

# BLUE ZONES PROJECT CEDAR RAPIDS

## Community Impact Report



# Table of Contents



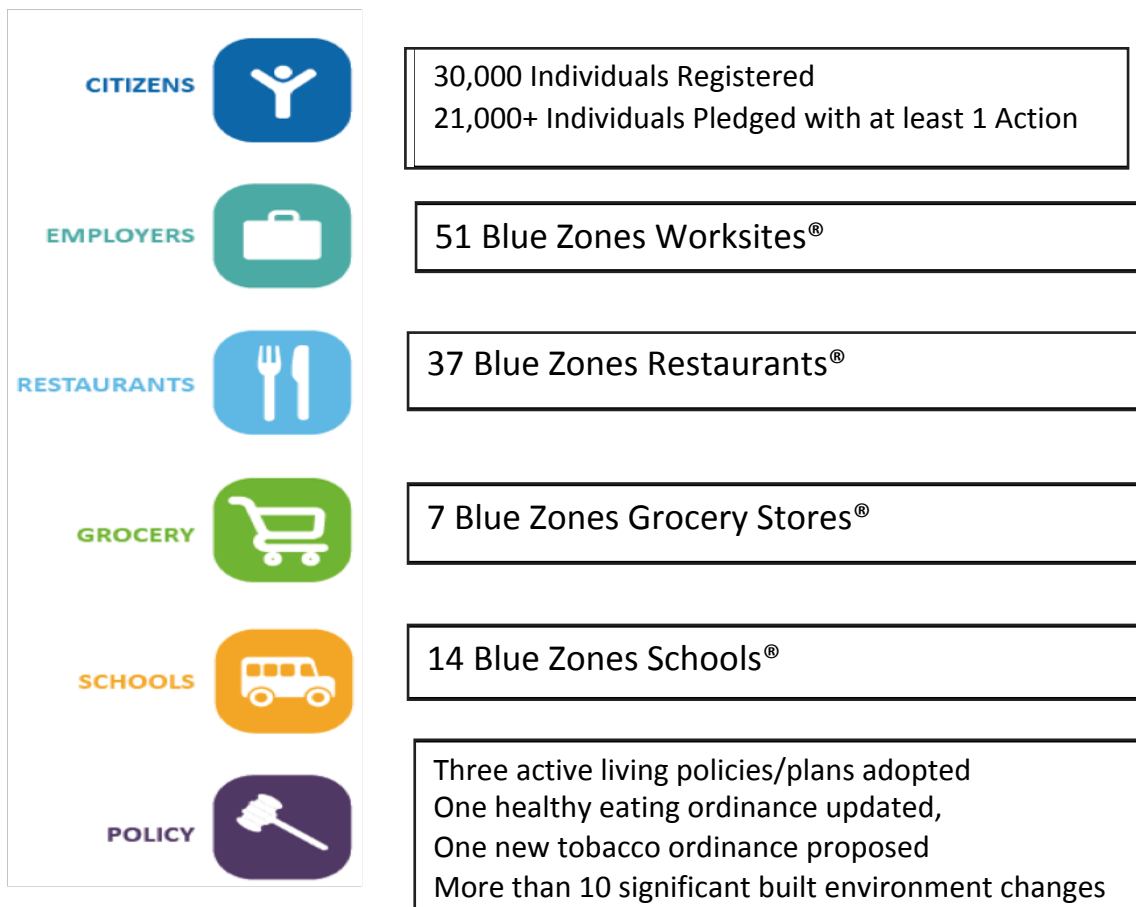
Summary of Accomplishments .....	3
Community Policy (Tobacco, Healthy Eating, Active Living) .....	4-11
Healthy Eating.....	4
Active Living.....	6
Tobacco.....	11
Schools .....	12
Worksites .....	16
Restaurants .....	21
Grocery Stores .....	23
Engagement .....	24
Organization Checklists.....	27
Healthy Eating.....	28
Purpose .....	29
Walking Moais .....	30
Volunteering .....	31
Summary .....	33

“Blue Zones Project is a proven model to improve health through smart eating and natural lifestyle practices. In Linn County, Blue Zones Project actually initiated a systems approach to introduce new health policies and programs by partnering with our schools, employers, restaurants, grocery stores and citizens. These policies and programs are sure to improve health and well-being of our residents. Linn County Public Health is proud to be a partner in this wholistic system approach.”

Pramod Dwivedi, Advisory Board, Director, Linn County Public Health

# Community Certification

The community is proud of our accomplishments since being selected as a Blue Zones Project® Demonstration Site in January 2013. As of October 13, 2015, more than 21,000 people have taken action to improve their health, 25% of schools, grocery stores, and locally owned restaurants have changed policies and programs. Fifteen of the top 20 worksites are improving their organization’s culture of well-being; and, an additional 50+ organizations have completed the Organization Checklist to take action that aligns with Power 9® Principles.



# Community Policy



The City of Cedar Rapids is a progressive community that leverages opportunities to improve infrastructure and programs that support a better quality of life for its residents and visitors. City Council members were supportive of Blue Zones Project efforts leading up to selection as a demonstration and throughout the operating period, aligning well-being initiatives to build on post-flood recovery efforts that began in 2008. Blue Zones Project served as a catalyst and model for cross-sector community change in the area of community policy, resulting in progress toward policy change in the areas of tobacco, healthy eating and active living, as well as numerous built environment projects that reflect changes in policy and the City's commitment to a healthier future.

## HEALTHY EATING

### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Urban Agriculture Ordinance (updated 2013):** Revised the current ordinance to allow food production a primary or secondary use on land regardless of zoning.
- **Food Environment Alliance (2014)**, a coalition of organizations dedicated to enhancing the food system in the Cedar Rapids area. The Alliance developed strong partnerships and is able to quickly identify and prioritize projects when resources come available and mobilize to take action on policy that creates barriers to healthy eating. Moving forward, the Food Environment Alliance will align with the strategic plan of the Linn County Food Systems Council.
- **SNAP/WIC at Farmer's Market (2014):** Statewide partnership developed to increase use of State Nutrition Assistance Program at Cedar Rapids Farmer's Markets. One funding application awarded, another in process.
- **Urban Greening:** Coe College design developed to include public edible landscaping, urban orchard, and gardens that will be incorporated into dining services.
- **Hoop House:** Identifying and implementing methods for extending the growing season by working with the City to address land use policies that restrict hoop houses.
- **Community Gardens:** 325 City-owned plots continue to be leased at capacity for food production purposes in 2015 (up from 317 leased in 2014)

### PROGRAMS

**Fresh Revolution (2014):** As a result of changes in the Urban Agriculture Ordinance, approximately 20 acres were harvested in 2014 to donate food to local food pantries in a farmer's market-type format. An estimated 29,564 pounds of food was distributed, valued at \$52,000. In 2015 the project expanded, coordinating growing across organizations to improve ease of growing, harvesting and distribution. Feed Iowa First, a Food Environment Alliance partner, secured an old school bus, which was retrofitted to carry fresh vegetables to food pantry locations and food desert areas, providing free vegetables to underserved families. In 2015, Feed Iowa First farmed 17 acres of urban land for food production, up from only 5 acres in 2012, partly due to the changes in the Urban Agriculture Ordinance and partly due to an increased number of partners involved with the project, including Blue Zones Worksites® and other organizations.

**Farmer’s Market “So You Think You Can Cook” Event (2015):** An addition to the regular cooking demonstrations at the Downtown Farmer’s Market this year showcased a cooking competition where teams recruited from the community prepared Blue Zones® Inspired dishes and were judged by local celebrities. The winning team included a Hy-Vee chef and his story was circulated widely throughout local Hy-Vee stores. The intent of the program focused on the pillar of learning opportunities with the goal of inspiring purchase of produce at the Farmer’s Market and using it to create plant-based meals.

