



Great Hometowns: One Vision

County Blue Zones Activate Assessment Kicks Off June 22 *A Healthier Marshall County Next?*

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Experts from Blue Zones will arrive soon to meet with local leaders in the private and public sectors to determine how to make better the places we live, work, learn, and play in Marshall County. Blue Zones' work to date in hundreds of communities across the U.S. has sparked transformations that are enhancing the lifespans and well-being of residents community-wide, improving employee and student productivity, and boosting economic vitality and development.

The original blue zones hotspots — discovered by National Geographic fellow and New York Times best-selling author Dan Buettner — are cultures where residents live significantly longer and healthier lives. Found worldwide, they include locations in the Nicoya peninsula of Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; and Loma Linda, California.

Work on the Blue Zones Activate assessment is being fostered by the Health and Wellness committee from Marshall County Crossroads under the leadership of Tracy Fox, Scott Graybill, and Linda Yoder. Crossroads is the volunteer group who brought the Stellar designation to Marshall County.

Rural communities across the country are setting aggressive and achievable strategies to improve public health and quality of life. Albert Lea, Minnesota, reduced health care claims by 49% for city workers and increased life expectancy by three years with Blue Zones. Fifty percent of city workers in Spencer, Iowa, eliminated one disease risk factor through Blue Zones Project®.

The first phase of a Blue Zones community transformation is the assessment and feasibility analysis where experts collaborate with community leaders to assess readiness and build a plan for change. During this period, Blue Zones educates and mobilizes local leaders and residents, evaluates the community's current state of well-being, identifies the highest priority strengths, challenges and opportunities, and produces and presents a plan for community transformation.



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The Marshall County Blue Zones Activate assessment will kick off on June 22, in Cana Hall at the Lindenwood Retreat & Conference Center, 9601 Union Rd, Plymouth, IN. You may register to attend the event [here](#).

“Marshall County leaders invited us to complete this initial assessment because they believe the region has potential to become a Blue Zones Community[®],” said Ben Leedle, the chief executive officer of Blue Zones, LLC and co-founder of Blue Zones Project. “The assessment visit provides us an opportunity to hear feedback from stakeholders across the community and gather additional information and statistics about health and well-being in the region.”

With life expectancy on a continuous decline in America, research shows that where people live has a bigger influence on health and well-being than genetics. Blue Zones tackles this so-called “zip code effect” using scientifically proven lessons of longevity, health, and happiness gleaned from over 20 years of research to boost the well-being of entire communities.

“We look forward to learning more about Blue Zones for our community and showcasing both our successes and opportunities for these experts,” said Linda Yoder, who also heads up the Marshall County Community Foundation and the United Way of Marshall County. “We believe Marshall County and our great hometowns are ready for this next step to enhance the places we live, work, play, and learn. We’re excited to see what the possibilities are.”

After the June assessment, the Blue Zones team will produce a report on the findings along with a detailed proposal that discusses top opportunities and recommendations. You may learn more about the Marshall County Blue Zones Activate Assessment by visiting the website:

<https://www.bluezones.com/activate-marshall-county/>.

The Marshall County Crossroads Health and Wellness Committee is grateful for the generous sponsors helping make the Blue Zones Activate assessment possible: the Marshall County Community Foundation, Saint Joseph Health System, the United Way of Marshall County, Dr. Joel Schumacher, and Dr. Tod and Ellen Stillson.

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About Blue Zones®

Blue Zones employs evidence-based ways to help people live longer, better. The company's work is rooted in explorations and research done by National Geographic Fellow Dan Buettner in Blue Zones regions around the world, where people live extraordinarily long and/or happy lives. The original research and findings were released in Buettner's bestselling books *The Blue Zones Solution*, *The Blue Zones of Happiness*, *The Blue Zones, Thrive*, and *Blue Zones Kitchen*—all published by National Geographic books. Using original Blue Zones research, Blue Zones works with cities and counties to make healthy choices easier through permanent and semi-permanent changes to our human-made surroundings. Participating communities have experienced double-digit drops in obesity and tobacco use and have saved millions of dollars in healthcare costs. For more information, visit bluezones.com.

About Marshall County Crossroads Marshall County Crossroads is a collaboration of leaders from across the region that engages with and inspires our communities to connect, collaborate, and create high-quality hometowns. This will be done by creating healthy, livable, thriving, and sustainable communities that provide current and future residents of all ages, races, and genders the best hometowns in the Midwest to live, work and play.

www.MarshallCountyCrossroads.com. Social Media Handle: @GreatHometowns



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