Purpose Moais with 190 participants. As a result, our community is less stressed. The Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index shows **stress levels have dropped nearly 23 percent**, from 52 percent in 2014 to 42.3 percent in 2015..

ORGANIZATIONS WITH THE RIGHT OUTLOOK

Organizations across Iowa City are creating environments and practices that encourage the right outlook. By keeping this top of mind throughout the community, everyone is enjoying more health and vitality.

Worksites

Fewer than 50 percent of Americans find meaning at work. Employers that invest in making work meaningful for their employees are more likely to see production rise and turnover decrease.¹⁴

Our community saw 17 worksites complete actions to help improve outlook and purpose among employees, including creating designated quiet spaces, posting the company mission or vision, encouraging volunteering, and offering Purpose Workshops.

MidWestOne Bank promotes volunteering among its employees and offers paid time off to volunteer in the community. In 2015 alone, more than 3,415 hours were donated.



Schools

Mindfulness is paying attention to the here and now with kindness and curiosity.

Research suggests that teaching mindfulness skills to students increases attention and improves social skills while decreasing test anxiety. It also creates a sense of calm connection to nature, and it improves sleep. These skills allow children to better cope with the stress and noise in life.¹⁵

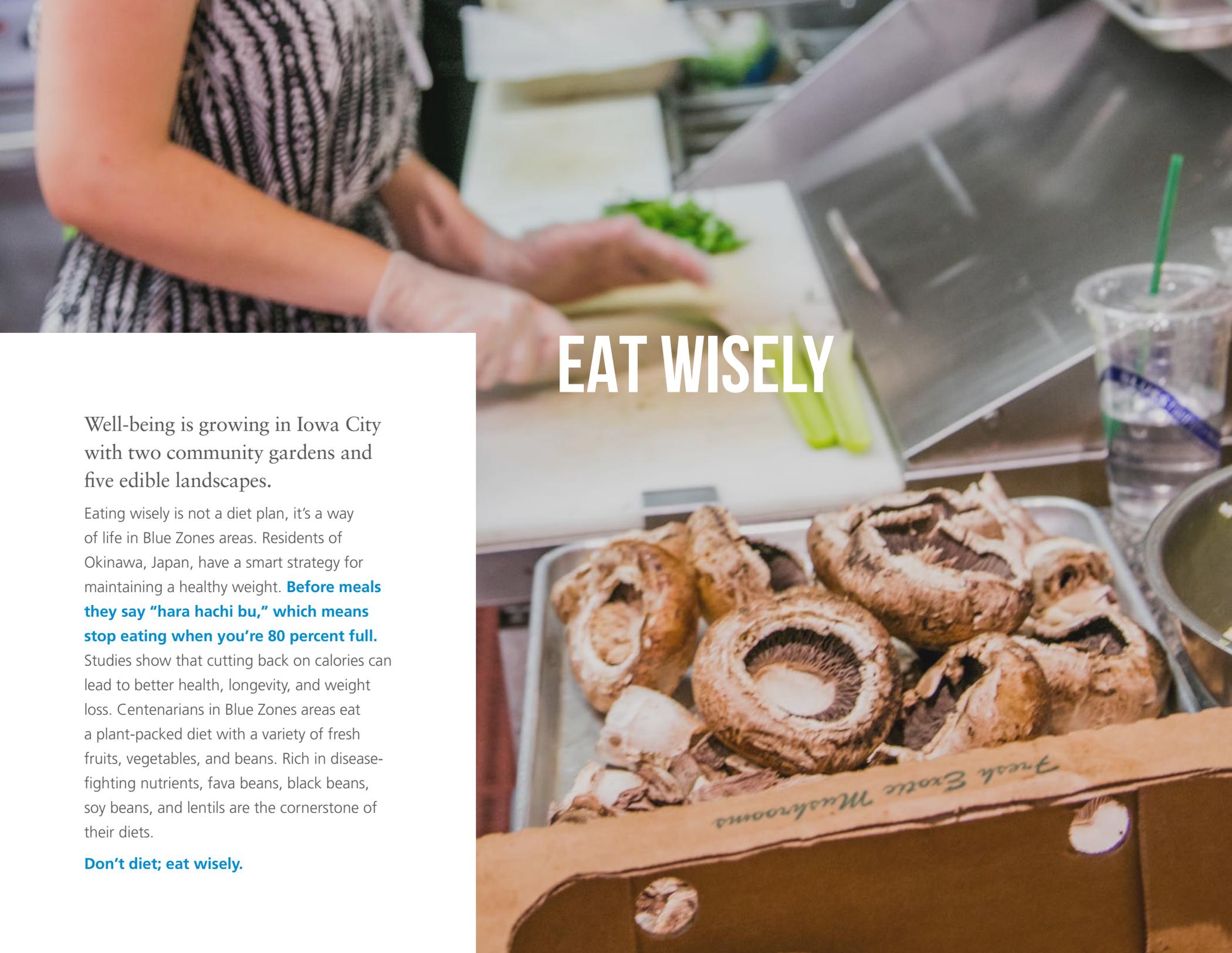
Six Iowa City schools implemented mindfulness programming to support the community's youngest minds. Research shows that students who participate in similar programs improved in the areas of empathy, perspective taking, optimism, emotional control, and mindfulness. They also were more likely to show improvements on trustworthiness, helpfulness, and sharing while showing less rule breaking and starting fewer fights than the control group.