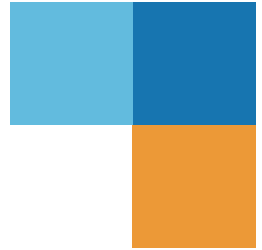


“The Blue Zones inspired event “So You Think You Can Cook” cook-off at the Downtown’s Farmers Market was fun a great reminder of the importance of incorporating plenty of fresh vegetables in our diet. The Blue Zones recipe, Honey Soy Vegetable Stirfry, was fast, easy to make, appealing to the eye and delicious! I’ll definitely make it again”

- Jade DeLang Hart, So You Think You Can Cook Participant

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

- **Urban Agriculture Toolkit (2014)** – A partnership with Iowa State University’s Community Design Lab provided the community with guidance and technical expertise for urban agriculture. Following Mark Winne’s visit to Cedar Rapids in September 2013, a group of organizations focused on the food environment began meeting together to form the Food Environment Alliance. The Alliance helped prioritize five short-intermediate term projects to enhance goals around increasing access, visibility and learning opportunities: Urban Orchard (Noelridge), Hoop House (Horizons), Urban Farm Network (Feed Iowa First), Public Edible Landscaping (Coe College), Community Kitchens (Horizons).
- **Urban Orchard (2015)** – An urban greening project initiated by Blue Zones Project Cedar Rapids and led by high school students from IowaBIG\* to design and install an urban fruit orchard at Noelridge Park concluded with tree plantings in the park in honor of Arbor Day on Friday, April 24. The year-long project involved the Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, City of Cedar Rapids\*, ISU Community Design Lab\*, Trees Forever, and Hughes Nursery. Students worked with the partner organizations and professional design consultants with a goal of creating an urban orchard for Noelridge Park that uses a variety of hardy, disease resistant fruit trees. Trees such as apple, pear, plum and cherry were donated for the project. This is the first urban orchard planted in the city park system. Students from Harding Middle School also assisted in planting trees, expanding the learning opportunities across schools and complimenting the 18 Cedar Rapids schools with onsite gardens (eight of which were established with the assistance of Blue Zones Project).



“The urban orchard is an important addition to Noelridge Park. Supporting local food production and watching as the kids connect to nature and gardening has been rewarding for all of the partner organizations.”  
- Daniel Gibbins,  
Parks Superintendent.

## ACTIVE LIVING

### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Comprehensive Trails Plan (2013):** Cedar Rapids’ comprehensive trails plan was adopted in 2013, emphasizing connectivity and active transportation. As a result, each year, the miles of trail
- **Complete Streets Policy (2014):** Numerous locations slated for upcoming built environment changes are already tracking pedestrian and bike traffics to collect baselines for increases in active transportation.
- **Street Design Guidelines (2014):** A leader in the state, Cedar Rapids updated the SUDAS guidelines to incorporate key complete streets principles into street design considerations. The guidelines developed are now being considered by other communities for implementation to create a more walkable, livable Iowa.
- **EnvisionCR Comprehensive Plan (2015):** EnvisionCR is the result of a year-long planning process which brought together stakeholders from throughout the community. Public input from this process strongly supported goals for the community which relate to the Blue Zones initiative, including complete streets, walkable neighborhoods, bike-able roads, placemaking, and sustainability. The plan, which will be reviewed and updated annually, lays out 97 initiatives that will be completed in the short, medium and long term to update city policies and help Cedar Rapids lead.

- **Sidewalk Infill (2015):** The City has identified gaps in the sidewalk system as a major barrier to walkable neighborhoods, and is working hard to close these gaps. The Public Works department has set a goal to install 2,600 lineal feet (approximately 1/2 mile) of new sidewalk per year. All streets touched by the Paving for Progress program will be evaluated with the City’s Complete Streets policy to see what opportunities exist to fill these gaps in the pedestrian network and provide safe and designated walking areas for residents. Additionally the City requires sidewalks of all new roads, and all of all new development within the City, including redevelopment of existing properties. These policies ensure that as the community continues to change and grow, remaining gaps in the sidewalk network will be closed.
- **Paving for Progress (2015)** – Paving for Progress is the City’s 10-year comprehensive program to repair and reconstruct public streets, funded by the Local Option Sales Tax which runs through June of 2024. While the program is focused on the maintenance and rehabilitation of roadways, improvements are also supported by the City’s Complete Streets Policy. The Complete Streets policy calls for engineering and transportation planners to automatically consider adding designs that support walkability and connectivity. The policy ensures staff are considering all possible ways to provide for the safe, efficient, and economic transportation of all modes of travel and offers a framework for these elements, while providing flexibility to complement each neighborhood’s unique characteristic and need.
- **Public Transportation (2015):** Increase in public transportation with new Ground Transportation Center and commissioned fixed route transit study with intent to develop a strategic action plan to increase public transportation in Q4 2015.

## PROGRAMS

- **Concrete Connections (3rd Street Walkability/Placemaking):** Dan Burden’s visit to Cedar Rapids in September 2013 highlighted 3rd Street as an opportunity for place making. Now termed the Downtown District’s “signature street”, it offers a variety of arts, culture and entertainment opportunities, boasting everything from a full service hotel, community theatre, year round market with teaching kitchen, and numerous restaurants and boutique-style shops. The Concrete Connections project invited organizations involved with Blue Zones Project to share their commitment to well-being by designing and painting artwork that aligned with the Power 9® principles at each intersection from 1st Avenue SE to 12th Avenue SE. Each of the principles is represented in the two-mile loop that encourages people to walk or bike the signature street. The painting event was followed up with a Scavenger Hunt, which kicked off during the Healthiest State Walk in October 2015, and encouraged individuals and families to walk the route to explore the Power 9 principles and vote for their favorite design.



“It’s a great neighborhood to have this kind of project because it’s so walkable and there’s a lot to see and something’s always changing down here. It should really help people realize how walk friendly the area is. I started a few blocks away and then saw another (painting) across the street so I just kept walking to see all them.”

*Terry Rogers, Cedar Rapids Resident*



## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

### **Project: 76th Ave SW-Prairie Community School Improvement (SRTS)**

**Limits:** Kirkwood Blvd to Prairie Crest Elementary

**Description:** Features included-Sidewalk on the south side of 76th Ave SW between Kirkwood Blvd and Prairie Crest Elementary; HAWK Pedestrian Signal across from Prairie Heights Elementary; Traffic Calming median installed HAWK and entrance to Prairie Heights Elementary

*Before Photo:*



*After Photos:*





## Project: Prairie Drive NE- Mount Mercy University Sidewalk Project

**Limits:** Franklin Ave NE to 29th St NE

**Description:** Features included-Sidewalk on the north side of Prairie Dr NE; Sidewalk and ramp improvements for crossings from Regis Middle School to Franklin Ave NE and G Ave NE

*Before Photo:*



*After Photo:*



## Project: 3rd St SE Traffic Calming

**Limits:** 1st Ave SE to 8th Ave SE

**Description:** Features included lane reduction from 4-lanes to 2 lanes with bike lanes and center median from 1st Ave SE to 5th Ave SE; Bike Lanes and improved Pedestrian Crossing signage and markings from 5th Ave SE to 8th Ave SE; “Parklets” for outdoor seating and a bike corral near the intersection of 3rd Ave SE and 3rd St SE

*Before Photo:*



*After Photo:*



## Project: Downtown Bike Racks

**Limits:** Various Locations

**Description:** Features included-Wave style and U-style bike racks installed at various locations in the Downtown that facilitate easier active transportation to and from key locations

*Before Photo: La Cantina (102 2nd Ave SE)*



*After Photo: La Cantina (102 2nd Ave SE)*



## Project: Bever Ave SE

**Limits:** Phase I-Memorial Dr SE to 34th St SE; Phase II-3rd Ave SE to Memorial Dr SE

**Description:** Features included-Pavement Rehabilitation; Roadway narrowing in Phase I w/pedestrian bulb-outs and bike sharrows; Bike sharrows as part of Phase II.

