Blue Zones: making healthy choices easier

Well-being initiative expands in Oregon

Klamath Tribal Health and Family Services employees are practicing the healthy strategies that they teach. The wellness committee there recently implemented strategies that include standing or walking meetings to encourage movement throughout the day; the installation of health-friendly equipment, including standing desks, wireless headsets and exercise balls; and the posting of upbeat messages throughout the offices. Employees also get 30 minutes of “wellness time” every day for activities such as working out in the weight room or walking on a nearby nature trail.

The clinic is not alone. In the Klamath Falls area, more than 60 worksites, schools, grocery stores, restaurants, faith-based groups and civic organizations are undertaking similar efforts. It’s all part of the Blue Zones Project, an initiative that helps communities make healthier choices easier for their residents.

Blue Zones Project is a nationally renowned well-being improvement initiative focused on helping communities change the places and spaces where people spend most of their time every day. The initiative believes that by transforming these settings to make healthy choices easier, communities can better inspire physical health, social connection and community vitality.

The Blue Zones Project approach is based on principles identified during an eight-year worldwide longevity study detailed in researcher Dan Buettner’s best-selling book *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People*.
Learning communities

High-quality out-of-school time linked to student success

With just 1,500 residents, Wheeler County in north-central Oregon is the least populated in the state. Four hours from Portland, it’s home to the John Day River, the state’s largest deposit of fossils, and three towns — the county seat of Fossil, and neighboring communities Mitchell and Spray.

What the area doesn’t have is a lot of activities for students. Mitchell and Spray, for example, have no scouting, no sports leagues, no faith-based activities outside of Sunday school. “Middle-school kids in particular have an absence of opportunities and are looking for other things to do,” says Phil Starkey, the superintendent of Spray School District, enrollment 56 students.

A partnership between The Oregon Community Foundation and The Ford Family Foundation is helping Wheeler County — and a host of schools and organizations throughout rural Oregon and Northern California — fill that critical gap with high-quality activities aimed at improving student success.

The K-12 Student Success: Out-of-School Time Initiative is supporting a wide slate of activities, from school-embedded programming to Boys and Girls Clubs activities to events targeted at helping students succeed in higher education.

In Wheeler County, the initiative supports activities designed to engage fourth- to eighth-graders, including math tutoring sessions, organized after-school games and an innovative robotics program.

“It’s important to fill time after school for this age group, to give them an outlet for something to do besides going home and doing chores,” Starkey says.

“We will get just about every boy and girl coming out to our activities,” says Starkey’s wife, Debbie, who oversees activities at sites in both Spray and Mitchell.

“Oh course,” she says with a laugh, “we’ve the only game in town.”

A wealth of educational research has highlighted a positive relationship between high-quality out-of-school time programs and student success.

For example, recent studies of 21st Century Community Learning Centers (a U.S. Department of Education program) have shown that school attendance, behavior and grade improvement improve for students participating in high-quality programs.

They also can boost social-emotional skills and improve academic performance, which in turn increases the likelihood of high school graduation.

“Middle school is a key transition time for kids,” says Belle Cantor, OCF’s program officer for education. “They start to make their own choices but they aren’t necessarily thinking long term. It’s also an area that no one pays a lot of attention to — there is a lot of programming for high school kids, but not for middle-schoolers.

In Grants Pass, the OST initiative is helping the long-established College Dream program expand its offerings, aimed at encouraging middle-schoolers to pursue higher education. Launched nearly 20 years ago, the nonprofit organization offers a wide-ranging menu of activities designed to build a college-bound mentality in Josephine County’s neediest students.

Core activities begin in the sixth grade, when participating students begin writing competitive scholarship applications, and continue throughout their schooling with college visits, academic support, summer employment opportunities, structured college savings accounts and internships.

“The Out-of-School Time Initiative is supporting us in engaging new middle school students,” says Quin Collins, program manager for College Dreams. “We are able to expand the opportunities.”

This summer, for example, the organization hosted an intensive two-day session with about 50 students interested in science and math careers. Also on the agenda was a three-day trip to an Oregon State University event for August’s total solar eclipse. “We took a busload of middle-schoolers up there, and they opened a dorm just for us and made it incredibly affordable,” Collins says.

Students aren’t the only ones who benefit from the initiative. Grantees are encouraged to participate in an ongoing learning community, where organization leaders and staff can learn from and with each other.