”

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA, WE ARE COMMITTED TO A CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF OUR STUDENTS, STAFF AND FACULTY; AND THE BROADER COMMUNITY. WE ARE EXTREMELY PROUD OF THE WORK COMPLETED TO BECOME A BLUE ZONES WORKSITE, AS WELL AS OUR CONTINUED EFFORTS TO SUPPORT THE IOWA HEALTHIEST STATE INITIATIVE. THESE ON-GOING EFFORTS IMPROVE THE WELL-BEING OF OUR CAMPUS MEMBERS, LOCAL COMMUNITIES, AND CITIZENS THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

Susan C. Buckley
Vice President of Human Resources
University of Iowa



A photograph of a person in a kitchen, wearing a black and white patterned top and a white glove, preparing food on a white cutting board. In the foreground, a cardboard box is filled with fresh mushrooms. The box has the text "Fresh Exotic Mushrooms" written on it. A clear plastic cup with a green straw is visible on the right side of the image. The background shows a stainless steel kitchen counter and a sink.

EAT WISELY

Well-being is growing in Iowa City with two community gardens and five edible landscapes.

Eating wisely is not a diet plan, it's a way of life in Blue Zones areas. Residents of Okinawa, Japan, have a smart strategy for maintaining a healthy weight. **Before meals they say "hara hachi bu," which means stop eating when you're 80 percent full.**

Studies show that cutting back on calories can lead to better health, longevity, and weight loss. Centenarians in Blue Zones areas eat a plant-packed diet with a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, and beans. Rich in disease-fighting nutrients, fava beans, black beans, soy beans, and lentils are the cornerstone of their diets.

Don't diet; eat wisely.

WHY EATING WISELY MATTERS

It is estimated that by 2030, 86 percent of the American population will be overweight or obese if current eating habits and exercise habits remain the same.¹⁶

Food is fuel, and what we eat impacts our productivity, too. A 2012 study revealed that **unhealthy eating is related to a 66 percent increased risk of loss of productivity.** Health-related employee productivity loss accounts for 77 percent of all productivity loss and costs employers up to three times more in annual health care expenses.¹⁷

In addition to looking and feeling better, **the benefits of healthy eating are numerous. In the U.S. estimated savings are \$114.5 billion per year (in 2012 dollars) in medical savings, increased productivity, and reductions in heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and osteoporotic hip fractures.**¹⁸ Poor diet is a major risk factor for these five health conditions, all of which reduce life expectancy. By making subtle but substantial changes to our food options, we can be healthier.

How Eating Wisely Impacts Our Community

People make more than 200 food decisions every day.¹⁹ Blue Zones Project helps people choose wisely. Iowa City implemented small changes and defaults in restaurants, worksites, grocery stores, and schools. For example: Restaurants created new, irresistible, good-for-you menu options. Grocery stores stocked their shelves with nutritious, tasty foods. Schools removed vending machines so kids aren't tempted by sugary snacks and sodas during the school day.