*Before Photo:*



*After Photo:*



## Project: Boyson Rd NE (SRTS)

**Limits:** 0.25mi West of C Ave NE to East City Limits

**Description:** Features included-Pavement Rehabilitation; Vehicle Lane narrowing; Bike Sharrows from 0.25mi west of C Ave NE to approximately 500ft east of C Ave NE and Bike Lanes from 500ft east of C Ave NE to the East City Limits.

*Before Photo:*



*After Photo:*



## Project: 4th Ave SE

**Limits:** 5th St SE to 19th St SE

**Description:** Features included-One-Way to Two-Way Conversion; Pavement Rehabilitation; "Super Sharrows" (Bikes May Use Full Lane) from 8th St SE to 12th St SE; Bike Lanes from 5th St SE to 8th St SE.

*Before Photo:*



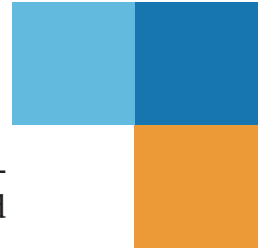
*After Photo:*



## Project: 3rd Ave SW/SE

**Limits:** 6th St SW to 3rd St SE

**Description:** Features included-One-Way to Two Way Conversion; Pavement Rehabilitation; Road Diet (3 travel lanes to 1 lane-each direction); Road Narrowing through painted islands and landscaping; Pedestrian Safety Zones; Protected Bike Lanes (1st in State of Iowa)



*Before Photo:*



*After Photo:*



## Project: Ellis Trail Extension

**Limits:** Edgewood Rd NW to Ellis Boat Harbor

**Description:** Features included-10ft wide asphalt trail; Green conflict areas; trail signage

*Before Photo:*



*After Photo:*



## Project: Edgewood Rd Trail Extension and Bridge

**Limits:** Prairie Valley Ct SW to 37th Ave SW

**Description:** Features included-10ft wide concrete trail; two lighted underpasses to cross US 30/Edgewood Rd off and on ramps; trail bridge over US 30

*Completed Project:*



## TOBACCO

- Nicotine Free Parks unanimously supported by Parks and Rec Commission
- Geonetric, A Blue Zones Worksite® built their new building completely tobacco free
- 28 new apartment complexes went smoke-free during the project period.

# Schools

There are three school districts serving Cedar Rapids families: Cedar Rapids Community School District, College Community School District, and Linn-Mar Community School District (also serves Blue Zones Community® of Marion, IA).

Cedar Rapids Community School District (CRCSD) is the largest of the three districts, serves the majority (16,000) of K-12 students and includes 4 high schools, 6 middle schools, and 21 elementary schools, for a total of 31 buildings spread throughout Cedar Rapids. College Community School District serves approximately 5,000 students from Linn, Benton and Johnson Counties; all buildings are located on one campus on the Southwest side of the city. More than 50% of students in each of the Prairie schools reside in Cedar Rapids. In addition, the Cedar Rapids Metro Catholic Education System (parochial) serves 2,214 students.

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- A District Wellness Council, formed by CRCSD in 2013, developed and strengthened policies to align with Blue Zones Project® School Pledge – supporting individual buildings in implementing best practices to improve student well-being. With a strong tobacco-free policy for all school property, and a policy prohibiting unhealthy food and beverage advertising, newly developed District Wellness Goals, supported by Wellness Operating Procedures, were approved by the Board of Education and implemented by District staff and representatives from each school building. Implementation of the following policies began in 2014 and will continue over the next three years:
  - Require that students are physically active during the majority of time in physical education class.
  - Ensure physical activity is not used for or withheld as a punishment
  - Ensure all snacks meet District Nutritional Guidelines for foods and beverages for schools, including vending, a la carte, snack lines, school stores, celebrations and fundraisers.
  - Discontinue using unhealthy foods for fundraisers.
  - Celebrate birthdays and other events involving food once a month only.
  - Discontinue using food/food coupons as rewards or incentives.
  - Implement elementary health education curriculum, including nutrition.
- Blue Zones Project is linked on the District’s website and referenced in building handbooks to improve consistency in messaging and help educate families on Blue Zones Project principles and research-based pledge actions.
- CRCSD administrative building became a Blue Zones Worksite®. The District is one of the largest employers in the community.
- Two high schools (one public and one parochial) made significant progress toward becoming Blue Zones Schools as a result of student-led efforts.

“We are grateful to have had Blue Zones to provide the impetus and tools we needed to implement our Wellness Policy!”

*Rhoda Shepherd, Power 9 Board*

*Former Director of Health Services, Cedar Rapids Community School District*

## PROGRAMS

### School Gardens

During the operating period, 18 new schools started school gardens. Eight of these gardens were started or expanded using container gardens provided by Blue Zones Project®. Many of the schools started garden clubs or incorporated nutrition education into the curriculum using their school garden.

### Walking School Bus

Twelve Cedar Rapids elementary schools started a walking school bus program during the project period. More than 700 students participated in a walking school bus during the 2013 and/or 2014 school year, walking an average of a ½ mile route to school at least weekly. A volunteer committee including parents, a City of Cedar Rapids traffic engineer, service club members and other non-profit organizations developed a comprehensive manual for implementation of the program, sharing their lessons learned with numerous Parent/Teacher Associations, community organizations and school personnel through presentations locally and statewide. More than 500 hours of volunteer time has been contributed to the Walking School Bus Programs each year.

## Garfield Elementary (Cedar Rapids Community School District):

---

### Designated March 16, 2015

- 2014 enrollment at Garfield was 186
- 69% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch
- Combined wellness and social committee addresses building student and staff well-being through healthy activities and cohesiveness
- Implemented Pick-a-better Snack to include nutrition in curriculum as well as a healthy snack cart program
- Celebrate student AND staff birthdays only once a month
- In addition to 20 minutes of recess, students participate in Physical Education twice a week, physical activity is integrated into the music education curriculum, brain breaks are provided throughout the day and enrichment clubs engage students in a variety of activities after school
- All students have recess before lunch
- Staff are trained in Zones of Regulation – a mindfulness program that is integrated into the curriculum at each grade level
- Started a Walking School Bus in 2013 and tripled participation in 2014

“Without Blue Zones Project, the time, effort and organization put into launching a lot of our programs would’ve taken much longer. It was a matter of having district level support and a strong structure, which Blue Zones Project provided. One of the biggest benefits (of being a Blue Zones School) is the snack program. 3 days a week the kids get fruits and vegetables that come in, so they get to taste it and learn about it and is available”

*Joy Long, Principal, Garfield Elementary, Cedar Rapids School District*

## Grant Elementary (Cedar Rapids Community School District):

---



### Designated February 25, 2015

- 2014 enrollment at Grant was 213; 61% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch
- One of three Cedar Rapids Schools implementing the Zach Johnson Kids on Course Program
- Redesigned lunchroom to add fun, age-appropriate signage using the school mascot to encourage healthy choices and moved white milk to the front of the cooler to make it easier to reach
- Lifestyle focused PE activities for all grades include bowling, juggling and cup-stacking; older grades do mini-golf and jump rope
- Intramurals, running club, soccer and dance team are offered before and after school, multiple days a week, to engage students in regular and frequent physical activity
- Students who arrive up to 20 minutes following the start of school are able to get a complete breakfast in their classroom
- Integrated wellness awards into monthly recognition celebration
- A container garden provided by Blue Zones Project was used to integrate nutrition education into the 5th grade science unit and get students/staff excited about starting a creating a garden in the Spring 2015

“Our garden has served many purposes since its creation, mainly tied to food education in & outside the classroom setting. Classroom teachers have been able to take their students out to the garden, our after school programs offer students a chance to join our Garden Clubs, where they get a chance to plant & pick veggies, and numerous parents joined us at school for our garden build day.”

