



1

## Blue Zones

- Communities with high concentrations of people who live longer than average
- Examples:
  - Sardinia, Italy
  - Okinawa, Japan
  - Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica
  - Ikaria, Greece
  - Loma Linda, California



2

## Blue Zones: “Power 9” Lifestyle Habits

- **Move naturally:** environments encourage physical activity
- **Purpose:** “why I wake up in the morning”
- **Down shift:** regular relaxation that combats stress
- **80% rule:** eating until 80% full
- **Plant slant:** plant-heavy diet
- **Wine at 5:** moderate alcohol with dinner
- **Right tribe:** life-long friends with positive influence
- **Loved ones first:** close multi-generational families
- **Belong:** part of tight-knit (faith-based) community



3

## Blue Zones Assessment

- Utilizes Blue Zones principles to transform the health and well-being of cities and communities
- **Assessment** is the first of two phases of the Blue Zones program
- Assessment is a **9- to 12-month process**; involves gathering stakeholder input, data analysis, and policy review
- Assessment includes a **readiness evaluation** to participate in a potential subsequent “certification program”



4

## Blue Zones Certification Program

- **Certification** = 5 year+ transformation program that involves changes in people, places, and policies
- At least **60 communities** have participated in the Blue Zones certification program
- Certification program focuses on making changes within the **"Life Radius"** (worksites, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, faith-based and civic organizations, policy)



5

## Blue Zones Approach

- **Traditional approach** to improving health focuses on changing **individual behavior**
- Blue Zones approach takes a different approach of ***changing the surrounding environment*** to support and promote health
- For example, placement of healthy options on a restaurant menu, placement of healthy sale items at a grocery checkout line, and implementation of local policies may all help to ***nudge behavior in small positive ways***
- Added together, **small nudges** across a community can result in **big positive changes**



6

## Fort Worth, Texas Blue Zones Certification Experience

- Population: 927,720
- Gallup Well-Being Index moved from **#185** (out of 190) in 2014 to **#58** in 2017
  - Decrease in **smoking** by **31.1%**
  - Increase in regular **exercise** by **16.8%**
  - Increase in self-reported “**thriving**” by **14.3%**
  - Increase in **civic pride** by **8.8%**



7

## Fort Worth, Texas Blue Zones Certification Experience

- Communities with greatest **disparities** saw greatest improvements
- **134** Blue Zones approved **worksites**
- **66** Blue Zones approved **restaurants**
- **47** Blue Zones approved **schools**
- Estimated **\$268 million savings** (healthcare savings and improved workforce productivity)



8

# Questions?

Kim Saruwatari, MPH  
Director of Public Health  
[KSaruwatari@ruhealth.org](mailto:KSaruwatari@ruhealth.org)  
(951) 358-7036

Geoffrey Leung, MD, EdM  
Public Health Officer  
[g.leung@ruhealth.org](mailto:g.leung@ruhealth.org)  
(951) 358-5077