874 actions taken by organizations to support eating wisely

14,035 actions taken by individuals to eat wisely, like joining a Plant-Based Potluck Moai, adding healthy items to their grocery list, or growing a garden

13 cooking classes with 409 participants bringing healthier cooking home to their families

12 Plant-Based Potluck Moais with 298 participants

4 gardens: two community gardens and two school gardens



BY THE NUMBERS

Since the early 1900s plate sizes have grown from

9.5 INCHES
TO
12.5 INCHES¹⁹

We've increased how much we eat by

27%¹⁹



”

THE EDIBLE FOREST IS AN AMAZING ADDITION TO THE COMMUNITY. I LIKE TO THINK ABOUT KIDS PLAYING ON THE PLAYGROUND WHO MIGHT FEEL HUNGRY AND THE BEAUTY OF THEM BEING ABLE TO RUN OVER TO THE EDIBLE FOREST AND PICK AN APPLE OR SOME BERRIES TO EAT.

Sheri Deal
Resident
Iowa City

Community Gardens

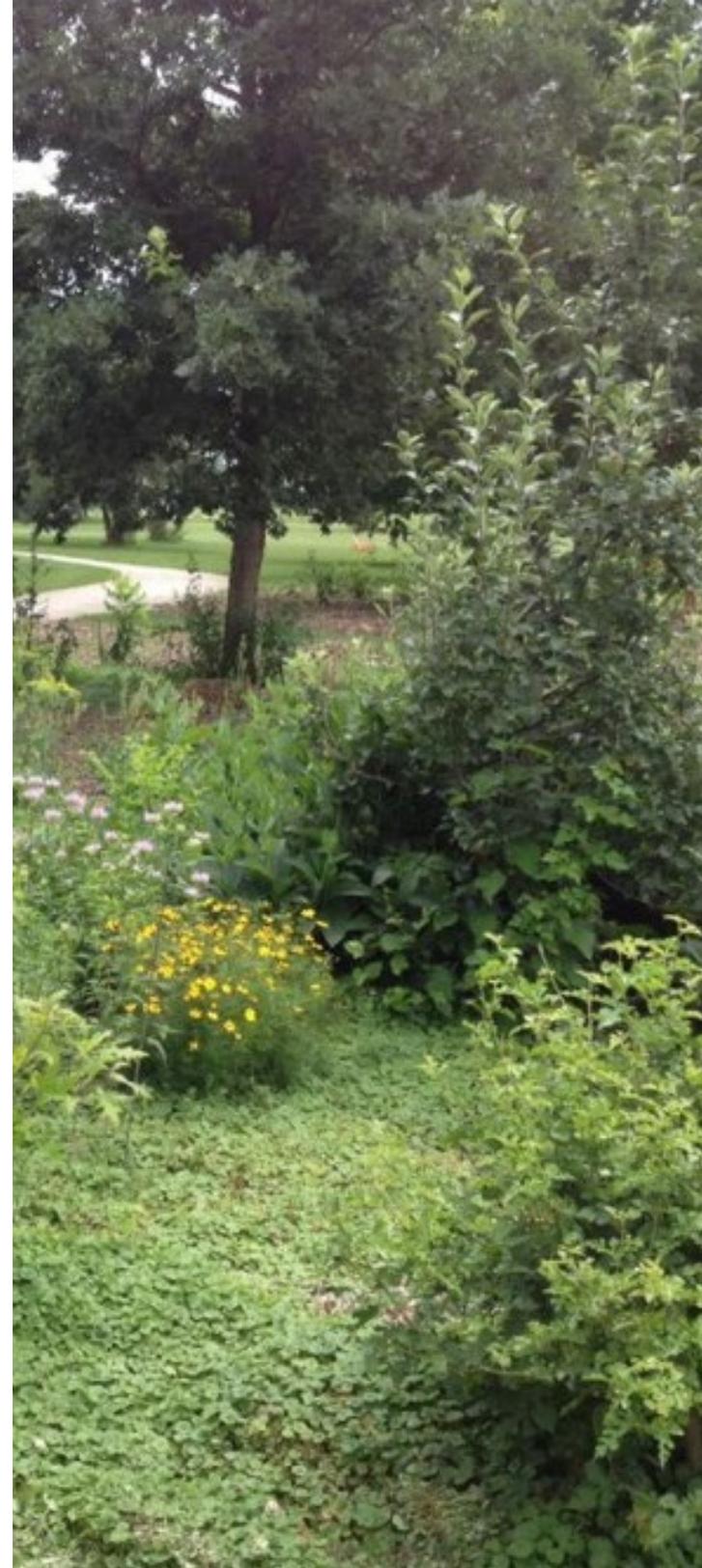
With two community gardens springing up each season, Iowa City is literally growing well-being. New gardens popped up in public parks and in neighborhoods. Gardens empower people to grow fresh, local food, and in many cases donate it to local food banks. Impressively, our community boasts five edible landscapes, totaling more than 77,622 square feet. These landscapes offer free food for community members to harvest.