*David Savino, Kids on Course Site Manager, Grant Elementary School*

## Johnson Elementary (Cedar Rapids Community School District):

---

### Designated February 25, 2015

- 2014 enrollment at Johnson was 223 students; 83% of students were eligible for free and reduced lunch
- In 2015, Johnson kicked off the school year as a STEAM Academy Magnet School.
- Provide 6 tasting lessons and 1 milk lesson that include movement, a book, a bingo card, fun food facts, and a tasting sample through Pick-a-better snack. Teachers report students are more willing to try new foods as a result of the program
- Once-a-month celebrations encourage healthy snacks for treats and has been going well with little resistance from parents
- The Arts Heighted Achievement Program (AHA!) provides a variety of free opportunities for students expand on their knowledge and experiences by learning something new and socially connecting with others
- Switched from All American Food fundraiser to Hy-Vee Coupon Books, magazine sales and a walk-a-thon, which also includes nutrition education
- Daily fruit and vegetable snack cart program implemented for all students K-5

## **Viola Gibson Elementary (Cedar Rapids Community School District):**

---



### **Designated June 4, 2014**

- 2014 enrollment at Gibson was 580; 22% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch
- Implemented many of the Blue Zones Project pledge actions prior to the adoption of District policy
- Eliminated food from all celebrations and replaced with fun activities
- Scheduled recess before lunch
- Integrated “Brain Breaks” throughout the day to encourage physical activity
- Implemented the MindUp curriculum to teach mindfulness in the classroom and has expanded the mindfulness program significantly
- Planted and maintained a school garden

## **Prairie Ridge Elementary (College Community School District):**

---

### **Designated May 7, 2015**

- 2015 enrollment at Prairie Ridge is 422
- College Community School District Policies support a tobacco-free campus, not using food as rewards, spending majority of time active in PE, and not using physical activity as punishment
- The Heart-to-Health Team was established as the building’s health-and-wellness council, which meets regularly to provide leadership in the promotion of physical, mental and spiritual wellness
- During Healthy Kids Week in April, nutrition education is integrated into the curriculum at all grade levels. Students take a healthy eating pledge and classrooms compete in a contest to see which can eat the most healthy foods
- Teachers in every grade use the Second Step curriculum to teach mindfulness to students through naming emotions, practicing empathy and focusing on regulating the body through breathing
- Students and staff are not allowed to eat/drink in undesignated areas or undesignated times of day, including hallways and classrooms
- 75% of Ridge students arrive at the District’s campus on the bus and then walk a .2 mile path to the building
- A self-serve fruit and veggie bar in the cafeteria provides multiple choices for students; a sample tray shows students an example of a healthy meal.

# Worksites

As of October 12, 2015, 139 Cedar Rapids worksites, representing 32,252 employees, have registered with the Blue Zones Project. Of those employees, 39% (or 12,440) have registered and, more importantly, 35% (or 11,196) have pledged and already taken at least one step toward improving their well-being. Of the registered worksites, 50 have completed the work to become Blue Zones Worksites which includes 15 of the community's Top 20 employers. These 50 worksites represent 23,795 employees, of whom 47% (or 11,096) have registered while 43% (or 10,126) have already taken action.



“The Gazette Company (TGC) became a Blue Zones Worksite in 2014. In the past 2 years alone, 89% of insured employees have participated in the company's robust Wellness Program. This includes having their biometrics checked and working with the on-site Wellness Coach to reach their wellness goals. About half of them have also participated in some of the nineteen team and independent TGC wellness events focusing on moving more, eating better and exploring ways to relax. In 2015 TGC also added a breakroom mini mart that provides fresh fruit and vegetables and healthier snack options. “

*Cathy Terukina, Power 9 Board  
Chief Administrative Officer, The Gazette Company*

Three specific strategies implemented by the Worksite Committee have been instrumental ongoing success with worksite engagement:

## **Worksite Summit**

Two worksite summits were conducted during the project period, inviting all registered worksites. Attendees were provided an overview of the worksite pledge as well as the ability to hear from other worksites that have successfully completed the pledge. Events were focused on education including strategies on how to effectively implement policy changes and how best to engage employees. Both events led to a spike in worksite designations due to increased knowledge and understanding of the process.

## **Worksite Roundtable**

A worksite roundtable was created for all designated worksites. During these quarterly meetings, special guests provide information related to topics and/or challenges specifically faced by worksite wellness teams, such as how to create a tobacco-free campus, or opportunities to increase employee community volunteerism. The Worksite Roundtable is also an opportunity for designated worksites to share best practices and ideas with each other. As a result of the roundtable meetings, more collaboration between worksite wellness teams throughout the community has occurred. Use of tools provided at the roundtable was effective at increasing employee engagement within worksites.

## **World Series Challenge**

In Fall 2014, 30 designated Worksites embraced a challenge to increase their organizations engagement percentages. The 30 worksites were split into 3 teams and pitted against one another to see who could increase their engagement the most. This challenge was the first set forth by the Worksite Engagement Round Table and provided an opportunity for our worksites to work together and create a bond. This month long challenge propelled engagement within the worksites and increased participation in worksite engagement strategies such as Walking Moais. More than anything it was the start of lasting relationships forged between our designated worksites.

- Worksite Engagement increased 8.1% during challenge (1,084 pledges)
- 15 of 30 worksites had over 50% engagement, another 6 had over 40% engagement



## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Kirkwood Community College

- Partnered with TransAmerica to sponsor a purpose workshop for employees
- Have a wellness committee and a policy to support its existence
- Provide several standing desks throughout the worksite that employees can utilize
- Stretching and movement is encouraged in all correspondence and prompts can be found throughout the campus – at fax machines, copy machines and where employees typically congregate
- Bike racks are available throughout the campus for both employees and students – additionally, there is a fitness center with showers free for employees to utilize
- Wireless headsets are available for employee use
- Well-being ideas/information/programs are promoted through meetings, email, intranet site, bathroom “newsletter”, Communique (Kirkwood’s newspaper) and posters throughout the campus
- Collaborated with the Hospitality Arts Program and offered two healthy cooking classes that had 86 participants
  - 32 attended in Fall 2014
  - 54 attended in Spring 2015
- Increased the number of employee and student participants in the Healthiest State Initiative’ walk (from 57 in 2013 to 83 in 2014)
- Established Walking Moais on campus
- Increased fitness class offerings
- Adopted an employee volunteerism policy to allow and encourage employees to volunteer, during normal business hours, to give back to the community in which Kirkwood serves.

