



YUBA-SUTTER, CA

Yuba-Sutter achieves certified Blue Zones Community® designation by investing in well-being for a more livable, vibrant, and healthy future.

A PROUD BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY





CONGRATULATIONS YUBA-SUTTER, FOR PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP !

In Yuba-Sutter, we are seizing every opportunity to move well-being in the right direction and transform well-being across our community.

After launching Blue Zones Project[®], we've seen community and social well-being, exercise rates and produce consumption improve, while tobacco use and chronic conditions like high blood pressure are on the decline. Community leaders, business owners, teachers, and volunteers are coming together to transform our environments into places where optimal health ensues and a culture of well-being flourishes.

Our community's resurgence is happening. Yuba-Sutter has always been a great place to live, work, learn, and play. And it's only getting better.

We did this together. By putting our personal and collective well-being first, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. Here's to making Yuba-Sutter one of the healthiest communities in California, where residents are living better, together.

THE JOURNEY TO BECOME A BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Blue Zones Project® helps communities implement the longevity and happiness lessons learned from the world's extraordinary people and cultures to measurably improve well-being and create enhanced community vitality. The method of work is to drive community-led semi-permanent and permanent change in man-made surroundings. This approach is designed to make healthier choices easier, more ubiquitous, and sustainable. The effect: people moving more naturally, taking more time to downshift daily, discovering the power of purpose, eating wisely, and deepening their connections with friends, family, and their faith. Over time, these collective choices compound to sustainably improve well-being. In 2021, a broad base of Yuba-Sutter's leadership set a course to do just that.

The value of Blue Zones Project is measured by the engagement of its citizens; the number, type, and scope of semi-permanent and permanent changes implemented; the prevalence and incidence rates of lifestyle risks and disease; and measurable improvements in well-being; all of which ultimately led to lower medical costs, better workforce productivity,

and a strengthened regional economy.

Since 2022, Yuba-Sutter has undergone its own community transformation, exceeding targets set to engage individuals and organizations and to implement citywide policy changes. Well-being has reached new highs according to the most recent Sharecare Community Well-Being Index (CWBI) and other community indicators.

Our community improved in four key well-being areas measured by the CWBI—community, social, purpose, and physical—and overall well-being improved by 1.0-point. Each point increase in well-being for a population leads to approximately a two percent reduction in ER visits and hospital utilization, and to approximately a one percent reduction in total healthcare costs.

A broad coalition has supported Yuba-Sutter's efforts to adopt 77 policies and plans like Safe Streets for All, establishing a food policy council, and smoking-control ordinances that will guide future decision-making toward an even more vibrant and active future. This work was bolstered by \$6 million in grant funding secured with the support of Blue Zones Project.

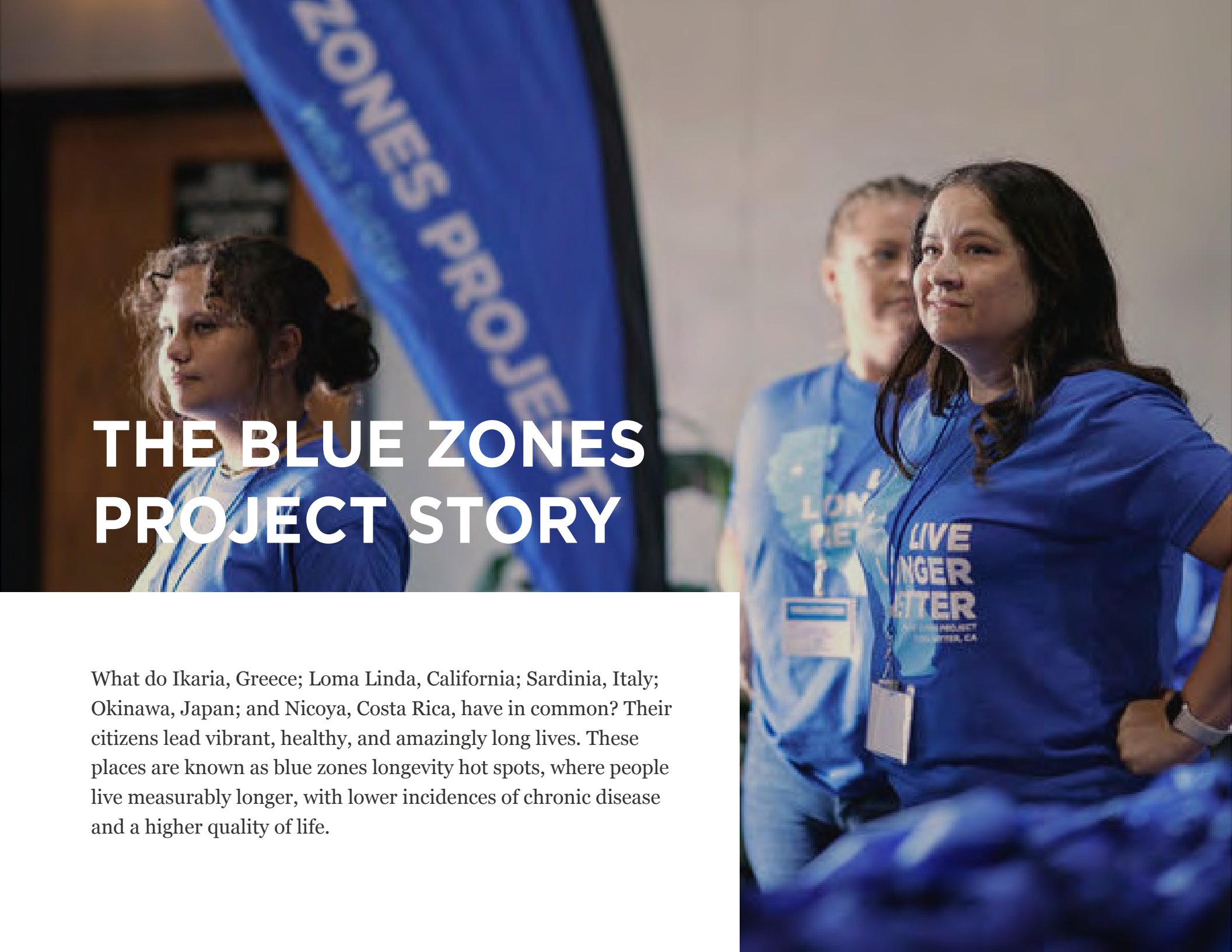
The return on investment has and will continue to manifest. The semi-permanent and permanent changes already made compound over time, producing greater future returns