Schools are taking part, too, with gardens at two Blue Zones Schools tended by students. The produce is used in nutrition education and some makes its way onto plates in the lunchroom as salads, sides, and entrees.

In the News

Nature promotes healthier lives and communities

The Gazette
12.08.15





COMMUNITY GARDENS



PEAS IN A POD

People who garden tend to eat more fruits and vegetables on a daily basis. In a survey of home and community gardeners in San Jose, California, participants doubled their vegetable intake and consumed the nationally recommended daily servings of vegetables. Another study from Denver, Colorado showed gardeners ate more fruits and vegetable than non-gardeners.²⁰



HOME IS WHERE THE GARDEN IS

An American Community Gardening Association report showed community gardens can increase home prices for residences near the garden as much as 9.4 percentage points within five years. The report also showed community gardens contribute to a reduction in violent and non-violent crime in the neighborhood and an overall increase in the feeling of safety.²¹



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Schools are taking part, too, with gardens tended by students. The produce is being used in nutrition education and some is even making its way onto plates in the lunchroom as salads, sides, and entrees.

Students who have access to school garden programs score significantly higher on science achievement tests than students who are taught by strictly traditional classroom methods.²²

ORGANIZATIONS EATING WISELY

Changes made to our restaurants, grocery stores, and schools can make a huge impact on the health and well-being of the community as a whole. By working together, we can make eating wisely second nature, not a chore.

Restaurants

Our community saw 23 restaurants complete actions to make healthy food choices easier

— things like offering half-size portions, creating new healthy entrees for adults and children, serving food on smaller plates, and serving healthier sides as the default option.

Our Blue Zones Restaurants are seeing noticeable business benefits. At NODO, customers enjoy a selection of whole-grain breads, several locally grown vegetables, and healthy, Blue Zones-inspired side items. In fact, 25 percent of NODO's customers opt for healthy side items instead of unhealthy options. When healthy choices are the default, it's easier for customers to make a healthy choice.

Local worksites are leveraging Blue Zones Restaurants for catering, which is a benefit to all parties.



BY THE NUMBERS

1,000 CALORIES
in a typical American entree in a restaurant.²³

2 EXTRA POUNDS
gained a year by eating one meal away from home a week.²⁴

5.5% INCREASE
in same-store sales at restaurants that increased their better-for-you/low-calorie servings between 2006 and 2011.²⁴

5.5% DECREASE
in sales at restaurants that did not increase their better-for-you/low-calorie servings.²⁴



Grocery Stores

Americans go to the grocery store more than twice a week. The actions we take to determine what we eat begin at the grocery store. Many grocery stores currently lead people to unhealthy foods in the way they are designed, the deals they promote, and the packaging of the food they sell.²⁵ Our community is taking the lead in taking the grocery store back.

60%

of the food we purchase is highly processed, fatty, salty or sugary.²⁶

Our community saw four grocery stores complete actions to make healthy food choices easier – things like sharing healthy recipes, offering cooking classes, ensuring water is available in checkout lanes, offering healthy foods on end caps and in special displays, and offering a Blue Zones checkout lane full of healthy options.

In 2014, the North Dodge Hy-Vee expanded its produce section by 22,000 square feet and experienced a 215 percent increase in produce sales over the following year. Additionally, the store now employs a full-time dietitian, who offers in-store tours and plant-based cooking classes. These offerings, which empower customers to make healthy choices, demonstrate how much the store cares about the well-being of our community.

In 2015, Bread Garden Market eliminated sugar-sweetened beverages from checkout-lane coolers and added nearly 30 feet to its produce section, providing more opportunities for customers to make healthy choices.

Actions Completed by 4 Grocery Stores

- 1 Sharing healthy recipes and offering cooking classes
- 2 Water made available in checkout lanes
- 3 Healthy food options on end caps
- 4 Blue Zones checkout lanes

”

BREAD GARDEN MARKET IS THRILLED TO HAVE ACHIEVED DESIGNATION AS A BLUE ZONES GROCERY STORE AND WE ARE EXCITED TO JOIN THE RANKS OF OTHER LIKE-MINDED LOCAL BUSINESSES AND ORGANIZATIONS. WE LOOK FORWARD TO BEING PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN OURSELVES AND ENRICHING OUR ALREADY VIBRANT COMMUNITY WITH HAPPY, HEALTHY RESIDENTS.