**622 Employees**  
**45% Engagement**  
**Designated September 9, 2014**

### Toyota Financial Services

- Created a Wellness Committee, LiveWell with a mission to “help enrich lives, one healthy decision at a time”
- Implemented “Wellness Wednesdays” to remind, encourage and/or influence team members to take advantage of the various wellness initiatives being supported. Monthly themes are developed and promoted on these days
- Created a Hoops Event playing off the March Madness theme – encouraged team members to shoot hoops with a basketball game, participate in a Wii basketball shootout event, and/or hula hoop/jump rope during breaks and lunches. All participants were given a healthy snack – over 140 of them
- Weight Watchers is implemented on site – over 45 team members have participated
- Created, designed, printed and promoted walking routes for employees – both inside and outside

**600 Employees**  
**54% Engagement**  
**Designated January 22, 2015**

- Implemented Walking Moais In November 2014 and encouraged team members to walk with others they didn't already know. Walkers are given a "walking card" and as walks are completed, they can stop by the security desk to have their cards stamped. After completing 15 walks, walking cards can be put in the Walking Moai Prize Box to be eligible for great prizes, like FitBits, walking weights and resistance bands



Winter session had 51 team members participate and 313 completed walking cards  
 Spring session had 71 team members participate and 611 completed walking cards  
 Summer session had 105 team members; *number of completed cards is not yet available*

- In August 2015, a Couch to 5K program was launched to support the "Especially for You" Race on Sunday, October 4th – over 100 team members are participating
- Team IMPACT (Integrating Meaningful Partnerships Across Communities & Toyota) is a local Toyota Financial team that promotes volunteering within our community. Team members are incentivized to partake in volunteer events and encouraged to log all hours into their tracking software.

2013: 3,056 volunteer hours logged  
 2014: 4,408 volunteer hours logged  
 2015: 3,414 volunteer hours logged (Jan-Sept)

- Created a volunteer policy to encourage employee volunteer initiatives
- Held several Health & Wellness Fairs centered around the Blue Zones Project Power 9 Principles
- Successfully worked with their on-site cafeteria to implement healthier options
- Offer several employer-sponsored fitness events throughout the year with incentives for participation
- Stairway is right inside the door and very aesthetically appealing - most people choose to use the stairs as they would have to walk a hallway to get to the elevator.
- Standing desks and wireless headsets are available for employee use
- Created a "Mystery Lunch" program where employees sign up and are put together with 2 other employees for lunch – in an effort for them to meet new people and build relationships within the organization
- Benefits, which cover 100% of preventative care, are available to all full-time employees

## ESP International

- Biometric screenings and monthly coaching are offered to all full-time employees and their spouses
- Implemented monthly wellness challenges; some examples include:
  - Maintain Don't Gain
  - Sleep Challenge
  - Water Challenge
  - Bike to Work Week Promotion
  - New Fruit/Vegetable Challenge

**90 employees**  
**53% Engagement**  
**Designated February 7, 2014**

- A workout room and fitness classes are open to all employees and their significant others
- Walking and standing meetings are promoted and encouraged

- Created a 2-Pot Tomato Garden that employees can tend and snack on
- Each week the IT Department brings in a new Super Food – educating them on the benefits and having it available for employees to sample
- Created a Wellness Fridge which has healthier options and lower costs than the vending machine – and all proceeds go to their Charitable Foundation
- A Fitbit Charge HR was purchased for all their full-time employees with a couple Lunch and Learns dedicated to their use and benefits
- Implemented several wellness policies:
  - Drug, alcohol and tobacco-free worksite
  - Nutrition Policy
  - Lactation accommodations
- As a result of these efforts, in 2014, participants in their wellness program had the following changes:
  - 4 High Risk participants
    - 2 remain high risk
    - 2 improved to LOW risk
  - 22 Moderate Risk participants
    - 1 increased to high risk
    - 5 maintained moderate risk
  - 16 improved to LOW risk
  - 15 Low Risk participants
    - All 15 maintained LOW risk

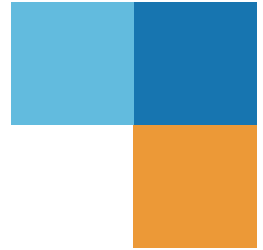


## Raining Rose

- Created a tobacco-free campus and offer smoking cessation classes
- Designated a lactation room and policy for nursing mothers
- Fitness center that is free and available to all employees
- Added healthier choices in the vending machines with red, yellow and green sticker codes to alert people to the healthier choices
- Working to change their longstanding tradition of decorating sugar cookies for the holidays – decorating ornaments instead
- Provide on-site health assessment/biometric screening
- Installed bike racks and promote/encourage employees to bike to work
- Hold a monthly “Chat & Chew” meeting which is designed to address total well-being: physical, financial, mental, and emotional.
- Facilitate volunteer hours and promote multiple charity events each year that employees can participate – either by donation, participation or volunteering
- Include a monthly wellness article featured in their employee newsletter “The Buzz”
- Turned their Blue Zones validation packet into a recruiting tool which showcases the benefits of being an employee at Raining Rose

**300 employees**  
**65% Engagement**  
**Designated October 31, 2014**

## GreatAmericaFinancial Services



**355 employees**  
**73% Engagement**  
**Designated September 3, 2014**

- A majority of the Leadership team participated in the Blue Zones Leadership training series, which was also added to new manager training material
- Several well-being policies in place including: Wellness Committee, Communication of Aggregate Data, Volunteering
- Lactation room for new mothers with a policy to support its use
- Four bike racks are available for employee use – one with cameras for additional safety and security
- Wireless headsets are available for employees
- A yearly Health & Wellness Fair brings awareness of the Blue Zones Power 9 Principles to employees and introduces them to suggestions on how to improve their health
- Posters and signs throughout the building to promote and encourage movement
- Several groups participated in Tennis Shoe Tuesdays – a ten week walking challenge
- Strict enforcement of their tobacco-free building policy Benefits – which cover preventative care at 100% - are offered to all employees and they provide on-site flu shots and biometric screening

# Restaurants



Cedar Rapids has 37 Blue Zones Restaurants which represent several different ethnicities, dining styles, and can be found in every quadrant of the city. In October 2015, all Blue Zones Restaurants came together to promote healthy menu options and highlight changes in making healthy choices easier during Blue Zones Restaurant Month.

Two strategies were implemented to increase awareness of healthy eating; Blue Zones Project partnered with the Cedar Rapids Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau to promote Restaurant Week in 2013 and 2014. During Blue Zones Restaurant Month in October 2015, all designated restaurants highlighted the availability of healthy Blue Zones menu options. Paid media, social media, and earned media were all contributing factors to the success of Restaurant Month.

## **Bistro on the River**

### **Designated October 8, 2014**

- All breads are made in-house and are all whole-grain
- Added several Blue Zones options to the menu and created a healthy Children's menu
- There is no fried food available
- Every customer is greeted with a glass of water upon arrival
- There are no free refills on sugar-sweetened beverages

"The value in being a Blue Zones Restaurant is really long-term rather than short-term, it's getting a lot of the people who are looking for an easy way to make healthy choices. It sends a very positive message overall"

*Brittany Hannah, Owner, Bistro on the River*

## **The Blue Strawberry Coffee Company**

### **Designated March 4, 2015**

- Created a Blue Zones menu which is prominently displayed by the register
- Started charging for refills on their sugar-sweetened beverages
- Produce sales are up 13% in the last year

## **Brewhemia**

### **Designated February 5, 2015**

- Created a Blue Zones menu
- A water station is available for all customers
- Fresh fruit is prominently displayed
- Added a bike rack for customers
- Participated in Concrete Connections

## **The Class Act**

### **Designated March 11, 2015**

- All customers receive a glass of water upon arrival
- Created, and added, Blue Zones options to their menu
- Incorporated a Wine @ Five for all hotel guests

## **Club Deli**

**Designated August 10, 2015**

- Added Blue Zones options to the menu
- Offer a fresh fruit bowl daily
- No salt shakers on table
- Bike racks are available for customers
- Offer an ongoing Blue Zones discount for worksites that frequent their establishment (Rockwell Collins, Rockwell Rec Center, Ghosh Center)



## **Coffee Emporium**

**Designated February 11, 2015**

- Added Blue Zones options to their menu
- Do not offer free refills on their sugar-sweetened beverages
- Started selling fresh fruit daily
- All bread is whole grain and purchased from Great Harvest Bread Company