for Yuba-Sutter. Return on investment can be measured in a myriad of ways, as the value captured is unique to each citizen, family, and organization. In this way, Yuba-Sutter has been enriched as a “choice community”—a place where more people and businesses decide to be. Conservatively, the five-year estimated healthcare and workforce productivity savings for Yuba-Sutter from 2021 through 2026 totals \$8.8 million.

With sustained momentum, continued implementation of local policy and plans, and project advancement in key areas, Yuba-Sutter stands to further improve community well-being in its next phase of work.

More than five years ago, when Blue Zones Project first engaged Yuba-Sutter leadership, we collectively established an ambitious plan for the region to become a certified Blue Zones Community. Today, Yuba-Sutter is a new benchmark for what bold leaders across the state and country can achieve when they invest in the health and well-being of their citizens.

Congratulations for creating an even better Yuba-Sutter!

The background image shows two women in blue t-shirts. The woman on the left is looking off to the side. The woman on the right is looking towards the camera with a slight smile. They are both wearing lanyards with ID badges. In the background, a blue banner with white text is partially visible. The text on the banner includes 'THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT' and 'LIVE LONGER BETTER'.

THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT STORY

What do Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, California; Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; and Nicoya, Costa Rica, have in common? Their citizens lead vibrant, healthy, and amazingly long lives. These places are known as blue zones longevity hot spots, where people live measurably longer, with lower incidences of chronic disease and a higher quality of life.



More than 86 percent₁ of the nearly \$3 trillion in annual U.S. healthcare costs are spent on chronic disease₁. Yet much of this disease can be prevented and reduced in impact through lifestyle changes.

According to a long-term population study of Danish twins, 80 percent of a person's lifespan is determined by lifestyle choices, environmental factors, and access to care. Only 20 percent is genetic.₂ Unfortunately, in most places, our environment encourages unhealthy choices. Americans are bombarded daily with messages for unhealthy products and surrounded by modern "conveniences" that make us more sedentary and isolated.

Discovering Blue Zones

In 2004, Dan Buettner teamed up with National Geographic, the National Institute on Aging, and the world's best longevity researchers to identify pockets around the world where people lived measurably better, longer. In the five original blue zones regions, they found that people reached age 100 at rates ten times greater than the U.S. average, with lower rates of chronic disease. These original blue zones areas are in vastly different parts of the world, from Sardinia, Italy and Ikaria, Greece to Okinawa, Japan, Costa Rica's Nicoya Peninsula, and stateside in Loma Linda, California. Studying the factors that influenced health and longevity in these places, researchers found that residents share nine specific traits. Dan Buettner captured these insights in his New York Times best-selling books, *The Blue Zones* and *The Blue Zones Solution*.



BLUE ZONES POWER 9

The secrets to well-being and longevity are found in the Power 9®—nine common principles from the world’s blue zones longevity hot spots. They can be grouped into four categories. These principles are the basis for how Blue Zones Project impacts communities to make healthy choices easier:

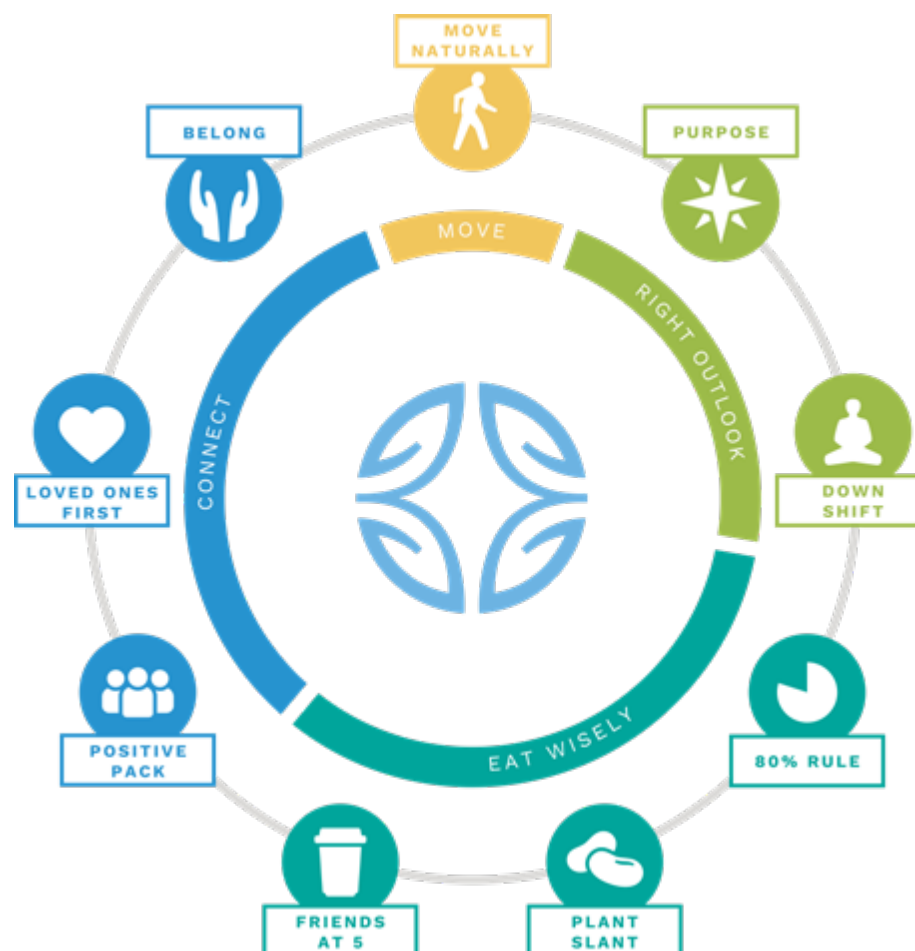
Move Naturally. Homes, communities, and workplaces are designed to nudge people into physical activity. Focus should be given to favorite activities, as individuals are more likely to practice them regularly. For example: gardening, walking, or biking to run errands, and playing with one’s family are great ways to incorporate natural movement into the day.

Right Outlook. Individuals know and can articulate their sense of purpose. They also take time to downshift, ensuring their day is punctuated with periods of calm.

Eat Wisely. In most cases, fad diets do not provide sustainable results. Individuals and families can use time-honored strategies for healthier eating habits, including:

- Using verbal reminders or smaller plates to eat less at meals
- Incorporating more plant-based options into your eating habits
- Enjoying coffee or a glass of wine with friends during regular social hours

Connect. Research indicates it is exceedingly important that people surround themselves with the “right” people—those who make them happy and support healthy behaviors. Put loved ones first by spending quality time with family and friends, and by participating in a faith-based community.



Because healthier environments naturally nudge people toward healthier choices, Blue Zones Project focuses on influencing the Life Radius®, the area close to home in which people spend the majority of their lives. Blue Zones Project best practices use policy, places, and people as levers to transform those surroundings. Our communities have populations with greater well-being, improved health outcomes, reduced costs, stronger resiliency, and increased civic pride, all of which support healthy economic development.





**SHARECARE COMMUNITY
WELL-BEING INDEX**

**The world's most definitive
measurement of well-being**

Based on over 4M surveys and over 600 elements of social determinants of health data, Sharecare's Community Well-Being Index serves as the definitive measure of community well-being across and within populations. Measuring well-being gives policy, community, and business leaders the data to benchmark populations, understand gaps and opportunities, and then prioritize interventions to measurably improve well-being. Improving well-being has been shown to lower health care costs and increase worker productivity, in turn, enhancing organizational and community competitiveness.



Measuring the Impact

Change requires action. It isn't enough to do something one time; lasting change, which is a central tenet of Blue Zones Project, must be created from permanent and semi-permanent changes and alterations to the environment, policies, programs, and social networks. These actions allow healthy choices to become easy choices today and for many years to come.

When Blue Zones Project launched in Yuba-Sutter, the overall community well-being sat at 62.2 according to Sharecare Community Well-Being Index (CWBI) data. Today, overall well-being in Yuba-Sutter is 63.2, a 1-point increase. This improvement highlights intentional efforts to improve the health of people who call Yuba-Sutter home.