Frankie Schneckloth
Marketing and Creative Director
Bread Garden Market



Worksites

Seventy percent of Americans eat at their desks several times a week, which can lead to distracted, disengaged, and mindless overeating.²⁷

In Iowa City, 17 worksites completed actions to make healthy food choices easier.

Mercy increased the amount of healthy options in its vending machines and introduced Fresh Fruit Fridays — a program that served 5,500 servings of fresh fruit to employees for free in 2014. Likewise, Proctor & Gamble offers fresh fruit to employees at no cost.

Schools

With childhood obesity at 17 percent, there's never been a more important time to examine what students are eating at school.²⁸

The place they go to learn about history and science should be the place they go to learn about eating wisely as well.

Students who attend schools that sell foods with low nutrient density and sugar-sweetened beverages have a lower intake of fruits, vegetables, and milk at lunch and higher daily percentages of calories from total fat and saturated fat.²⁹

Our community saw six schools complete actions to make healthy food choices easier for students.

All vending machines were removed from schools prior to the 2015 school year with the exception of a Fresh and Healthy vending machine at the high school. Third- through sixth-grade students at Lincoln Elementary completed the four-week “Blue Zones Challenge.”

Over the course of the month, their consumption of daily servings of fruits and vegetables rose 53 percent, physical activity increased by 58 percent, consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages decreased by 18 percent, and screen time decreased 34 percent. This four-week program empowers students to take charge of their own health from a young age and develop healthy habits that last a lifetime.

Redesigning the school lunchroom is a simple and cost-effective way to nudge students into eating healthier without creating strict policies. Research by Brian Wansink of Cornell University found that **simple changes to the lunchroom design tripled salad sales, doubled fruit sales, doubled sales of healthy sandwiches, and reduced the purchase of ice cream.**¹⁹ By optimizing the school environment, students are nudged towards healthier choices.

Actions Completed by 17 Worksites

- 1 Healthy potlucks and worksite gardens
- 2 Improved cafeteria options
- 3 Healthier vending machine choices

Actions Completed by Six Schools

- 1 School gardens
- 2 Farm-to-school programs
- 3 Healthier vending machines
- 4 New policies for celebrating and fundraising with food
- 5 Redesigning lunchrooms



Outdoor dining brought neighbors together at 38 local restaurants and 2,643 people built strong relationships with new friends and neighbors in Walking Moais.

The world's longest-lived people in Blue Zones areas have always understood the power of social connectedness and putting their families first.

In Okinawa, "Moais" — groups of about five people who commit to each other for their whole lives — provide social connection and emotional and sometimes financial support in times of need. Moai members have the security of knowing there is always someone there for them.

Putting family first and investing time with loved ones can add up to six years to your life.³⁰ Having a sense of belonging is an important part of enjoying a long and healthy life. It doesn't matter which faith you belong to, **studies have shown that people who belong to a place of worship and attend four times a month live four to fourteen years longer than those who don't.**³¹

CONNECT



WHY CONNECTION MATTERS

Our connections to friends, family, and those around us are very powerful. They have the ability to shape our lives in more ways than we realize. Research shows that even your friends' friends' friends — people you don't even know — have the ability to affect your health, happiness, and behaviors.³²

How Connectedness Impacts our Community

Spending time with people who positively influence one another is crucial. In Iowa City, we embrace the power of social connections to bring citizens together through groups, clubs, and faith-based organizations. We also encourage social connections throughout the community with our new community gardens, at outdoor dining locales, and along new trails.

In September 2015, Iowa City introduced a rooftop-dining program to increase the vibrancy of downtown dining options. Outdoor dining is available at 38 sidewalk cafes, and this program will continue to promote an active streetscape, economic and social vitality, and pedestrian- and retail-friendly activity.

More than 2,643 people have joined 75 Walking Moais throughout the community, building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.



BY THE NUMBERS

90

Actions taken by organizations to build strong connections

7,341

Actions taken by individuals to connect, like designating regular family dinner nights, joining a Moai, or volunteering

75

Walking Moais with more than 2,643 participants

33

Purpose Moais with 190 participants

12

Plant-Based Potluck Moais with 298 participants

ORGANIZATIONS CONNECTING

There are many ways to promote connections in organizations throughout the community.

By providing these opportunities, everyone in the community feels like a part of something bigger.

Worksites

The digitalization of the work day has done wonders for productivity but not much for social connectivity.