“Since becoming a Blue Zones Restaurant we’ve made simple changes to help create a healthy food environment. We took the salt off the tables and added fruit cups to the menu, which has been one of my most successful item on the menu. I even have one customer who calls in each morning making sure we have a fruit cup made for him”

*Robin Morris, Owner of Coffee Emporium*

## **Coffeesmiths**

**Designated April 2, 2015**

- Created Blue Zones options for their menu
- Created a Children’s Menu with Blue Zones options
- No fried foods are available
- All condiments are served on the side
- Bike racks and outdoor seating on the premise

## **The Early Bird Cafe**

**Designated July 12, 2014**

- They switched all their breads to whole wheat
- Removed their fountain soda machine
- No fried foods available

“We made the choice to do all whole grain breads and wraps because of the Blue Zones Restaurant designation. Since becoming a Blue Zones designated restaurant I’m ordering 50 percent more fruit then I was prior to becoming a Blue Zones Restaurant”

*Brooke Fitzgerald, Top Chickadee, The Early Bird Cafe*

## **Great Harvest Bread Company**

**Designated July 15, 2015**

- All their breads are made there and are all whole-grain
- They do not have free refills on sugar-sweetened beverages

## **Lava Fusion**

**Designated July 23, 2015**

- All guests receive a glass of water upon arrival
- Salt shakers are not provided on tables
- Fruit is their default side option

# Grocery



There are seven Blue Zones Grocery Stores in Cedar Rapids that made positive changes designed to nudge customers into making healthier shopping choices to align with the Blue Zones Grocery Store pledge. These stores have taken the lead and been a positive force in educating the community about the Blue Zones Project and the importance of making healthier choices for themselves and their families.

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Each of the grocery stores listed below implemented the following strategies:

- Blue Zones shelf talkers are prominently displayed throughout the store
- Healthy options are available at the restaurant/deli area for both children and adults
- Bike racks are available for customers (and employees)
- Blue Zones Project and Healthy Dish Guidelines and recipes are frequently featured at one of their end caps
- 25% of breads in the bakery are whole grain
- Deli offers half-size sandwiches, brown bag lunches and smaller portions
- The produce section is large and prominent at the front of the store – healthy recipes and snack packs of fresh produce are readily available
- Stores have increased procurement of produce from local farmers; it is promoted heavily throughout the store

**Mount Vernon Road Hy-Vee**  
**Designated January 2, 2014**

**Oakland Road Hy-Vee**  
**Designated January 13, 2014**

**First Avenue Hy-Vee**  
**Designated January 17, 2014**

**Wilson Avenue Hy-Vee**  
**Designated February 12, 2014**

**Johnson Avenue Hy-Vee**  
**Designated February 8, 2014**

**Edgewood Road Hy-Vee**  
**Designated January 2, 2014**

**Collins Road Hy-Vee**  
**Designated January 7, 2014**

“The most meaningful change I have seen in the community is a more encouraging attitude among individuals to live healthy. It seems anywhere you go in Cedar Rapids, there is something encouraging the healthy choice – from grocery stores to restaurants to more health-focused community events and policies. It is exciting to see this attitude shift!”

*Melissa L. Walker, Power 9 Board  
Deputy Director, Area Substance Abuse Council*

# Engagement



The numbers tell the story. 21,667 citizens have completed at least one pledge action, 30,000 have registered. Through strategic collaborations, Blue Zones Project Cedar Rapids maintained a prominent and continuous presence the community. The following paragraphs and remaining sections provide examples of the incredible impact of these powerful partnerships and purposeful planning.

## KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Having an intentional continuous presence in the community to promote awareness and engagement required creative partnerships with existing community organizations and events. Blue Zones Project Cedar Rapids was most successful in building awareness and increasing individual engagement by integrating Blue Zones Project principles into current strategies designed to provide social engagement opportunities; this also resulted in greater sustainability because each event has established staff and planning committees who now make decisions while taking individual well-being into consideration. Examples of this strategy that were most effective (highest engagement as measured by completed pledge actions) are listed below:

### **Power 9 Passport**

To increase awareness at Health Fairs and other special events, Blue Zones Project Cedar Rapids developed and implemented Blue Zones-themed health fairs. At these events, vendors were paired up with a Power 9 Principle that closely aligned with what their organization represented. Each guest at the event was provided with a Power 9 Passport, encouraging them to explore each of the principles for living longer, better. This strategy provided more visibility for Blue Zones Project at health fairs while also encouraging guests to visit more booths in search of Passport punches. Organizations that offered the passport were highly successful in collecting personal pledges from guests. As an example, the Physicians' Clinics of Iowa (PCI) Health Fair in Spring 2014 resulted in 50 pledges, whereas the PCI Health Fair in Spring 2015 resulted in 150 pledges collected when utilizing the Blue Zones Passport. The most successful event was Rockwell Collins Health Fair engaging over 500 participants.

### **Rockwell Collins**

As the largest worksite in Cedar Rapids, Rockwell Collins provided a great opportunity to connect with many individuals with Blue Zones Project through different engagement strategies. Rockwell got off to a great start using email solicitations from senior leadership requesting employees take the Blue Zones Project personal pledge. Rockwell also hosted a very successful Purpose Workshop with 90 employees participating. As a result of this event, several internal Ambassadors were recruited to help promote well-being within the worksite. The Purpose Workshop sparked interest in the Blue Zones Project and was the inspiration for Four Purpose Moais with 23 participants and six Walking Moais with 53 participants. Over a 2-year period, Rockwell invited Blue Zones Project to participate in Health and Safety Fairs, employee orientations, and pledge drives where we were able to educate Rockwell employees about things they could do to live longer, better. Blue Zones Project attended 40 different Rockwell events resulting in 1,829 pledges collected and 15 Moais formed. Internal champions within Rockwell's wellness team, the Recreation Center, and Union leadership were instrumental to the success of Rockwell Collins achieving the 25% engagement that led to their designation as a Blue Zones Worksite.





## Large-Scale Annual Events

Freedom Festival and Tanager Place Summer Fest were two of the largest and most visible events and Back 2 School Bash and KGAN 2 Your Health Expo were examples of mid-size community events. Blue Zones Project worked closely with planning committees visibly incorporate Power 9 principles through strategic placement at these events. A few examples of the strategies include showing the overview video to a captive audience at Movie Night with the Kernels, providing activities for Kids Zones, playing Blue Zones Project messages over speaker systems, using the Power 9 Passport, and distributing Blue Zones information to visitors through partner organizations. For many events, Blue Zones Project conducted a prize drawing that also helped attract visitors and increase visibility. Participation in these key community events also led to enhanced partnerships with organizations such as Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation Department, Macaroni Kids, the Cedar Rapids Library, and the Cedar Rapids Kernels.



## Cedar Rapids Kernels

What better opportunity to incorporate Blue Zones principles than a ballpark with a captive audience out for an enjoyable evening of downshifting and family first! Through a partnership with the Cedar Rapids Kernels that resulted in completion of the Organization Checklist, the ballpark implemented “Walk to Healthy Eating” which is footprint markers on the pavement encouraging fans to check out the healthy food options at concession stands. As is common at most ballparks, the Kernels conduct a mascot race where fans can cheer for their favorite to win. A pizza slice has been a mainstay in the race as well to advertise a concession stand favorite. During Blue Zones Project Night at the Ballpark, the Blue Zones Banana and Grapes were also added to the race. It was a ton of fun, and of course, the Banana WON, prompting the announcer to remind patrons about the importance of eating with a plant slant to stay healthy and strong. The Kernels plan to continue to include the fruit in the race at future games. Seventh Inning Stretch also now includes a Blue Zones Project video of Mr. Shucks and the signature Blue Zones Fruits dancing and moving naturally!



