

ASANTE® News

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Why do people live longer in some places? Blue Zones Project brings lessons on health and well-being to Grants Pass

It is said that Ikaria, Greece, is a place “where people forgot to die.” That’s not exactly true, but the populace in the isolated island in the Aegean Sea lives an average eight years longer than the rest of us, and the elderly rarely suffer from dementia. What is Ikaria’s secret?

For that matter, why do people in Sardinia, Okinawa, a Costa Rican peninsula and Loma Linda, California, also tend to live longer than everyone else?

Those questions — and the answers — have

spawned a global movement called [The Blue Zones Project](#). It turns out that these communities have

some things in common: Their inhabitants have healthy diets, stay active, drink red wine, take naps, take time off, celebrate, are involved in the community and have a strong faith.

Now Asante is hoping to encourage the Blue Zones lifestyle in Grants Pass. The system is partnering with Cambia Health Foundation, Oregon Healthiest State initiative and several community businesses to make Grants Pass a Blue Zones city.

As a major sponsor, Asante aims to address several of the community’s health issues revealed in the system’s recent Community Health Needs Assessment.

The study found, for example, that people in Josephine County exercise less than the national average. A greater percentage are overweight or obese than state and national averages. And Josephine County has a higher percentage of smokers — nearly 19 percent — than the national average of 14 percent.

“By participating in the Blue Zones Project we hope to create more opportunities to make healthy choices easy,” said Win Howard, CEO of Asante Three Rivers Medical Center. Other community partners include AllCare Health, PrimaryHealth, Dutch Bros Coffee, Siskiyou Clinic and Evergreen Bank.

To date, 37 communities across the country are participating in the Blue Zones Project. Typical changes found in these communities include:

- Partnering with local grocery stores to promote healthy foods and beverages
- Planning for walk and bike paths that promote “human-powered” transportation
- Creating programs and activities that encourage social engagement
- Helping local restaurants offer healthier menu choices
- Reducing snacking and increasing exercise in schools

The goal is to improve health outcomes by lowering the rates of smoking and obesity in Josephine County as well as increasing daily physical activity and healthy food choices, among other things. Asante is also considering becoming a Blue Zones Worksite, which will demonstrate its commitment to making Asante a healthier place to work, improve the health of employees and become an employer of choice.

“Asante and our community partners are happy to lead the Grants Pass Blue Zones Project,” Howard said. “We truly believe this effort will help improve the health and well-being of our community through our workplaces, schools, restaurants, grocery stores and faith-based centers.”



National Geographic featured a 99-year-old goat herder in Ikaria.