Well-Being on the Rise in
Yuba-Sutter

	2022	2026	Point Change
Overall Well-Being Score	62.2	63.2	1.0 ↑
Community Well-Being	58.2	61.0	2.8 ↑
Social Well-Being	63.7.1	65.3	1.6 ↑
Purpose Well-Being	60.7	63.4	2.7 ↑
Physical Well-Being	63.7	64.4	0.7 ↑
Financial Well-Being	58.1	54.8	-3.3 ↓





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IN COMMUNITIES WITH HIGHER WELL-BEING, WE HAVE FOUND THAT PEOPLE LIVE LONGER, HAPPIER LIVES AND BUSINESS AND LOCAL ECONOMIES FLOURISH. A RELIABLE WELL-BEING METRIC PROVIDES COMMUNITY AND BUSINESS LEADERS WITH THE DATA AND INSIGHTS THEY NEED TO HELP MAKE SUSTAINED TRANSFORMATION A REALITY. AFTER ALL, IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE IT, YOU CAN'T MANAGE IT.

Dan Buettner
New York Times best-selling author
National Geographic Fellow
Blue Zones founder

A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a black t-shirt, khaki shorts, and a black cap, is riding a black bicycle on a paved street. He is smiling at the camera. In the background, there are green trees, a flagpole with an American flag, and a bridge. A white pickup truck with 'MPW' on its side is parked on the left. The scene is bright and sunny.

PUTTING WELL-BEING ON THE MAP IN YUBA-SUTTER

Yuba-Sutter community members transform well-being with Blue Zones Project.

Yuba-Sutter is prioritizing the health of its neighbors and investing in policies and programs to improve health equity for those who need it most. Our neighbors, teachers, and community leaders have made tremendous strides in optimizing the places where we all live, work, learn, and play.

Yuba-Sutter is a community to be proud of, and our well-being transformation is just beginning.

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BLUE ZONES SEEMS LIKE THAT MISSING LINK WE NOW HAVE TO MAKE THE HEALTHIER CHOICE THE EASIER CHOICE. JUST MAKING SIMPLE, LITTLE CHANGES IN YOUR LIFESTYLE CAN HAVE A DRAMATIC IMPACT ON YOUR LIFE, YOUR LIFE SPAN, AND YOUR LIFE HAPPINESS. AND THAT'S WHAT WE ARE HERE TO DO.

Marni Sanders, Executive Director, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter

A COMMUNITY IN ACTION

Local businesses, organizations, residents, and city leaders came together to make incremental changes that caused a ripple effect, improving well-being across the city and bringing individuals together to create lasting change.

People of all ages and backgrounds participated in Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter: some 12,645 residents. Many attended free cooking demonstrations and Purpose Workshops. Hundreds donated their time to volunteer opportunities and joined supportive Moais to connect and walk or connect and eat healthier in small groups. Many residents also supported Blue Zones Project planning and implementation by serving on committees.

A critical mass of places optimized their environments for healthy living. **More than 50 organizations participated in Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter.** Worksites, schools, restaurants, grocery stores, faith-based organizations, and community groups made changes that produced new gardens, highlighted healthier foods, created safer walking routes, offered spaces to de-stress, and energized employees, members, and residents through purpose and new connections.



From a policy standpoint, Yuba-Sutter is creating, supporting, and implementing:

- More than \$4.75 million in infrastructure grants, including a \$3.5 million award for E. 22nd Street multi-modal safety improvements and \$250,000 for Historic Downtown Marysville walkability enhancements.
- A 12-mile regional bicycle spine that has been formally adopted into law through resolutions by both the Sutter and Yuba County Boards of Supervisors.
- The Yuba-Sutter Food Policy Council, a cross-sector governance body officially recognized by county resolutions that affirm every resident's right to nutritious, affordable, and locally grown food.
- Healthy food procurement policies across regional hunger relief systems and local school districts, complemented by grassroots nutrition access points like the student-led Madd Love Community Fridge.
- The Plumas Street Commercial Overlay District, a permanent land-use ordinance passed by the Yuba City Council that legally prohibits any new tobacco and vape retail shops along the corridor.
- Strengthened anti-smoking ordinances and youth advocacy networks, highlighted by the formation of the bi-county Yuba-Sutter Tobacco Youth Coalition and active policy coordination to enhance Marysville's existing no-smoking municipal codes.



THE WORLD IS WATCHING

Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter has attracted local and national recognition, with more than 530 media stories to date.

Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter has been featured for its innovative approaches to population health management in notable publications, including those noted below.

BLUE ZONES PROJECT YUBA-SUTTER IN THE NEWS

530+

Total Mentions

6.5 Billion+

Total Reach

\$50.6 Million+

Total Publicity Value*

**Publicity value calculated using Cision Media Monitoring service.*





POLICY

Blue Zones Project works with city leaders to implement evidence-based best practices to impact food policy, tobacco policy, and the built environment.

By improving community infrastructure and public policies, Blue Zones Project maximizes the ability of our community's residents to move naturally, connect socially, access healthy food, and improve quality of life.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

We generally exercise too hard or not at all. However, the world's longest-lived people don't pump iron, run marathons, or join gyms.

Instead, they live in environments that constantly nudge them into moving without thinking about it. They live in places where they can walk to the store, a friend's house, or places of worship. Their houses have stairs. They have gardens in their yards. It's not just about moving; it's about moving naturally.

