



City Health Makeover

Helping people live better, longer

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BLUE ZONES LONGEVITY EXPERT DAN BUETTNER TO LEAD AARP/BLUE ZONES CITY HEALTH MAKEOVER ALBERT LEA, MN

*New Initiative Designed to Add 10,000 Projected Years of
Life Expectancy to City's Residents*

AARP/Blue Zones City Health Makeover today announced that Albert Lea, Minnesota will be the focus of an intense 10-month pilot makeover project designed to improve the health and longevity of the city's residents. The goal is to add two years of projected life expectancy to each participant (or up to 10,000 years of life to the city) through community and individual changes. The AARP/Blue Zones City Health Makeover is a collaboration of **AARP**, the world's largest membership organization for people 50+ and **Blue Zones**, one of the world's leading expert organizations studying longevity. The project is sponsored by the United Health Foundation.

Between now and October 2009, the project will sponsor significant community-wide events featuring national experts in close collaboration with the city of Albert Lea's community leaders to adjust the local environment to enhance the health and wellness of people of all ages who live and work in the city. The project will also work with individuals to make subtle but powerful changes to their personal living environments. By affecting change on both the community and individual level, the AARP/Blue Zones City Health Makeover anticipates creating long-term benefits in each person's health and longevity.

(MORE)

“Let’s be clear. No one wants to live to be a 100 years old and feel *old*. We want to live that long and live *well*! Many people wrongly assume that longevity is attributed to genes. But studies have shown that as little as 10% of one’s lifespan can be attributed to the genes we inherit, the remaining 90% is attributable to lifestyle,” said Dan Buettner, the project leader. Buettner is a Minnesotan and author of the *New York Times* bestselling book, *The Blue Zones: Lessons for Living Longer From the People Who’ve Lived the Longest*.

“AARP is eager to help Albert Lea transform their community,” said Michele Kimball, State Director, AARP Minnesota. “We look forward to supporting the city as its residents make small changes that can greatly increase the number of healthy years they can experience. Through this project, the residents of Albert Lea will be empowered to make their city one of the best places in America to lead a long, healthy life.”

“We are pleased to be chosen for this project, and ready to go to work to make Albert Lea a healthier place to live and work,” said Albert Lea City Manager, Victoria Simonsen. “I encourage every resident of our city to take advantage of this great opportunity to improve your own life while helping to shine a positive spotlight on our community.”

The AARP/Blue Zones City Health Makeover project has two phases. January 15, 2009 marks the beginning of phase one with a community-wide audit of the city’s physical environment, governmental policies and business practices related to healthy behaviors. From the audit, community leaders will develop a plan for environmental improvements that encourage healthy behaviors.

The second phase will commence in late March/April of 2009 and will focus on encouraging individuals in Albert Lea to make changes in their homes and lifestyles. People of all ages who work or live in Albert Lea are invited to participate in the project and find out more by visiting www.bluezones.com/makeover or www.aarp.org. The project leaders encourage people of all ages who live and work in Albert Lea to participate in the project.

The AARP/Blue Zones City Health Makeover will culminate in October 2009 with a series of community events to celebrate and recognize the additional years of life resulting from the makeover. An interactive, educational website, to be launched in late March/April 2009, will be promoted nationwide to encourage other people and communities to do their own makeovers. Results of the project will be featured in *AARP the Magazine*, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world’s largest circulation magazine with over 34 million readers.

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About Blue Zones™

Founded by Dan Buettner as an ongoing project that is part of Quest Network, Inc., Blue Zones™ studies the world's longest-lived populations for wellness information and lifestyle management tools that can help Americans live longer, healthier lives. For each Blue Zones™ expedition, Buettner and his award-winning team journey to a specific region whose population is reaching age 100 at an extraordinarily high rate. These longevity hotspots are called "Blue Zones™." Buettner and his team of scientists identify and study the regions' common threads in lifestyle behavior, diet, outlook and stress-coping mechanisms. Through this ongoing study, Blue Zones™ has developed a formula of the world's best practices in healthy longevity that people can put to work in their own lives. In short, Buettner aims to help everyone live within their personal "Blue Zone." Buettner's research and his insight into enhancing longevity has been published in his *New York Times* bestselling book, *THE BLUE ZONES: Lessons for Living Longer by the People Who've Lived the Longest*, which was published by National Geographic Book in 2008. Partially funded by the National Institutes on Health, Blue Zones™ is advised by an internationally-recognized panel of academic and scientific experts on the topic, and supported by the National Geographic Expeditions Council as well as by researchers at the National Institute on Aging (NIA). For more information, visit www.bluezones.com.

About AARP

AARP is a nonprofit, nonpartisan membership organization that helps people 50+ have independence, choice and control in ways that are beneficial and affordable to them and society as a whole. AARP does not endorse candidates for public office or make contributions to either political campaigns or candidates. We produce AARP The Magazine, the definitive voice for 50+ Americans and the world's largest-circulation magazine with over 34.5 million readers; AARP Bulletin, the go-to news source for AARP's 40 million members and Americans 50+; AARP Segunda Juventud, the only bilingual U.S. publication dedicated exclusively to the 50+ Hispanic community; and our website, AARP.org. AARP Foundation is an affiliated charity that provides security, protection, and empowerment to older persons in need with support from thousands of volunteers, donors, and sponsors. We have staffed offices in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

About the United Health Foundation

Guided by a passion to help people live healthier lives, United Health Foundation provides helpful information to support decisions that lead to better health outcomes and healthier communities. The Foundation also supports activities that expand access to quality health care services for those in challenging circumstances and partners with others to improve the well being of communities. Since established by UnitedHealth Group [NYSE: UNH] in 1999 as a not for profit private foundation, the Foundation has committed more than \$160 million to improve health and health care. For more information, visit www.unitedhealthfoundation.org .