“The program is used as a quality-improvement tool,” Cantor explains. “It provides the structure and scaffolding so they have an opportunity to look at their program over time and make targeted improvements internally.”

In Grants Pass, Quin Collins is especially appreciative of the evaluation piece. “It seems like there has never been space for this conversation before,” she says. “It gave us an opportunity to be intentional and thoughtful about what things actually look like, and what it would take to improve our program further.”

The views expressed by the authors in bylined articles are not necessarily those of the Ford Family Foundation.
Tailgate produce parties in Siskiyou County, Calif., feature fresh goods donated by farmers through California’s “Donate, Don’t Dump” program. Clients can take home as much as they can use.

In Oregon, the numbers also reveal a troubling story. The state’s latest food insecurity rate of 16.1% reflects the sharpest increase in the country, even as the Oregon economy grew. That gives Oregon, the sixth-worst state ranking for food insecurity, and means that nearly one in every six Siskiyou County residents lives without knowing where the next meal is coming from. Communities step up

In an effort to combat the hunger problem, many community organizations are stepping up with comprehensive, innovative programs. Great Northern, for example, operates more than a half-dozen food-related programs that benefit Siskiyou County residents, from commodities distribution to nutritional cooking classes for adults.

The “tailgate produce parties” feature fresh goods donated by farmers through California’s “Donate, Don’t Dump” program. Clients can take home as much as they can use.

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Karla Chambers

Karla Chambers was 42 years old when she got a call from Ron Parker, then chairman of The Ford Family Foundation's board of directors. "He asked me to come talk to the board, and I actually turned him down," Chambers says. She was mom to four children and an owner of a whitewater tourism business investor. "You can't help but love the mission of this Foundation," Chambers says. “Rural Oregon is underserved, and the Foundation plays a lot of holes and serves a lot of needs.”

Chambers, whose family has farmed in Oregon for 133 years, says her service is all about stewardship. “Those of us who have spent our lives in forestry and agriculture, we think of ourselves as stewards,” she explains. “And good stewardship means leaving things better for the next generation. We still do a lot of that, but today we are also trying to support communities on social issues — improved high school graduation rates, early childhood development, awareness of child sexual abuse. We aren't afraid of tackling really hard problems, and with that, you have success and failures. We have a good dialogue on being okay with that.”

There's one practice Chambers hopes will never change. “We review the articles of incorporation regularly. To be a good steward, you always need to go back to the intent of the founders. Are we truly making progress? That's the beauty of the board that is there now, the foundation values. "As a Foundation, our role is to adapt and stay focused while still being effective. "I'm talking long term — there are little things you can do to help keep the wheels on, but as a Foundation, our role is to deal with the long-term things where we can have impact, and boy, that's challenging. It requires a very strategic look, and, especially with rural communities, you have to listen. It's not an easy job, and the difficulty is compounded by the high stakes for rural communities. "Vital rural communities — that's what it's all about," Ford says. "There has to be a sense of urgency. We can't be complacent. You have to reinvent yourself as an organization all the time, you can't sit still. If you sit on it, you slowly wither away. There's a time for us to be in one area, then a time to drop it and move to a different direction. That is hard work." Although Ford is retiring, there will still be a family member on the board of directors, as mandated by Foundation bylaws. "We think the role of family board members is not a right, it's an obligation," Ford says. "Candidates are nominated by family members and go through a lengthy application process with the quality of the board and its ability to move forward." What will he do with his free time? "I don't have any real hobbies — my golf game is horrible — but I expect to be very busy," he says. "Here in Roseburg, I'm working more on the community level than I did before because I have the time. The biggest thing is my time is my own now." And Ford looks forward to continuing his relationship with the Foundation. He won't be far — his new office is just a quarter mile away from the Foundation headquarters.

As a Foundation, we listen and we respect the people we deal with.

— Allyn Ford

Chambers has seen the board evolve in several significant directions. "I'm the first board chair who has never met Mr. Ford, for example," she says. "Now we have a whole group of staff and board members who have never met Mr. and Mrs. Ford. We have a phenomenal president in Anne [Kohlsch], and now two new board members, one of them a Ford family member [Allyn Ford].”

Chambers also notes a significant change of focus for the Foundation during her tenure on the board. "We used to fund pretty much every rural fire hall and community center. We still do a lot of that, but today we are also trying to support communities on social issues — improved high school graduation rates, early childhood development, awareness of child sexual abuse. We aren't afraid of tackling really hard problems, and with that, you have success and failures. We have a good dialogue on being okay with that.”