Why It Matters

About 69 percent of the American population can be classified as overweight or obese.³ For the first time in history, our children's life expectancy is projected to be shorter than that of their parents. Obesity is not just a health problem, it's an economic one too. **The estimated annual health care costs of obesity-related illness are a staggering \$190 billion, or nearly 21 percent of annual medical**

spending. Childhood obesity alone is responsible for \$14 billion in direct medical costs.⁴

The good news is there is a solution for this growing issue. Increasing simple movements like standing, walking, stretching, and bending can help burn an extra 350 calories a day. **Studies show that just by making our communities more walkable, the prevalence of obesity can decrease by more than 10 percent.**⁵

This opens the door to even bigger wins, like lowered incidences of heart disease, diabetes, and respiratory issues. Equally important is the possibility for increased productivity, vitality, and years spent enjoying greater quality of life.

Policies that support natural movement can shift the dynamics in any community toward physical activity. To this end, **Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) has completed 37 built environment initiatives across local policies, capacity building, demonstration projects, and infrastructure improvement.**



Key Actions and Innovations

- Spearheaded a novel Regional Joint Application Strategy that united all six local jurisdictions to secure \$800,000 in federal Safe Streets for All (SS4A) planning funds. Rather than letting municipalities compete against one another, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) aligned the region around a single application to beat out individual submittals, with SACOG contributing \$5,000 toward a grant-writing consultant to support this collaborative model.
- Co-authored the Yuba-Sutter Bicycle Implementation Plan and drove its formal validation to map out a 12-mile regional bicycle spine. This milestone marked the first bi-county active transportation policy resolution in the region's history, securing formal adoption resolutions from both the Sutter County Board of Supervisors (Resolution 26-003) and the Yuba County Board of Supervisors in early 2026.
- Provided decisive advocacy and public backing to help secure \$3.75 million in grant funding for multi-modal street and walkability improvements in Marysville. BZPYS's targeted letters of support and direct testimony at the SACOG Board meeting served as the decisive voice to unlock \$3.5 million for protected bike lanes, ADA ramps, and safer transit stops along the high-speed E. 22nd Street school corridor, alongside \$250,000 for Historic Downtown enhancements.
- Organized comprehensive, multi-jurisdictional walk audits and safety assessments featuring nationally recognized built-environment experts. Collaborating with national experts Dan Burden and Gary Toth, as well as UC Berkeley's SafeTREC, BZPYS brought together elected officials, Public Works directors, and school administrators to evaluate local corridors, producing site-specific design renderings that are now shaping capital improvement plans.



GRANT FUNDING FOR COMPLETE STREETS

More than \$4.75 million in grant funding has been secured for built environment improvements in Yuba-Sutter. These awards are being actively invested in transformative local infrastructure, including Safe Streets for All planning, multi-modal improvements (featuring protected bike lanes, ADA ramps, and safer school transit stops), and Historic Downtown Marysville walkability enhancements.



Marysville Streets Become a Model for Data-Driven Traffic Calming

In the city of Marysville, maintaining safe routes within residential neighborhoods and school zones is a top priority for local families and officials. However, achieving true street safety requires a delicate balance across the entire urban grid.

When an initial pilot project was implemented on 14th Street to address resident concerns about speeding and cut-through traffic, it seemed like a straightforward victory. Yet, post-implementation traffic analysis revealed an unintended consequence: the traffic-calming improvements inadvertently displaced vehicles onto adjacent residential corridors, shifting the hazard directly onto E Street.

Recognizing that this displacement pattern actively threatened students traveling to and from local schools, the Yuba County Office of Education raised critical safety concerns. Data quickly validated their observations, showing

that southbound E Street had become a primary cut-through route experiencing severe speeding during school commute hours—with 45% of vehicles exceeding the 25 MPH limit and peak speeds reaching a dangerous 45 MPH. To transform these anecdotal worries into documented facts, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) stepped in to partner with the City's Public Works Department.

Operating as both a technical resource and a policy leader, the BZPYS team brought a blend of visionary safety goals and pragmatic solutions to the table. They provided expert design review by bringing in international traffic safety expert Dan Burden to evaluate street layouts, and invested \$2,000 in immediate technical assistance funds so the city could bypass long capital improvement timelines to test solutions in real time.

Beyond analyzing the numbers, BZPYS actively worked to bridge the gap between residents and decision-makers. They deployed a comprehensive community survey in May 2025 to gauge public preferences on physical interventions and presented the complete evidence-backed data package directly to the Marysville

City Council to build a bulletproof case for permanent infrastructure changes.

The initiative moved swiftly through the spring of 2025, progressing from initial speed and volume studies in March to a formal Traffic Analysis Report in April. By Q2 2025, the partnership successfully secured formal agreements for targeted interventions at 12th and E Street, setting a clear trajectory toward permanent neighborhood adjustments and a collaborative asphalt art installation slated for Spring 2026.

The final traffic-calming strategy utilizes an array of adaptive features, including temporary roundabouts, radar speed feedback signs, delineators, and tactical lane narrowings. Notably, the upcoming 12th & E Street Asphalt Art Project—developed alongside the Yuba County Office of Education and Yuba Sutter Arts—will serve a dual purpose: enhancing local neighborhood aesthetics while functioning as a vital visual cue to naturally slow drivers at a high-risk intersection. Preliminary pilot data has already demonstrated measurable reductions in peak speeds, earning an enthusiastic mandate from the community

for upcoming permanent speed humps and curb extensions.

