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RUHS-Public Health Launches Blue Zones Activate to Improve Well-Being in Riverside County

Riverside University Health System-Public Health (RUHS-PH) is launching Blue Zones Activate, a comprehensive policy-based initiative that uses an evidence-based approach to make healthy choices easier in all the places people spend the most time.

Spearheaded by RUHS-PH, the effort begins with an in-depth readiness and feasibility assessment of several communities in Riverside County that will help determine how to make them healthier places to live, work, grow up, and grow older.

“Our mission is to improve the health and lives of everyone in Riverside County, and we are committed to reducing the well-being gaps that currently exist,” said Kim Saruwatari, Director of Public Health at RUHS-PH. “We’re excited to partner

with Blue Zones, a proven innovator in community well-being improvement, to make Riverside County a healthier, happier place where everyone can thrive.”

Blue Zones employs a proven solution in collaboration with communities to help people live better and longer. Research shows where people live has a bigger influence on their health than their genetics. Blue Zones tackles this “zip code effect” using scientifically proven lessons of longevity, health, and happiness gleaned from 20 years of research to boost the well-being of entire cities, towns, counties, and regions.

The Blue Zones approach focuses on the single largest determinant of health: the place we live. Instead of focusing on individual behavior change, Blue Zones helps communities make permanent and semi-permanent changes to policies, systems, streets, surroundings, and social networks so it’s easier for residents to eat wisely, move naturally, and connect more with others as they advance throughout their day.

“We are excited to work with Blue Zones and other community leaders and partners to help improve the health of our entire region. This work will bring together many different organizations in a shared vision toward improving quality of life and well-being for everyone in Riverside County,” said Dr. Geoffrey Leung, County Public Health Officer at RUHS-PH.

“Riverside County is blessed with leaders that want to build a community where everyone has access to a healthy, happy life,” said Ben Leedle, Blue Zones CEO and Co-founder of Blue Zones Project.

The Blue Zones team will connect with Riverside County leaders and organizations to begin immediate work assessing the strengths, needs, and challenges that residents are facing today. The work will survey countywide policy with a detailed focus on the cities of Banning, Coachella, Riverside, and the unincorporated communities of French Valley and Mead Valley.

Blue Zones will then create a transformation plan that, once implemented, can drive widespread improvements in well-being, reductions in healthcare costs, and improve economic vitality in the region. For more information, visit bluezones.com/activate-riverside-county