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Although Ford is retiring, there will still be a family member on the board of directors, as mandated by Foundation bylaws. “We think the role of family board members is not a right, it’s an obligation,” Ford says. “Candidates are nominated by family members and go through a lengthy application process with the board. The final decision is made by non-family board members, who recently chose Ford’s daughter, Allyson Ford, to fill his spot. “We have top-notch board members and the family representatives have to be positive contributors who can work in a collegial fashion with the rest of the board. I think Allyson is very capable.”

Ford remains active in a host of volunteer activities, including serving on the University of Oregon Board of Trustees and as an advisor to the school of forestry at Oregon State University. He says the timing is perfect for him to go off the board. “I am very comfortable with the quality of the board and their ability to move forward.” What will he do with his free time? “I don’t have any real hobbies — my golf game is horrible — but I expect to be very busy,” he says. “Here in Roseburg, I’m working more on the community level than I did before because I have the time. The biggest thing is my time is my own now.”

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For the children

Advocates volunteer to protect abused and neglected children in Douglas County

At the end of December 2016, the Douglas County foster care system reported 419 registered abused and neglected children. Two months later, there were 485 — an increase of more than one new foster child per day. According to state and federal regulations, all of these children should have a “court-appointed special advocate” or “CASA,” but they do not.

CASA is a qualified, compassionate adult who volunteers time to fight for and protect a child’s right to be safe, to be treated with respect, and to grow in the security of a safe, nurturing environment.

Susan Knight, executive director of the local CASA for the past 12 years, grew up in Douglas County, who last year retired as a vice president of Eddie Bauer, she returned to Oregon to assist her ailing parents. Bonnie Ford, the second wife of Kenneth Ford, recognized the value of Knight’s skillset and urged her to become involved in CASA. Under Knight’s direction, CASA thrived as an organization and served as a driver of cross-county collaboration.

CASA now works with three other organizations to better connect supports for children in foster care. The collaboration is known as Kids in Common. The goal is to concentrate attention on the children and families who need it most, to reduce trauma, and to improve outcomes.

Knight recently passed the CASA executive-director baton to Richelle Bryant, another woman born and raised in Douglas County, who last year jumped from a job overseas working with the U.S. military.

Both Knight and Bryant agree on the need for more CASA volunteers. Each CASA advocate is appointed special advocate” or federal regulations, all of these more than one new foster child per day.

CASA of Douglas County leads the effort to recruit, prepare and match volunteers with the county’s foster children.

At present, only half the children in the Douglas County foster care system have access to a CASA. More volunteers are needed, especially in rural areas.

CASA Volunteer

It’s very important for all children to have an adult they can count on. The littlest things, like sitting down to play a board game, can make such a big difference.

—Alisha Templeton

“CASA volunteers come from many backgrounds. All must be 21 years old, have an email account and access to the internet. No other special skills are required, beyond the training that CASA provides. See www.casaofdouglascounty.org/volunteer for more information.”

Both Knight and Bryant say, “It’s very important for all children to have an adult they can count on. The littlest things, like sitting down to play a board game, can make such a big difference.”

“The experience has opened my eyes to how much need there is — everywhere,” Templeton says. “It’s very important for all children to have an adult they can count on. The littlest things, like sitting down to play a board game, can make such a big difference.”

CASA of Douglas County

For the children

CASA Volunteer

Advocates volunteer to protect abused and neglected children in Douglas County

The efforts of creative business entrepreneurs hold great promise for the economic health of Oregon, particularly in rural communities, but they can’t do it without help. “It takes a community to raise an entrepreneur,” says Caroline Cummings, venture capitalist for the Oregon Regional Accelerator and Innovation Network organization.

RAIN serves entrepreneurs in the south Willamette Valley and mid-coast regions by providing access to resources and partners. “Our organization wraps services around these at-risk entrepreneurs so their chances of success increase and their chance of failure decrease,” says Cummings, a Eugene entrepreneur and angel investor for the Willamette Angels.

Founded by the Oregon Governor’s Regional Solutions network, Oregon RAIN is financially supported by the Oregon Legislature as well as by governments in the four counties it serves, and by businesses, donors and nonprofit foundations.

