

# **Fallbrook Regional Health District**

## **Community Engagement:**

**Blue Zones®**



### ***What are Blue Zones?***

Dan Buettner is a National Geographic Fellow and multiple *New York Times* bestselling author. He has discovered five places in the world – dubbed “Blue Zones” – where people live the longest, and are healthiest: Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece, and Loma Linda, California.

The concept of “Blue Zones” grew out of the demographic work done by Gianni Pes and Michel Poulain outlined the *Journal of Experimental Gerontology*, identifying Sardinia as the region of the world with the highest concentration of male centenarians. Pes and Poulain drew concentric blue circles on the map highlighting these villages of extreme longevity and began to refer to this area inside the circle as the “Blue Zone.” Building on that demographic work, Dan pinpointed other longevity hotspots around the world and dubbed them “Blue Zones.” Blue Zones® is now a trademark of Blue Zones, LLC, and reflects the lifestyle and the environment of the world’s longest-lived people.

### What do these 5 places have in common?

A team of medical researchers, anthropologists, demographers, and epidemiologists found **9** evidence-based common denominators.



#### 1. Move Naturally

The world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons or join gyms. Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it. They grow gardens and don't have mechanical conveniences for house and yard work.

#### 2. Purpose

The Okinawans call it "Ikigai" and the Nicoyans call it "plan de vida;" for both it translates to "why I wake up in the morning." Knowing your sense of purpose is worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy

### 3. Down Shift

Even people in the Blue Zones experience stress. Stress leads to chronic inflammation, associated with every major age-related disease. What the world's longest-lived people have that we don't are routines to shed that stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors, Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap and Sardinians do happy hour.

### 4. 80% Rule

"Hara hachi bu" – the Okinawan, 2500-year old Confucian mantra said before meals reminds them to stop eating when their stomachs are 80 percent full. The 20% gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight or gaining it. People in the Blue Zones eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and then they don't eat any more the rest of the day.

### 5. Plant Slant

Beans, including fava, black, soy and lentils, are the cornerstone of most centenarian diets. Meat—mostly pork—is eaten on average only five times per month. Serving sizes are 3-4 oz., about the size of deck or cards.

### 6. Wine @ 5

People in all Blue Zones (except Adventists) drink alcohol moderately and regularly. Moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers. The trick is to drink 1-2 glasses per day (preferably Sardinian Cannonau wine), with friends and/or with food. And no, you can't save up all weekend and have 14 drinks on Saturday.

### 7. Belong

All but five of the 263 centenarians we interviewed belonged to some faith-based community. Denomination doesn't seem to matter. Research shows that attending faith-based services four times per month will add 4-14 years of life expectancy.

### 8. Loved Ones First

Successful centenarians in the Blue Zones put their families first. This means keeping aging parents and grandparents nearby or in the home (It lowers disease and mortality rates of children in the home too.). They commit to a life partner (which can add up to 3 years of life expectancy) and invest in their children with time and love (They'll be more likely to care for you when the time comes).

### 9. Right Tribe

The world's longest lived people chose—or were born into—social circles that supported healthy behaviors, Okinawans created "moais"—groups of five friends that committed to each other for life. Research from the Framingham Studies shows that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness are contagious. So the social networks of long-lived people have favorably shaped their health behaviors.



***Want to learn more about Blue Zones®?***

Sign up for the *Blue Zones*® free weekly e-mail:

<https://www.bluezones.com>

**Books by Dan Buettner:**

Dan's adventure – and all that he learned – is chronicled in his book ***The Blue Zones***, as well as the follow-up ***The Blue Zones Solution***. The books became New York Times best-sellers and drew worldwide media attention. The subsequent best-sellers ***Thrive*** and ***Blue Zones of Happiness*** takes a Blue Zones approach to solve another mystery: Why are the world's happiest places the happiest?

## Blue Zones Project®

A team that helps transform communities into thriving places to live, work, eat, and play.

### ***Who is the Blue Zones Team?***

A team of explorers, entrepreneurs, and outdoor enthusiasts who put their passions to work every day.

### ***What do they do?***

The *Blue Zones Project*® focuses on a “life radius,” or the area close to home where we spend 90 percent of our lives. In the Blue Zones Projects communities, we optimize:

- **The built environment:** Improving roads and transportation options, parks, and public spaces
- **Municipal policies and ordinances:** Promoting activity and discouraging junk food marketing and smoking
- **Restaurants, schools, grocery stores, faith-based organizations, and workplaces:** Building healthier options into the places people spend most of their time
- **Social networks:** Forming and nurturing social groups that support healthy habits
- **Habitat:** Helping people design homes that nudge them into eating less and moving more
- **Inner selves:** Encouraging people to reduce stress, find their purpose, and give back to the community

### **The 12 Pillars**

Taking the life radius approach, the Blue Zones Project communities focus on 12 “pillars” in 3 phases:

1. The first 3 pillars are areas in which city governments can make a difference: the built environment, food policy, and tobacco policy.
2. The next 6 pillars are places where people spend their day: employers, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, faith organizations, and home.
3. The last 3 pillars are programs for creating new social networks, getting people involved in volunteering, and helping them define a sense of purpose.

# LIFE RADIUS®

The area close to home where we spend 90 percent of our lives.