## High Schools

Blue Zones Project Cedar Rapids worked with leadership groups throughout several high schools in Cedar Rapids, including Kennedy, Washington, Jefferson, and Xavier. These groups became Ambassadors for Blue Zones Project and led initiatives within their respective schools. Pledge drives were highly successful when utilizing a strategy with captive audiences, homeroom and student body messaging. Purpose Workshops were conducted at Kennedy and Jefferson, with a total of 88 students in attendance. High School strategies were most successful when an Ambassador, such as a teacher or nurse, led the student leadership group to partner with Blue Zones Project. In a few cases, students became community volunteers with Blue Zones Project as a result of their exposure through school.

## Meet Me at the Market

This program builds community through a unique opportunity to connect on a weekly basis from May through September. This community driven activity was inspired by Blue Zones Project and has flourished over the last 3 years.

- Over 250 participants every Thursday night for 20 weeks
- Free opportunities for Group Runs, Walks, Biking and Yoga
- Healthy cooking demonstrations offered through a new program, Chef at the Market, created by Blue Zones Project
- 7 percent increase in participation from 2013-2014



“The Blue Zones project has reminded me of the power of community when it comes to health and wellness. It is truly magical to be part of the buzz Thursday nights at Meet Me At The Market, to sit at a table and discuss purpose with people who were previously strangers at a Purpose Workshop. I’m also very inspired by the power of small, incremental changes and hearing the stories of how these have completely changed the lives of people in the community.”

*Sarah Young, Zing Coaching, Blue Zones Project Leadership Team*

## Media Coverage

In August of 2013, City of Cedar Rapids turned the town blue in featuring Blue Zones Project in their typically green, Our CR magazine.

Business focused articles were featured in Corridor Business Journal and Power 9 Principles were highlighted in Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation brochure encouraging Blue Zones related activities.

Cooking Classes, Purpose Workshops, Moai Kickoffs and other events were published on-line with Hooplanow.com, Convention and Visitor Bureau, Economic Alliance, Macaroni Kids and often featured in the Penny Saver weekly publication.

Local Channels CBS 2, ABC 9 and Fox 28 covered Cooking Events, Walking Moai Launches and special events like Concrete Connections and the Urban Orchard.



# ORGANIZATION CHECKLISTS

57 organizations have completed the Blue Zones Organization Checklist and are implementing well-being strategies to care for their staff, members and the community.

In September 2015, these organizations were invited to a Roundtable encouraging them to connect, share and grow their organizations. The Round Table was highly successful with 15 organizations represented. The group plans to continue this work on a quarterly basis.

**Connect** – With other like-minded organizations  
**Share** – Their stories, ideas and programs to improve well-being  
**Grow** – Their network and help promote one another

## Gloria Dei Lutheran

Gloria Dei Lutheran embraces Blue Zones Project principals for the community and their church members, hosting walking Moais, book clubs, wellness fairs, and cooking demonstrations. Gloria Dei particularly finds it important to influence children at a young age through whimsical skit presentations utilizing puppets and props during worship services. Skit content is focused on right tribe, belonging, healthy eating, and moving naturally. Their dedication to overall health and wellness is embraced by the entire church community and we are proud to call them a Blue Zones Supporting Organization!

- Host Special Events to facilitate new relationships
- Hosted plant-based cooking demonstration
- Enforced a tobacco-free campus
- Published Blue Zones Project communications on a regular basis
- Hosted Walking Moais
- Started a Book Club

## Lovely Lane United Methodist

Lovely Lane has much in store for their future for sustaining the Blue Zones Project Organization Checklist. With the already established programs, and the newly added programs inspired by Blue Zones Project, their members are in for a large variety of ways to be healthy and move naturally.

One of the programs Lovely Lane has adopted from Blue Zones are Walking Moais. They have also started a Children's Reading Moai, where story time takes place while the kids go on a group walk.

Aside from walking groups, Lovely Lane provides countless opportunities for their congregation to partake in Family First and Right Tribe activities. Health and Wholeness, Book club, Movie Night, Brunch for Newborns and Women's Day Out are just a few examples of fun, social activities the organizations puts on for its members.

Since completing the Blue Zones Project Organization Checklist, Lovely Lane has increased the importance of good health with guest speakers and a day dedicated to Blue Zones. Other small changes like providing healthy food options during events have helped make people more aware of the easy ways to take care of their bodies.

- Host Special Events to facilitate new relationships
- Started Walking Moai program with their youth
- Enforced a tobacco-free campus
- Published Blue Zones Project communications on a regular basis
- Created a Wellness Committee
- Started a Book Club
- Offer healthy options at meeting and events



“We’ve really made the people of the church aware of the Blue Zones Project and emphasized its values through many special events and programs. People really made an effort to eat healthy and exercise after being constantly reminded of the Blue Zones Project”

*-Nancy Miller, Lovely Lane United Methodist Church*



## HEALTHY EATING - Cooking Classes, Cooking Demonstrations, Potluck Moais

Cedar Rapids residents embraced opportunities to learn about plant-based cooking. Nearly 1200 individuals participated in a cooking class or demonstration. These opportunities offered both hands on experience for participants to work directly with cooking the food and participants to observe as an experienced chef went through the step-by-step process of cooking a Blue Zones inspired recipe.

Blue Zones Project Cedar Rapids coordinated with several organizations to offer healthy cooking classes and demonstrations. In partnership with NewBo City Market and Kirkwood Community College Culinary Arts program, monthly classes were offered where participants were able to do hands-on cooking of plant-based recipes from each of the five Blue Zones regions. We also partnered with local Hy-Vee dieticians to demonstrate how to prepare plant-based dishes using seasonal fruits and vegetables. Recipes included both traditional and non-traditional preparations to expand knowledge and experience or fresh plant use. Community members both young and old were impacted through special programs in collaboration with Theatre Cedar Rapids, Hy-Vee, and through our “Eat Green with Shrek” cooking classes, which coincided with the performance of Shrek in Fall 2014 and exposed more than 50 children to green vegetables in a fun, hands-on learning experience.



Volunteer chefs, dieticians, and community members were instrumental in helping orchestrate these events resulting in approximately 600 volunteer hours.



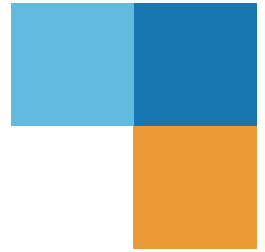
Local Chef, Daniel Dennis, volunteers his time and talents to teach Plant-Based cooking classes for Blue Zones Project®. He volunteers for many reasons and two in particular. Daniel loves to connect with people to share his enjoyment of cooking. He also loves to “teach people how to cook with healthy Blue Zones® ingredients”.

Daniel first became involved because of his family, who volunteers with Meet Me at the Market, a Blue Zones inspired event. They mentioned that Blue Zones Project was looking for someone to lead a cooking session for the community.

Not only has Chef Daniel volunteered his time, but also created several recipes that are now Blue Zones approved. He incorporates Power 9 principles into his daily life by putting his Family First with two little girls at home and incorporates a Plant Slant to his weekly menu eating primarily plant-based proteins. He also states that his sense of Purpose has driven his life. Once Chef Daniel started cooking he has had a passion to continue and share this passion with the community.



“Each month we provide healthy recipes for everyone to take home and make one thing from the list and bring into the office for the event. Everyone loves it because they get to try eating and making something healthy that they probably hadn’t tried previously and realize that it tastes good and was easy to make.” - *Dr. Matt Dietz*



## PURPOSE – Workshops and Moais

Purpose Workshops were held at a variety of locations and organizations in Cedar Rapids, such as high schools, hospitals, colleges, worksites, and a nature center. The range of organizations that hosted Purpose Workshops and formed Purpose Moais promoted the importance of purpose to a diverse audience of Cedar Rapids students, employees, and community members.