“An economic catalyst in a little town like ours, this is really something,” says Florence entrepreneur Carl Hulan, founder of LocalGrange, a farm-to-table app that allows customers to purchase goods directly from local farmers.

In coordination with the cities of Corvallis and Eugene, as well as communities throughout the region, Oregon RAIN partners with two “accelerators” that assist entrepreneurs in establishing viable companies that generate jobs, wealth and opportunities for the region. RAIN Corvallis is served by the Oregon State University Advantage Accelerator; the RAIN Eugene Accelerator is managed as a virtual nonprofit by the University of Oregon, the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce and the City of Eugene.

Oregon RAIN recently offered two Coastal Pre-Accelerator (Pre-X) programs for entrepreneurs in Florence and Lincoln County. The 12-week, bootcamp-style programs featured seminars, workshops, and mentoring on topics that included marketing and sales, competitive advantage, financials, and business modeling.

Top prize

One of the companies participating in the Pre-X program was Stoney River Sinkers. Its founder, Jesse Dolin, went on to pitch his company’s lead-free fishing sinkers at the Willamette Angels Conference this year, taking home a top cash prize.

Network provides resources, mentoring and support

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Education for Job Readiness

Grants support education after high school, focus on work preparation

It should come as no surprise that an integral part of the Eastern Linn County Education for Job Readiness (EDJR) program is education. After all, the goal of the initiative, led by business and education leaders in the greater Albany area and Chamber of Commerce, school districts and Linn-Benton Community College, is to prepare area students to fill the highly skilled, family-wage jobs in the region.

What is surprising is that much of the educational effort is showing that success can take many educational paths; a four-year college is not always required. “Part of this project is a marketing effort to educate the community, particularly students and their families and their teachers, that there are these amazing jobs in great companies,” says Bruce Clemetsen, vice president of student affairs at Linn-Benton.

“We want them to know that if you do well in high school and you go to community college, there is a job waiting for you. If you do well in high school and you go to community college and are a committed student, there is a job waiting for you that will let you buy a house, raise a family and be a part of the community.”

The pipeline project is just one of several programs around the state and soon in Siskiyou County, Calif., supported by The Ford Family Foundation’s Education for Job Readiness program. The program invests in efforts that support rural residents’ continued education after high school and prepares them for work.

“A four-year college degree is not the only path to employment following high school, and many students are finding success with technical training, apprenticeships, job skills programs and community college degrees,” says Denise Callahan, the foundation’s director for Postsecondary Success. “Career technical instruction meets the needs of the community and it’s an important part of what we do.”

The pipeline project began four years ago, as major manufacturers in the area looked into the future and realized that significant numbers of jobs were in danger of going unfilled. The Albany Chamber of Commerce acts as the connector for participating organizations, which include Linn-Benton, school districts and a host of businesses.

This year, the project is looking at significantly expanding its reach to students in the greater Albany area. The Chamber will add a second coordinator to focus on all four rural area school districts, help coordinate student tours of local businesses and other events, and identify businesses in eastern Linn County that may want to participate.

As many as 20 events are planned throughout the next school year, including plant tours and a Girls Explorer Camp on the college campus. Activities are designed to give kids a look at different jobs and information about the skills and education necessary to get them, as well as hands-on activities.

“You go on a tour, you see people making space station parts or running the robotics in a national frozen-food processing plant, then you come to the campus and you see the same equipment and learn how to do something you saw in the businesses,” Clemetsen explains.

The project team also plans to bring high school and middle school teachers on business and college tours. The activity, done with other teachers, generates new understanding of the possibilities for good jobs and the type of education required.

“We really try to wow them,” Clemetsen says. “Many teachers have not experienced manufacturing, so they can’t talk about career technical education or agriculture the way they can the four-year track. It expands their ability to talk to students about more options.”

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Linn-Benton Community College

Baker Technical Institute

Career technical instruction meets the needs of employers in Eastern Oregon

adjacent to Baker High School, the Baker Technical Institute announces its mission with a bold sign: "Next generation education for thriving communities."

The institute began four years ago with a problem and a vision. The problem was the same faced by many of Oregon’s and Northern California’s rural communities: an isolated workforce that did not have the skills for high-paying jobs, or the resources available to provide them. The vision was to create access to these skills in a way that would contribute to the economic vitality of the entire Eastern Oregon region.

