

Ukiah Blue Zones Project

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to report on the Ukiah Blue Zones Project Community Development Forum, which was held last Thursday, May 18th.

Let me back up a bit first. What is a Blue Zone?

The term "Blue Zone" came about when Belgian demographer Dr. Michel Poulain circled an area on a map with blue ink that included municipalities in Sardinia, Italy, which had a phenomenally high "Extreme Longevity Index."

In one village of 2,500 people Dr. Michel Poulain found seven centenarians. Compare that with the ratio for centenarians in the U.S., which is roughly one per 5,000. They had 14 times more centenarians than we do.

The 5 Blue Zones in the world are

- Sardinia, Italy
- Okinawa, Japan
- Loma Linda, USA
- Nicoya, Costa Rica
- Ikaria, Greece

Why do people in these Blue Zones live up to 12 extra years?

On Wikipedia's website a Venn diagram shows us 3 of the Blue Zones:

- Loma Linda, USA
- Sardinia, Italy
- Okinawa, Japan

They have the following in common:

- Family

- No Smoking
- Plant-based diet
- Constant moderate physical activity
- Social engagement
- Legumes

The Blue Zones Project was born out of National Geographic explorer Dan Buettner's eight-year examination of communities across the globe that lived the longest, and happily so.

With a team of medical researchers they uncovered nine common characteristics that help identify why people in these different geographic regions live an extra 10-12 years. They call it the Power9, and I will explain it shortly.

Buettner partnered with a company called Healthways in 2009 and together they help communities implement steps to make the healthy choice the easy choice. They also work with health insurances like Blue Shield.

Here is the list of the Power9.

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|-----------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1) Move | 2) Purpose | 3) Plant Slant |
| 4) 80% Rule | 6) Wine | 5) Downshift |
| 7) Family First | 8) Right Tribe | 9) Belong |

Well, why would city government want to invest money and time and partner with Healthways to create a healthy environment and make its citizens healthier?

You achieve

- lower health care costs
- increase productivity
- improve quality of life for residents
- cities become a more desirable place to live and work and for people to raise their families

Approximately 42 communities in the US are participating in the Blue Zones City Projects. Generally in a Blue Zones City Project

- 80% of people know about it due to media outreach
- 40% are engaged in the project

Usually the project spreads over 3-7 years.

What results might you get?

The Beach Cities Redondo Beach, Hermosa Beach and Manhattan Beach saw a drop of

- 14% in obesity and a
- decreased smoking rate of 30% across the entire community after just 2 years

Most of you know that I have worked as a sub-contractor for Public Health in the last 13 years. In those years we have accomplished a few things that improved residents' lives, but nothing will come close to the effect a Blue Zones City Project will have on our community should we ever decide to pursue it.

Here are a few words by Ukiah mayor Jim Brown.

"Give it a shot. What do you have to lose? All you would do is create a healthier community."

What could be the first step each council member could take?

- You could take the 5-minute True Vitality Test at <http://www.bluezones.com> and see how you personally score.
- You could see a TED Talk at www.bluezones.com
- You could visit www.healthways.com/bluezonesproject to learn more
- You could read the book *The Blue Zones Solutions* and learn how communities across the US have improved their residents' chance of living longer, happier lives.
- You could create a personal Blue Zone in your own home.
- Maybe you could see how you could improve the quality of life of your neighbors as well.
- You could contact Tiffany Gibson, who is the Ukiah Valley Medical Center Wellness Director, at 707-463-7523 or email her at gibsona@ah.org to find out how to become a Blue Zones Project City.
- You could contact Tony Buettner, Speaker & Senior VP of Blue Zones at 612-596-3600 or at tony@bluezones.com

Thank you for letting me report on the Ukiah Blue Zones Project.