### Power 9 in Action

After attending a Blue Zones Purpose Workshop and joining a Purpose Moai, Cheryl Redd, decided to go back to school. Through the process of exploring her purpose, she rediscovered her passion for working with Veterans and began exploring how she could help them overcome issues related to post-traumatic stress disorders.

“Even though my goal was to take tools back to my students, I ended up benefitting from the process and learning a lot about myself. I’m really excited about the journey. It’s really neat to identify what I’m passionate about and to learn more about my passions. It gives me more energy and more motivation for setting goals for my future.”

*Cheryl Redd, Career Services Director, Mount Mercy University*

As an organizational leader, Pat Airy’s participation in a Purpose Workshop inspired her to help her employees improve their job satisfaction by participating in Purpose Moais she set up in the workplace. Goodwill of the Heartland went on to implement additional wellness policy and programs, which led to their designation as a Blue Zones Worksite.

“I participated in a Purpose Moai and found the experience to be very enlightening. It helped me to solidify my purpose to help others become the best version of themselves. One way that I was able to do this was by introducing the Purpose Moai to our employees at Goodwill of the Heartland. A group of our team members formed their own Purpose Moai and benefited greatly from that experience with their peers.”

*Pat Airy, President and CEO, Goodwill of the Heartland*

# WALKING MOAIS

The term “Walking Moai” became identifiable in Cedar Rapids by implementing different strategies to launch new groups and reinvigorate existing groups. Individuals who may have otherwise stayed at home or possibly walked on their own were energized by the Blue Zones Project Walking Moai concept. Through conversations, we know there are many more active Walking Moai groups in Cedar Rapids than we could possibly capture. But one thing is clear—individuals understand the concept of a Moai and the importance of group accountability.

Strategies included destination walks highlighting area attractions that were walkable from NewBo City Market, launching groups at local YMCA’s, launching Walking Moais within the downtown Skywalk system, and promoting groups to walk at Meet Me at the Market.

## Team Funny Movies

Team Funny Movies was a random group of strangers who met at a Walking Moai kickoff on the roof of the Cedar Rapids Public Library. Made up of 6 individuals living in different zip codes, born of different ethnicities, it appeared had nothing in common but their love of funny movies. This group has become everything and more a Moai is intended to be, family. Team Funny Movies has not only stayed in communication with each other, they meet every week. Over the past 3 years they have family dinner nights, gone camping together and taken family vacations with each other.



## Community Organizations

Walking is one of best ways to stay active and bring individuals from all walks of life together for one common purpose. Several groups and organizations in Cedar Rapids embraced the Walking Moai concept and started walking programs. Moving forward, the following organizations will continue to offer Walking Moais that meet regularly and are open to the public:

- Cedar Rapids Parks and Recreation
- Cedar Rapids Public Library
- Curves
- Friends of Cedar Lake
- Meet Me at the Market
- St. Mark’s United Methodist Church
- Sister’s Health Club



## Worksites

Worksites played an integral part in connecting their employees through Walking Moais. Over 3 years, approximately 150 worksite walking groups were formed, with over 1,000 participants.



Worksites implementing successful Moais each had a wellness program that got involved and wanted to partner with Blue Zones Project. Internal champions recruited leaders to run their 10-week programs and as additional incentive, each worksite provided a prize structure for participation.

“I Started the Walking Moai with a group from City Hall that meets each Tuesday. This provides a means to talk with coworkers outside of the work environment and enjoy a walk in our ever changing downtown area.”

*Heath Halverson, Walking Moai Leader, City of Cedar Rapids*

## Tennis Shoe Tuesdays

In 2015, Worksites were invited to participate in Tennis Shoe Tuesdays to promote worksite walking groups (Moais). Nine worksites participated and formed 26 teams, engaging 185 individuals. A total of 39,326 minutes were logged for the program.

## Downtown Skywalk Walking Moais

Cedar Rapids has a unique opportunity to walk all winter long in the downtown Skywalk system. In Winter 2015, Blue Zones Project and ParkCR promoted a walking program with four different days/walking times, including mornings, evenings, and lunch hour options. The program was advertised through local free advertising avenues and volunteers were recruited to lead the walks throughout the 10-week session. The program was highly successful, bringing together individuals with a passion for staying fit even during the cold months of winter. Together, there were 90 participants in the program. Moving forward, the Cedar Rapids Public Library has taken the initiative to continue the Skywalk Walking Moais.

# VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering not only improves individual well-being, but community volunteers contributions were critical to the success of Blue Zones Project in the community of Cedar Rapids. Covering a vast geographic area as well as maintaining and increasing awareness of Blue Zones Projects efforts and successes required a significant effort, much of which was undertaken by passionate advocates improving the quality of life where they live, work and play.



In addition to worksites that enhanced their internal volunteer programs, Blue Zones Project volunteers engaged in a variety of ways that leveraged their talents and passions around the Power 9 principles. Over the course of the project, volunteers contributed by serving on the

Advisory Board, Power 9 Board, and sector committees to help guide, coordinate and implement programs, planning and executing events and programs, data entry and office support.



Blue Zones Project also hosted a variety of interns from local and out-of-state colleges and universities. Many of these bright, young students had grown up in Cedar Rapids, but after volunteering with the Blue Zones Project for a summer, stated they had a new appreciation for what Cedar Rapids had to offer. Becoming engaged in their community inspired some to consider beginning their career in their home town.

## Faces of Volunteerism

In 2014, Lynn Stansbery, along with Blue Zones Project Leadership Team member, Jackie Fetter, were two of 50 people across the State of Iowa to receive the “Faces of Volunteerism” award.

Lynn began volunteering with Blue Zones Project before Cedar Rapids was chosen as a demonstration site. Her volunteer efforts and motivational story have made a positive impact on citizens in Cedar Rapids, across the State, and throughout the Nation.

Part of Lynn’s motivation to improve her well-being came from taking the Vitality Compass – an online questionnaire to help discover well-being age compared to chronological age using a series of lifestyle questions. When Lynn first took the questionnaire, it revealed that her 64 year old body was functioning more like that of an 81 year old. The shocking results, along with news from her doctor that she was obese, had high blood pressure and had developed diabetes, inspired Lynn to make a change and begin incorporating the Blue Zones Power 9 Principles into her life.

By gradually implementing changes such as walking and biking, eating with a plant slant, and finding her purpose, Lynn began to lose weight and regained her health so she no longer needed her diabetes medication. “The last time I took the Vitality Compass, it said my body was 54.9 years old!”

Through small changes and staying involved with the project to which she credits her success, Lynn has lost more than 105 pounds and added 26 years to her life in the last two years. Lynn has become the spokesperson for Blue Zones Project, volunteering her time to give numerous presentations and share her story in hopes of inspiring others to make a similar change.



“Blue Zones Project has given me a purpose – a reason to do what I do. Telling the community what Blue Zones Project is about makes me feel good because I know that what I’m doing is making me feel better, and that’s what I want to share with others. It helps remind me to be an example for people and not go back to how I used to be.”

*Lynn Stansbery, Community Volunteer*



# Summary



---

Blue Zones Project Cedar Rapids has inspired countless individuals to take steps toward a better quality of life and create a greater sense of well-being. Through individuals, organizations and policies, the culture is beginning to shift to support the community's vision of becoming the City of Five Seasons – the fifth season representing time to enjoy the other four. That time can be found in the years of life gained through our Blue Zones Community®.

“(In Cedar Rapids) The conversation surrounding wellness and well-being used to be one that was jarring and atypical. Today, it’s the community conversations that don’t include wellness and well-being that are atypical and incomplete.”

*Casey Prince, Power 9 Board, Executive Director, Theatre Cedar Rapids*