The result was Baker Technical Institute, in partnership with the Baker School District, offers high school students and adult community members a full slate of career technical instruction that meets the needs of regional employers.

How did BTI get there? By being intentional about meeting the current and future needs of the community and its employers.

Filling the gap

“We put a handful of the visionaries in industry around us and ask them, ‘What is the next generation of jobs coming, and what are the skill sets in the workforce today, and what is the gap?’ Then we just sit and listen — that process basically gives us our marching orders,” explains Doug Dalton, BTI president.

BTI works with business leaders in industries all over Eastern Oregon to strategically develop curriculum in fields such as welding, engineering, agriculture, heavy equipment operation, health services, natural resources and construction.

“BTI is really creative in figuring out how to make the most of what they have,” says Denise Callahan, The Ford Family Foundation’s director of Postsecondary Success, “and the approach that they take in developing the program is very focused on the long term.”

With support from Caterpillar simulators, other businesses and organizations such as The Ford Family Foundation, BTI recently launched a new Heavy Equipment Operator career pathway. Dalton describes the program’s high-tech mobile simulators as “really next-generation education when it comes to heavy equipment training.”

A course began in September for students at Baker High School, and organizers plan to launch a series of classes for adult community members in late fall. The course is a combination of simulator training and time on the real equipment. A 30-foot trailer allows the simulators to travel wherever they are needed in the region.

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As the project brings these opportunities to rural communities, one of the biggest challenges is that will let you buy a house, raise a family and be a part of the community, particularly in the Tillamook Economic Development Council and the OSU Extension program.

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Strong partnerships

In rural communities, strong partnerships across sectors, like the one in Tillamook, are crucial to creating paths of opportunity for students.

Partnerships certainly are the operative phrase in Eastern Linn County Pipeline. The pipeline project began four years ago, as major manufacturers in the area looked into the future and realized that significant numbers of jobs were in danger of going unfilled. The Albany Chamber of Commerce acts as the connector for participating organizations, which include Linn-Benton, school districts and a host of businesses.

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**PROFILE**

**Planting seeds of service**

Ford Scholar earns Gerald Bruce award

Brandy O’Bannon loves living a life of service. “Working alongside friends, colleagues, donors and volunteers in my community has brought a tremendous amount of joy to my life,” says Brandy O’Bannon, a Ford Scholar from the class of 1994 — the very first class of Ford Scholars. Her strong work ethic, volunteerism and professional achievements earned O’Bannon the 2017 Gerald E. Bruce Community Service Award, presented annually to an outstanding Ford Family Scholarship alumnus.

“The selection committee was particularly impressed by Brandy’s long-term commitment to the causes she cares about,” says Bonnie Williams, manager of Scholar and Alumni Engagement at The Ford Family Foundation.

A lifelong Salem resident, O’Bannon says her parents set a great example of service. “They didn’t have a lot of financial resources to offer, but that never stopped them from giving what they had — whether that was a few dollars, a smile, lending a hand to a neighbor or friend in need,” she says, adding that she began volunteering at age 14.

She earned a bachelor of arts in history from Willamette University in 1998 and a master of business administration with a focus on nonprofit management in 2000. “I had the opportunity to meet Mr. Ford several times at conferences,” O’Bannon says, noting that his humbleness and work ethic inspired her. She still has letters he sent to the Ford Scholars. “His words of wisdom have been a guiding force in my life.”

After graduation, O’Bannon worked as a grant writer at a children’s museum before working in development for a private college preparatory school in Salem. **Keeping children safe**

In 2013, she joined Family Building Blocks, a nonprofit Relief Nursery that works to keep children safe and families together. She manages a staff of five and leads the major gifts and foundation gifts solicitation.

O’Bannon has served as a respite volunteer with Willamette Valley Hospice for five years, leads a local toy drive, and participates in several events to benefit the homeless population. **Perhaps closest to O’Bannon’s heart** is the Lord and Schryver Conservancy, a Salem nonprofit group that preserves and interprets historic gardens, a cause she’s been involved with since she was a teen. Elizabeth Lord and Edith Schryver were the first professional women landscape architects in the Northwest and designed more than 200 notable gardens during a career that spanned from the 1920s to the 1960s.

“Gardens can bring us peace, beauty and respite, and teach us lessons from the past we can apply to today,” she says.

