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The City of San Marcos Launches Blue Zones Ignite™ to Improve Well-Being

Blue Zones to conduct a citywide assessment and propose a plan to help all residents live better, longer

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The City of San Marcos announced today the launch of Blue Zones Ignite, a well-being initiative that uses an evidence-based approach to make healthy choices easier in the places where people spend the most time. In partnership with TrueCare and Gary and Mary West PACE, the City will coordinate the effort, which begins with an in-depth readiness and feasibility assessment of San Marcos that will help determine how to make it a healthier place to live, work, grow up, and grow older.

In addition to TrueCare and Gary and Mary West PACE, this initiative is made possible through the support and collaboration of community and development partners, including Affirmed Housing, C&C Development, the County of San Diego, HA Builders, Hitzke Development, Hope Through Housing, National CORE, Neighborhood Healthcare, Scripps Health, Stanbridge University, TERI Campus of Life, and the University of St. Augustine.

Blue Zones uses an evidence-based, environmental approach to making healthy choices easier in the places where people spend the most time. Together with the community, the Blue Zones team will assess readiness and build a plan for change.

“We are proud of our leadership role in bringing Blue Zones to San Diego County,” said San Marcos Mayor Rebecca Jones. “San Marcos already has all the ingredients for living a long and healthy life. Going through the Blue Zones Ignite assessment will give us the data we need to continue on this path.”

Blue Zones employs a proven solution in collaboration with communities to help people live better and longer lives. The company’s work is based on research and principles developed by



founder Dan Buettner, a National Geographic Fellow and New York Times bestselling author, who identified the cultures of the world – or blue zones – with the healthiest, longest-living populations.

The Blue Zones approach focuses on the largest determinant of health: the environment in which we live. Instead of focusing solely 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 move throughout their day. By improving the Life Radius®—the area close to home where most Americans spend 90% of their lives—Blue Zones transformations have been able to move the needle dramatically in improving overall population health and well-being. Participating communities have seen double-digit drops in obesity and smoking rates, economic investment in downtown corridors, grant funding awards to support policies and programs to improve health equity, and measurable savings in healthcare costs.

"We're thrilled to see the City of San Marcos launch the Blue Zones Ignite assessment and proud to stand alongside the community and Blue Zones in this important work. At Gary and Mary West PACE, we see every day how environment, connection, and purpose shape health—especially as we age. This initiative reflects a shared commitment to making healthy choices easier, strengthening social bonds, and creating a community where people can live well at every stage of life. This is an incredible opportunity to collaborate with partners and residents to help San Marcos continue to be a place where individuals, families, and neighborhoods truly thrive," said Mary Jurgensen, Community Engagement Director, Gary and Mary West PACE.

"At TrueCare, our mission is centered on breaking down barriers to quality health care while supporting the overall well-being of the communities we serve," said Michelle D. Gonzalez, President & CEO of TrueCare. "We are proud to partner with the City of San Marcos and Blue Zones to help foster environments where healthier choices are made easier and more accessible for everyone. While we know that primary care is vital to health, it is shaped by the everyday experiences and surroundings that influence how people care for themselves and one another. This initiative marks an important step towards building a healthier future for our community."

Ben Leedle, CEO of Blue Zones and Co-founder of Blue Zones Project, said: "We are excited to partner with the City of San Marcos and this impressive coalition of healthcare, housing, and educational leaders to launch Blue Zones Ignite. What makes this effort truly powerful is the collective will of these diverse partners aligning around a single vision for a healthier community. We are excited to build a plan that harnesses this local energy to create a more vibrant, connected, and resilient San Marcos for generations to come."

Blue Zones' team of experts will connect with San Marcos leaders and organizations to begin immediate work assessing the strengths, needs, and challenges that residents are facing today. Blue Zones will then create a policy-focused transformation plan that, once implemented, can



drive widespread improvements in well-being, reductions in healthcare costs, and improve economic vitality in the region.

As part of the project, the Blue Zones team will be in San Marcos for an in-person visit to tour the city, meet community members, and kick off the initiative. TERI Campus of Life will host a keynote event on Tuesday, March 17, at 555 Deer Springs Road, San Marcos, CA 92069, offering residents and leaders a first-hand look at the project and an opportunity to get involved.

Registration and full event details are available at <https://www.bluezones.com/ignite-san-marcos/>

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About Blue Zones

Blue Zones employs evidence-based ways to help people live better, longer. The company's work is rooted in explorations and research done by founder and 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*, *The Blue Zones Solution*, *The Blue Zones of Happiness*, *Thrive*, *Blue Zones Kitchen*, *Blue Zones Challenge*, *Blue Zones American Kitchen*, and *Blue Zones Secrets for Living Longer*—all published by National Geographic books. A hit docuseries, *Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones*, was released on Netflix in 2023. 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 www.bluezones.com.

About San Marcos

The City of San Marcos, located in northern San Diego County, is home to more than 96,000 residents and is known for its strong sense of community and high quality of life. San Marcos offers an extensive system of parks, open space, and multi-use trails, including more than 15 parks and destinations such as Double Peak Park, that support outdoor recreation, scenic views, and community connection.

San Marcos is also a hub for education, innovation, and healthcare, and is committed to providing excellent public services, fostering a strong local economy, and creating a vibrant, inclusive community for residents, businesses, and visitors.