This successful collaboration between BZPYS, City Public Works, and local education leaders highlights the power of data-driven proof of concepts in municipal planning. It provides a repeatable blueprint for how cross-sector partnerships, grassroots feedback, and the strategic leveraging of regional funding—such as SACOG Mode Shift and an \$800,000 federal Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant—can successfully turn traffic safety policy into life-saving, on-the-ground reality.



Key Actions and Innovations

- **Engineered Data-Driven Validation:** Conducted rigorous pre- and post-project traffic analysis to transform anecdotal school-zone safety concerns into documented, actionable facts for city leaders.
- **Deployed Rapid Quick-Build Tactics:** Utilized a \$2,000 technical assistance investment to immediately install temporary roundabouts and delineators, successfully testing infrastructure changes before permanent capital allocation.
- **Secured Legislative and Community Mandates:** Presented a comprehensive evidence package to the City Council and paired it with a targeted resident survey to build absolute consensus for permanent safety investments.
- **Aligned Cross-Sector Funding:** Positioned local traffic-calming efforts to meet the requirements of a SACOG Mode Shift grant and secured an \$800,000 federal Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant to guarantee long-term infrastructure sustainability.
- **Pioneered Aesthetic Traffic Calming:** Partnered with local education and arts institutions to design an asphalt art project at a key intersection, creating a visually engaging, dual-purpose tool to slow down drivers.

Ultimately, Marysville's data-driven approach ensures that as the city transitions to permanent safety infrastructure and vibrant asphalt art, its neighborhoods remain protected for generations to come. By proving that temporary, quick-build innovations can successfully shape permanent citywide policy, this partnership paves a clear path toward a safer, more walkable future.

Yuba-Sutter Sets a New Standard for Unified Regional Planning

Across the neighboring boundaries of Marysville, Yuba City, Yuba County, and Sutter County, local infrastructure planning was historically restricted by geographic silos. For years, individual municipalities advanced isolated, jurisdiction-specific improvements—an approach that often left regional trail networks, public spaces, and active transportation systems fragmented at the border.

Recognizing that community well-being, equity, and economic vitality do not stop at city or county lines, local leaders sought a more integrated approach. The challenge lay in establishing a continuous framework that could seamlessly align distinct local priorities into a singular, cohesive regional vision. To bridge these systemic divides, the Built Environment (BE) Committee was formed as a central regional forum to convene cross-jurisdictional advocates and public staff around a shared agenda.

Functioning as a collaborative regional table, the BE Committee provides a space where distinct agencies can share critical data, coordinate complementary investments, and transform fragmented ideas into unified action. A signature achievement of this cooperative structure is the development of a shared regional active-transportation “spine”. Masterminded by specialized consultants, this comprehensive Bicycle Implementation Plan outlines the exact project sequencing, policy steps, and precise alignments required to build a continuous, high-quality pathway connecting the Sutter Buttes all the way to Yuba College across four distinct jurisdictions.

This sweeping network is bolstered by vital local milestones, such as the Yuba City Council’s adoption of the Abandoned Railroad Corridor Feasibility Study, which demonstrates the political will to repurpose underutilized rail routes into vibrant trail segments. Concurrently, in Yuba County, the Parks and Recreation Workgroup is driving targeted charter initiatives to weave unincorporated communities, neighborhood schools, and

public riverfront zones into the expanding regional grid.

To anchor these brick-and-mortar developments in rigorous safety data, the committee leverages the Yuba-Sutter Regional Safety Action Plan (RSAP) to actively match infrastructure investments with documented collision and high-injury trends. This data-driven platform is supercharged by community-level insights from the Yuba City Community Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Training (CPBST) workshop, ensuring that local school zones and downtown corridors receive highly tailored updates. Furthermore, programs like Safe Routes to School and the local Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) explicitly treat these trails and streets as vital mechanisms for boosting public health, fostering social connection, and driving down chronic disease.

Ultimately, the BE Committee’s regional synergy elevates local infrastructure into a highly competitive, state-and-federal-ready funding pipeline. By weaving active public spaces across multiple policy arenas—ranging from tobacco prevention to food access—this

POLICY: BUILT ENVIRONMENT

partnership guarantees long-term political durability and reduces risk as jurisdictions pursue ambitious updates to the regional footprint. By erasing political borders in favor of shared regional pathways, the Built Environment Committee demonstrates that true community mobility relies on a foundation of unified cooperation. Through this continuous network, the Yuba-Sutter region sets an enduring standard for how connected planning can cultivate healthier, safer, and more vibrant communities for generations to come.

Key Actions and Innovations

- **Forged a Multi-Jurisdictional Framework:** Convened public staff and advocates across four distinct city and county boundaries to transition the region away from fragmented planning toward an integrated, cross-border strategy.
- **Engineered a Connected Active-Transportation “Spine”:** Finalized a comprehensive Bicycle Implementation Plan to establish a continuous, high-quality path linking the Sutter Buttes to Yuba College.
- **Repurposed Dormant Infrastructure Assets:** Secured local adoption of feasibility studies to transform abandoned railroad corridors and underutilized riverfront sectors into functional regional trail segments.