She has chosen the Lord and Schryver Conservancy to receive the 5,000 grant from The Ford Family Foundation that comes with the Bruce Award. “Lord and Schryver were extremely talented and professional — and trailblazers in a male-dominated field,” O’Bannon says.

Mr. Ford would be proud of one of his first Ford Scholars. “The Ford Family Foundation and so many others have invested in me. I hope that my work honors this legacy,” O’Bannon says.

**Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who’ve Lived the Longest** by Dan Buettner. 320 pages. ©2010. If you have ever wondered why some people live a lot longer than others, read this book. In fascinating detail, Buettner describes five communities across the globe where the population lives significantly longer than the rest of the world. Then he tells you how your community can be one of them. See full review on the back cover.

**What to Do When Your Child Gets Sick** by Ann Kuklinski and Gloria Mayer. 181 pages. ©2008. A pair of registered nurses provide advice on managing more than 50 common childhood illnesses and health problems, including earaches, fever, vomiting and nosebleeds. The book describes the condition, what can be done at home, and when to call a healthcare provider. It’s for parents and caregivers of children from birth to 8 years of age.

**Blue Zones** is available on Kindle, audio CD, and Spanish translations available.

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Resources offer insights


**Blue Zones** by Dan Buettner. 320 pages. ©2010.

The only requirement is proof of age.

A pair of registered nurses provide advice on managing more than 50 common childhood illnesses and health problems, including earaches, fever, vomiting and nosebleeds. The book describes the condition, what can be done at home, and when to call a healthcare provider. It’s for parents and caregivers of children from birth to 8 years of age.

**An Introduction to Net- work Weaving** by June Holley. 150 pages. ©2013.

This spiral-bound guide is useful for individuals or groups interested in gaining basic skills to improve the effectiveness of their networks.

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A pair of registered nurses provide advice on managing more than 50 common childhood illnesses and health problems, including earaches, fever, vomiting and nosebleeds. The book describes the condition, what can be done at home, and when to call a healthcare provider. It’s for parents and caregivers of children from birth to 8 years of age.

**Blue Zones** by Dan Buettner. 320 pages. ©2010.

If you have ever wondered why some people live a lot longer than others, read this book. In fascinating detail, Buettner describes five communities across the globe where the population lives significantly longer than the rest of the world. Then he tells you how your community can be one of them. See full review on the back cover.
Blue Zones
Continued from page 1

Who’ve Lived the Longest (see review, page 16), Buettner con-
cludes that people inhabiting Blue Zones — pockets of long-
lived communities — share a set of common lifestyle characteristics that contribute to their longevity. He and his team of researchers brought these findings back to the United States, where they partnered with health solutions company Healthways to create Blue Zones Project.

In 2009, Blue Zones Project applied the longevity insights of the book in a pilot effort in Albert Lea, Minnesota, successfully raising life expectancy and lowering healthcare costs for city workers by 40 percent. Today, more than 40 communi-
ties around the country have adopted Blue Zones Project principles to improve the health of their residents. Four of those communities are right here in Oregon. The Blue Zones Project was brought to Oregon in 2014 by Cambia Health Foundation in support of Oregon Healthiest State, a privately led, publicly supported partnership aiming to create and sustain healthy environments that support healthy lifestyles.

Klamath Falls became Oregon’s first Blue Zones Project Demonstration Community in 2015. In April, three more areas were selected to participate in the transformative project: The Dalles, Grants Pass and the Umpqua region surrounding Roseburg.

Oregon Healthiest State
Oregon Healthiest State leads the community trans-
formation strategy, fundraising and expansion of the Blue Zones Project work in Oregon,” explains Sarah Foster, executive director of Oregon Healthiest State, “and Blue Zones Project is the implementation arm that provides the tools and expertise to help communities reach their goals.”

The Blue Zones Project Demo-
stration Community model is a community-led, cross-sector approach to making the healthy choice the easy choice in the places where people spend most of their time. The goal of these efforts is to inspire physical health, social connec-
tion and community vitality.

In Klamath Falls, for exam-
ple, the City Council passed an Urban Trails Master Plan, setting funding priorities to enhance walkability and bike-
ability for the next 20 years, meeting a community-identified goal.

“We’ve seen in Klamath Falls is a community really engaged and focused on its own health and well-being,” says Aar
On Patnode, executive director of Blue Zones Project Oregon. “They are making permanent and semi-permanent changes to spaces in the community so that an environment of health and well-being is created there to make the healthy choice easy for the community.”