Americans change jobs more often than ever before, and working from home or in isolated conditions can further a lack of socialization among coworkers and peers.

Our community saw 17 worksites complete actions to help employees connect and boost social connections, including things like “lunch with a co-worker” programs, flexible work schedules, offering strengths assessments, and implementing Moais.

Schools

Students will tell you that they’re connected with their classmates, but, they mean that they’re connected by their cell phones, which children receive at the age of six, on average.³³

To bolster real, human interaction, Iowa City got students to plug in differently. Schools embraced connecting students to the world around them by establishing the **Legacy Project**, a program that encourages students to interact with and share stories with older adults.

Restaurants

Eating together fosters togetherness in all kinds of families, even those that are the size of whole communities.

There is no better opportunity to connect than around a dining table. Outdoor dining options are available at several Blue Zones Restaurants, providing more opportunities for people to connect deeply with their neighbors and community while enjoying a healthy meal outside.

”

WORKING THROUGH BLUE ZONES PROJECT HELPED US RECOGNIZE AND CELEBRATE OUR ONGOING EFFORTS AND IDENTIFY ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE AND ENHANCE A HEALTHY WORKPLACE. ANYTHING WE CAN DO AS AN EMPLOYER TO HELP OUR EMPLOYEES AND FAMILIES BECOME HEALTHIER IS A BENEFIT WE’RE EXCITED TO BE A PART OF.

Sue Freeman
Senior VP of Human Resources
University of Iowa Community
Credit Union



FRIENDS ALWAYS SHARE

Friends provide more than good times, memories, and companionship — they also share health habits and other traits with one another. Did you know that if your friends are smokers, unhappy, or obese, you're more likely to adopt these same traits? You are twice as likely to be overweight if your three closest friends are overweight,³⁴ and inversely, you are 20 percent more likely to succeed at new behaviors if you do them with a buddy.³⁵



GOOD FRIENDS AND FAMILY MAKE EVERYTHING BETTER



EAT TOGETHER BETTER

Adolescents who eat dinner with their family are 15 percent less likely to become obese. Additionally, a report by the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse points out that teens who eat dinner with their families more than three times a week are less likely to do poorly in school.³⁷



SOCIAL WELL-BEING

The amount of time you spend socializing each day has a direct impact on your well-being. To have a good day, a person needs around six hours of socializing. So, get socializing!³⁶



DON'T GO IT ALONE

It's getting harder to be connected. In 2004, 25 percent of Americans felt they had no one to confide in. A lack of social connectedness leaves people vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and other anti-social behaviors.³⁸ Social isolation and feelings of loneliness can increase the chance of premature death by 14 percent—nearly double the risk of premature death from obesity.³⁹



CONGRATS, IOWA CITY!

A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

We did this together. By putting our personal and collective well-being first, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone.

Here's to making Iowa City one of the healthiest cities in the nation, where residents are living better, together.

APPENDIX

Designated Organizations

Blue Zones Grocery Stores

Bread Garden Market
East Hy-Vee
North Dodge Hy-Vee
Waterfront Hy-Vee

Blue Zones Schools

Grant Wood Elementary School
Horace Mann Elementary School
Lincoln Elementary School
Longfellow Elementary School
Shimek Elementary School
Twain Elementary School

Blue Zones Restaurants

Baroncini Ristorante
Bread Garden Market
Brix Cheese Shop & Wine Bar
Cactus
Cactus 2

Devotay
El Banditos
Fairgrounds Coffeehouse
Heirloom Salad Company — Downtown
Heirloom Salad Company — PBDB
High Ground Café
Hy-Vee Market Café
LEAF Kitchen
Mama's Deli
Mami's Authentic
Motley Cow Café
NODO
NODO — Downtown
Oasis Falafel
Pullman Diner
Share Wine Lounge & Small Plate Bistro
Trumpet Blossom Café

Blue Zones Worksites

ACT, Inc.
City of Iowa City — City Hall
Hills Bank and Trust Company
Iowa City Area Chamber of Commerce
Iowa City Senior Center
Johnson County, Iowa
Mercy Hospital
MidWestOne Bank
Oaknoll Retirement Residence
P&G Oral Care
Pearson
Procter & Gamble
Progressive Rehabilitation Associates — Mercy
Medical Plaza
Progressive Rehabilitation Associates —
Towncrest
University of Iowa
University of Iowa Foundation
Van Meter — Iowa City

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