- **Synthesized Safety Action Data with Public Health:** Integrated the regional RSAP framework with local CHIP health initiatives, explicitly using street design to counter documented crash patterns and enhance community-wide wellness.
- **Cultivated a Competitive Funding Pipeline:** Structured a coherent, multi-agency project portfolio that optimizes local positioning for state and federal transportation grants.

By breaking down geographic silos and establishing a shared infrastructure network, the Built Environment Committee ensures that local trails and public spaces serve as unified pathways toward community well-being. This enduring framework proves that when neighboring jurisdictions plan as one, they build a more resilient, accessible, and deeply connected region for everyone.



TOBACCO

City policies have a lasting, community-wide impact on shaping our environments to support well-being.

Smoking-related illness in the United States costs more than \$300 billion each year, including nearly \$170 billion for direct medical care and more than \$156 billion in lost productivity.¹⁰ Comprehensive community policies can support well-being by limiting exposure to second-hand smoke and leading to lower overall use of tobacco and e-cigarettes.

California is known for having robust statewide tobacco policies, but local partners knew they could take additional steps to help reduce tobacco use rates.

Accordingly, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) worked alongside public health leaders, City and County officials, youth advocates, and community organizations to advance science-based tobacco-control policies aimed at reducing commercial tobacco use and protecting public health.

Key collaborators include the Yuba County Community Health Action Team (CHAT) coalition, Yuba County Health and Human Services (YCHHS), Sutter County Public Health, and the Sutter County Office of Education, who partnered with BZPYS to support regional advocacy, youth engagement, and local policy updates.

In total, nine tobacco policy initiatives and regional collaborations were advanced across the areas of policy enhancement, capacity building, and environmental alignment.



BY THE NUMBERS

According to CWBI data, the rates of cigarette use in Yuba-Sutter dropped to 2.8 percent in 2026, down from 4.0 percent in 2022.



Key Actions and Innovations

- **Marysville No-Smoking Policy Enhancement:** BZPYS and the CHAT Coalition are actively supporting the City of Marysville in strengthening its existing no-smoking ordinance. Working in partnership with the American Lung Association and Yuba County HHS, the team compiled regional data—including Yuba County Kids in Tobacco Control (KIC) data—to draft and deliver an evidence-based policy response.
- **Sutter County Tobacco Ordinance Advocacy:** In February 2026, BZPYS participated in an in-person strategy session with Sutter County Public Health, the Sutter County Office of Education, and regional tobacco control partners. BZPYS reviewed gaps in Sutter County's existing ordinance and served as a regional bridge to align the process with parallel advocacy work in Marysville and Yuba County.
- **#AirOutTheTruth Awareness Media Campaign:** BZPYS co-produced a multichannel anti-vaping media campaign branded #AirOutTheTruth alongside the Yuba County CHAT Coalition. Launched in the summer and fall of 2025, the campaign utilized stark vape-in-schools imagery pulled directly from local campuses for social media platforms and radio advertisements on KUBA/Country 103.1.

- **Vape Waste and Environmental Collaboration:** Exploring an innovative advocacy angle, BZPYS participated in a tobacco waste collaboration meeting in February 2026. This initiative connected tobacco harm reduction directly to SB 1383 environmental compliance, recycling, and community cleanup goals in partnership with Recology, Yuba-Sutter Recycling, and county staff.
- **CHAT Coalition Infrastructure Integration:** BZPYS embedded its operations within the Yuba County Community Health Action Team (CHAT) coalition. By utilizing CHAT's bi-monthly meetings as an operational engine to co-develop campaigns and media content, BZPYS established a permanent, trusted seat within the regional tobacco policy infrastructure alongside health, education, and law enforcement partners.

Together, these policy and capacity-building efforts demonstrate how coordinated, locally driven action can reduce tobacco-related harm and create healthier environments—ensuring that well-being is protected not just today, but for future generations across Yuba-Sutter.

Zoning in on Health in Downtown Yuba City

In mid-2025, leaders and residents in Yuba City sought to safeguard the Plumas Street corridor, widely regarded as the heart of downtown. To ensure the area remained a vibrant, family-friendly destination, stakeholders recognized the importance of preventing an over-concentration of tobacco and vape retailers.

Beyond addressing immediate public health concerns, limiting these establishments was seen as essential to supporting downtown economic vitality and community well-being. To achieve this, the Yuba City Council, Planning Commission, and community development staff collaborated to design a targeted solution. Consequently, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) stepped in to play a key role in convening partners and advancing the policy initiative.

On August 18, 2025, the Yuba City Council

officially approved the establishment of a Commercial Overlay District for the Plumas Street corridor between Highway 20 and Bridge Street. This land-use tool functions by adding targeted requirements on top of existing zoning, effectively prohibiting new tobacco and vape retailers while restricting businesses that primarily sell alcohol for off-site consumption.