These changes can be small, like restaurants making half-
size portions available, to large, such as changes in infrastruc-
ture policy to improve walk-
ability.

The three new Blue Zone Project communities began their work in June with a series of meetings to identify current health-related efforts and to establish community priorities. “Each community has different health needs, different inter-
est,” Patnode says. “One of the things I really enjoy is having conversations with individuals who represent different aspects and parts of a community to learn about what the health and well-being goals and op-
portunities really are. How can we support them? What do they want to try? What did they fail with but wish the outcome was different?”

“The process is designed to break down silos, and takes a holistic approach to what the community is already doing,” Foster says. “We want to know what is already in place so we can build on existing systems.”

Tony Swan and Jessie Hecota participate in the Blue Zones Walking School Bus event in Klamath Falls in 2016.

The Dalles: Policy changes to support health, wellness

n The Dalles, organizers hope Blue Zones Project will help them change policy related to initiatives already under way in the community health improvement plan. The Columbia Gorge region has had a lot of success with community engagement in creat-
ing programs that address issues such as food security, childhood obesity, affordable housing and tobacco use, says Paul Lindberg, collective health impact specialist for Columbia Gorge region.

It is Lindberg’s job, funded by Providence Hood River Hospital through the United Way, to bring groups together and help them find funding for common goals.

“We can create any number of programs and have an impact on people’s lives in the short term,” Lindberg says, “but we’ve come to realize that what we really need to do is change policies at all kinds of levels. That’s where we see Blue Zones Project coming in and really helping us.”

Take childhood obesity. Sev-
eral wellness initiatives are tack-
ing that community issue, includ-
ing development of public spaces encouraging exercise, community meals promoting healthy eating, and encouraging restaurants to offer smaller sizes of sugar-
sweetened beverages.

“So, we have programs op-
crating, but how do we codify that so it becomes a norm? Do we get the city to adopt a sugar-sweetened beverage tax or policy? That’s where we don’t have the bandwidth right now, and that’s the component where we see Blue Zones com-
ing in and really helping us.”

Complements
Other policy changes that would complement current ini-
tiatives include municipal rules for tobacco-free parks, remov-
ing barriers that right now limit schools from buying healthy food locally, and creating poli-
cies that increase the number of affordable housing units.

A Blue Zones Project design-
nation brings manpower — four full-time staff members are hired from participating commu-
nities to direct the work happen-
ning there — but the increased access to outside resources is equally as valuable, Lindberg says.

“For us, the benefit is not just the added staff. It’s the con-
nection to data and experts in
different areas of interest.

“I am convinced we can move far enough upstream to change conditions that are creating issues in our area,” Lindberg says, “and Blue Zones Project will help us do that.”

Living long
Continued from page 16

Different communities have different factors that contribute to longevity, and in his final chapter, “Your Personal Blue Zone,” Buettner suggests ways to identify what could work in your community.

The book has inspired the Blue Zones Project, a nationally renowned well-being improve-
ment initiative focused on helping communities change the places and spaces where people spend most of their time every day. (See page 1)

“The calculus of aging offers us two options,” he says. “We can live a shorter life with more years of disability, or we can live the longest possible life with the fewest bad years.”

“As my centenarian friends showed me, the choice is largely up to us.”

Student children participate in a foot race in The Dalles.
Long and healthy lives

Good habits and good communities promote longevity

Every few years, it seems a story pops up in the newspaper about the oldest man or woman in the world, and readers eagerly parse their words of wisdom for something they can apply to their own lives.

Well, longevity expert Dan Buettner, author of the book *The Blue Zones*, has done all the research for you. After a marathon research trip around the world, Buettner released a second edition of his book. *The Blue Zones: 9 Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who’ve Lived the Longest* is a completely updated version of the bestselling classic that launched community public initiatives around the country.

Buettner’s research is based on a simple principle: Living a long, healthy life is no accident. There’s no doubt that good genes play a role in how long — and how well — a person lives, but good habits and healthy communities are also integral components. Buettner came to that conclusion after he and a team of researchers traveled the world to find pockets of longevity, which he calls “Blue Zones.”

What they found by simply talking to people is that factors such as lifestyle, coping strategies, community and spirituality are just as important as diet and genetic propensities. Their stories come alive in the pages of Buettner’s book, and all of them add up to this: People live longer and healthier lives when they create the right community.

*Continued on page 15*