



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BLUE ZONES PROJECT COMES TO FAYETTE COUNTY, BEGINS WITH SITE ASSESSMENT

Uniontown, PA – The Fayette Living Well Coalition strives to help improve health and quality of life for Fayette County. One way the coalition is seeking to meet its goal is by participating in the Blue Zones Project, a community well-being initiative designed to help residents lower their risks of illness and diseases so that they can live longer and enjoy a better quality of life.

Experts from the Blue Zones Project will visit Penn State Fayette, the Eberly Campus on Oct. 4 and 5 for a site assessment to determine the community's preparedness for the program.

Fayette Living Well Coalition Chairman Mike Quinn explained that the Blue Zones Project was inspired by National Geographic Fellow and New York Times best-selling author Dan Buettner, who identified five regions worldwide with higher-than-average concentrations of people living to the age of 100 or older.

Quinn said Buettner's research found "variations that allow segments of the population to live longer and healthier – diet, exercise, a sense of community, spirituality – there are nine parameters."

He explained the coalition was able to help bring the Blue Zones Project to Fayette County with some assistance from partner organizations and grant funding.

"Fayette Living Well Coalition was able to raise some funds from some of our partner organizations that are a part of the coalition, and we received a grant from the Chevron Foundation," he said. "Some of that fundraising is what's helping support this initial wellness community assessment."

Quinn said the assessment will be "a jam-packed two full days."

"We'll start with invited meetings with some of our key community stakeholders and organizations that might be able to help continue to support the Blue Zones Project moving forward," Quinn said. "We want to make them aware of what it is we're doing."

He said those organizations will include such entities as financial institutions and key employers in the area. The assessment also will feature one-to-one meetings and small focus groups with state and local representatives, school personnel and superintendents, faith-based groups, healthcare, and community engagement organizations and the media.

"We're really trying to get some focused, detailed input from these different sections of the community that all, in their own way, impact the community," Quinn said.

A keynote presentation by the Blue Zones Project team will be open to the public, and Quinn said it will be livestreamed, with opportunities for audio-visual participation. Discussion will include the strengths

and weaknesses in the county and offer input on “how can we, as a community, work together to improve the health and wellness of our citizens?”

According to a ShareCare community well-being index, Fayette County ranks 52nd of Pennsylvania’s 67 counties in wellness. Pennsylvania ranks 17th among the nation. In Fayette County, aspects of community wellness such as access to healthcare and resources, economic security, and housing and transportation rank well below the national average.

Quinn said the community assessment is a valuable tool toward figuring out how to change those numbers.

“The next step is to digest the analysis that the Blue Zones staff does when they receive all of our input,” he said. “It’s going to be a very exciting couple of days.”

Blue Zones Project® is a community-led well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to a city’s environment, policy, and social networks. Established in 2010, Blue Zones Project is inspired by Dan Buettner, a *National Geographic* Fellow and *New York Times* best-selling author who identified five regions of the world, or Blue Zones®, with the highest concentration of people living to 100 years or older. Blue Zones Project incorporates Buettner’s findings and works with cities to implement policies and programs that will move a community toward optimal health and well-being. Currently, 62 communities in nine states have joined Blue Zones Project, impacting more than 3 million Americans nationwide. The movement includes three beach cities in California; 15 cities in Iowa; Albert Lea, Minnesota; the city of Fort Worth; and communities in Southwest Florida, Hawaii, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Wisconsin. For more information, visit www.bluezonesproject.com.

To learn how you can participate in the upcoming Blue Zones Project Site Assessment, visit <https://go.bluezonesproject.com/fayetteco>.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.FayetteCountyPA.org.

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