



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE RESULTS ARE IN: BLUE ZONES PROJECT TEAM PRESENTS FAYETTE COUNTY ANALYSIS

Uniontown, PA – Representatives from the Blue Zones Project were back at Penn State Fayette, the Eberly Campus April 20-21, to present the results of a community assessment done last October.

The Blue Zones Project is well-being improvement initiative which evaluates communities through an evidence-based program based on research findings gathered from “blue zones” – places around the world where the general population tends to enjoy a high quality of life and extended longevity. The project’s goal is to help community members live longer, healthier lives.

The team evaluated Fayette County on a scale of 1 to 5, with the county scoring highly in areas like alignment of community/current initiatives; governing body support and continuity; need, feasibility and impact and cross-sector leadership.

The county received a rating of 3 out of 5 on funding strategy.

Blue Zones Project Director of Community Partnerships Margaret Brown said the amount of participation by local government was impressive.

“You had 100% participation from your county commissioners, which is a really great metric to meet,” she said. “You also had all your federal and state legislators represented in some way, so we felt like we really met that cross-sector engagement coming out here.”

Michael Acker, Senior Vice President and General Manager of Community and Urban Services at Blue Zones Project parent organization Sharecare, said the science that Blue Zones Project was built on shows “healthy people cost less and perform better.” He added that if nothing changes in Fayette County, it could cost residents \$992 million, or 5.6 percent more over a 10-year period.

Brown and Acker discussed some of their plans for utilizing what the project has learned about Fayette County. Brown said one of the planning goals is to develop “strategies for working at the municipal level,” by bringing mayors and other municipal leaders on board. Those strategies will include hosting a series of summits to “give people a chance to raise their hand and say what they think is important in this process.”

Businesses, restaurants, schools, and other entities will also be key partners in the project. The first six to eight months of planning, they said, will be a “foundation period” where summits are also held to engage these groups. In particular, Brown and Acker stressed the impact of working with school districts.

Acker also mentioned the establishment of Blue Zones in Corry (Eric County), Pennsylvania, noting that the municipality began outperforming the whole county in several sectors, as well as in economic savings.

“Small changes across large populations make a big impact,” Acker said.

He said that under Blue Zones, Fayette County could see an average, cumulative risk reduction of 15.2% over 10 years, along with a \$424 million cumulative medical, productivity and regional economic impact savings.

Acker said his team “built these recommendations in partnership with the Fayette Living Well Coalition.”

Fayette Living Well Coalition Chairman Mike Quinn said the Blue Zones Project’s assessment has given the county a place to start. Now, it’s time to put those recommendations into action.

“We have a strategy. The next step is to formulate a plan,” Quinn said. “Essentially, do we have the wherewithal, the leadership and the resources to implement our strategy?”

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

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