



Vitality Project

Helping you live longer, better

Sponsored by



For Immediate Release:
June 10, 2009

Contact: Amy McDonough
amcdonough@aarp.org
651-726-5644 (w) 651-492-5837 (c)
Teresa Kauffman
tkauffman@city.albertlea.org
507-377-4380

Vitality Project Launches Walking Moai
Residents of Albert Lea Urged to Participate in Community-wide
Walking Launch
Free AARP pedometer for each participant!

(*Albert Lea, MN*) The AARP®/Blue Zones® Vitality Project sponsored by United Health FoundationSM invites everyone who lives or works in Albert Lea to join us at the launch of the Vitality Project's Walking Moai on Thursday, June 18th, 6:30 – 8:00 p.m. at a school nearest your home.

“Anyone of **any age** can make walking a part of their daily life,” said Margaret Hawkins, a national walking program expert from AARP. “This unprecedented program combines the ease of AARP’s walking program with the Blue Zones principles to give Albert Lea residents another tool to live longer, better.”

What is a Walking Moai?

Natural movement throughout the day, especially walking, is a way of life in Blue Zones around the world. The walking moai program is designed to bring this practice to Albert Lea -- and help residents make walking a natural part of their day by walking to typical destinations. At the same time, the program will help strengthen ties between neighbors of all ages.

“We know that if your three best friends are obese, you have a 50% greater chance of being overweight” stated Blue Zones explorer Dan Buettner. “This exploration of Albert Lea will help participants make friends that can contribute to greater health and happiness.”

Albert Leans are invited to join neighborhood teams of about 10 people and earn points each time they walk with at least one other team member. Teams can compete for prizes after they walk to a designated list of local destinations provided to each team.

Vitality Project Walking Moai Launch

Thursday, June 18, 2009

6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Come to the location listed below nearest your home to get started!

Free AARP pedometer for each participant!

Wear comfortable shoes.

Albert Lea High School, 2000 Tiger Lane -- if you live in the area of Hawthorne School

Southwest Middle School, 1601 W Front St – if you live in the areas of the Arena, Indian Hills or Sibley School

Brookside Education Center, 211 W Richway Dr – if you live in the areas of Wedge Nursery or Lakeview School

Halverson Elementary School, 707 E 10th St -- if you live in the area of Halverson School or wish to enroll as a business

Visit www.aarp.org/bluezonesproject to find out more about the various events and projects available to residents of Albert Lea. For more information about joining a moai in your neighborhood, contact the Walking Moai leaders: Nancy VanderWaerdt 377-0227; Catherine Buboltz: 377-0835; Jeshua Erickson: 373-1289.

About the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project sponsored by United Health Foundation

Since January, Albert Lea leaders have been working behind the scenes with the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project to make changes to their community that will promote health and longevity. Today, residents who live or work in Albert Lea made an individual commitment to participate in the first-ever longevity makeover of an **entire community**. The Vitality Project will shine a national spotlight on the efforts of one small town working together to make a commitment to better health and increased longevity.

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 35.5 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 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 the United Health Foundation

Guided by a passion to help people live healthier lives, United Health Foundation 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. The Foundation also provides helpful information to support decisions that lead to better health outcomes and healthier 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.