Notably, this action positions Yuba City among a small number of California communities using overlay zoning for tobacco prevention, making it an innovative model for other jurisdictions. Supported by the Downtown Business Association and backed by strong community testimony during public comment, the policy reflects a shared vision for a healthier downtown. Yuba City Vice Mayor Marc Boomgaarden highlighted the achievement, noting that the policy will help keep the community safe and healthy while demonstrating the value of Blue Zones' collaborative policy work.

The new overlay provides a strong

foundation for future Tobacco Retail Licensing initiatives. Moving forward, partners will embed these protections into long-term planning, conduct community outreach, and monitor tobacco retailer density alongside economic activity to ensure that downtown development decisions remain firmly aligned with community health priorities.

Key Actions and Innovations

- BZPYS acted as a convener and advocate, leading policy conversations, providing testimony, and elevating community voices to align land-use regulations with public health and downtown economic vitality goals.
- The new policy utilizes overlay zoning, a rare and innovative place-based tool in California that adds targeted requirements on top of existing zoning to prohibit new tobacco retailers and restrict off-site alcohol sales.



POLICY: TOBACCO

- A structured city approval process took place between May and August 2025, with the ordinance earning strong community backing and being deemed exempt from environmental review because it restricts specific uses without creating new environmental impacts.

Ultimately, this innovative zoning policy protects the economic vitality of local businesses while fostering a health-forward, family-friendly atmosphere. By prioritizing community well-being, Yuba City is ensuring that the Plumas Street corridor remains a safe, vibrant, and welcoming destination for everyone who visits.



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YUBA-SUTTER BLUE ZONES EFFORTS TO BRING FORWARD AND WORK WITH THE CITY TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A POLICY BANNING THE SALES OF TOBACCO AND RELATED PRODUCTS WITHIN THE CITY’S DOWNTOWN AREA WILL CERTAINLY HELP KEEP OUR COMMUNITY SAFE AND HEALTHY. THIS IS YET ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THE IMPORTANT POLICY WORK THAT BLUE ZONES IS INVOLVED WITH IN YUBA CITY AND OUR SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES.

Marc Boomgaarden, Vice Mayor,
Yuba City

Unifying Voices for Tobacco Prevention in Yuba County

In late 2025, communities across the Yuba-Sutter region faced a critical threat to youth wellness: an escalating vaping epidemic left unchecked by minimal local policy safeguards. Rising usage rates were coupled with alarming scientific evidence revealing that disposable e-cigarettes expose teenagers to dangerous heavy metals, including lead, nickel, and antimony.

Recognizing that standard classroom education was insufficient to halt this trend, local advocates sought a strategy aimed at systemic and environmental change. To build collective readiness for future policy protections, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) teamed up with the Yuba County Community Health Action Team (CHAT) and the Yuba County Office of Education TUPE Team to spearhead a comprehensive response.

This collaborative effort led to the Yuba County Community Tobacco Forum, dynamically themed #AirOutTheTruth. Held on November 13, 2025, at the Tri-

Counties Community Center, the gathering mobilized around 100 participants—ranging from medical professionals and regional leaders to parents and educators—to forge a united front against commercial tobacco harms.

Rather than presenting a typical seminar, the forum served as a platform for cutting-edge research translation and authentic youth empowerment. Academic experts from UC Davis delivered critical toxicology insights, while neighboring Nevada County public health representatives shared successful blueprints for rural retail licensing. Simultaneously, the event amplified student leadership through a “Wellness Wins” contest, where Lindhurst High School’s Amnesty International club claimed top honors for their peer-driven awareness campaign, and student speaker Angeleek Viola moved the audience with a personal account of breaking generational nicotine patterns.

The forum successfully galvanized regional momentum, prompting cities like Marysville and Yuba City to actively explore more robust local tobacco regulations. Looking ahead through 2026, partners are establishing a sustainable

bi-county youth advocacy coalition to ensure local adolescents secure the same environmental health protections enjoyed in urban California.

Key Actions and Innovations

- BZPYS engineered a multi-sector coalition model, uniting public health entities, academic researchers, and educational institutions to transform complex scientific data into accessible, community-ready advocacy tools.
- The initiative prioritized authentic youth agency, shifting students from passive listeners to active leaders by incentivizing peer-led wellness campaigns and providing financial awards to sustain high school advocacy clubs.
- Regional and rural insights were seamlessly integrated, leveraging state-level perspectives alongside successful small-county policy frameworks to address unique geographic equity gaps in tobacco control.

POLICY: TOBACCO

By transforming a single afternoon of education into a sustained, youth-led movement, the region is actively shifting from passive acceptance to systemic action. This momentum ensures that local youth are fully equipped to champion a healthier, tobacco-free future for the entire Yuba-Sutter community.



FOOD

Food policy has the power to improve the availability of produce across neighborhoods.

A 2011 analysis of U.S. Census data by the Center for Social Inclusion reveals Latino, Native American, and African American communities are two to four times more likely than Whites to lack access to healthy foods.¹¹ Collaborative, community-based policies can foster a healthier local food system, improving access and making produce more visible via schools, corner markets, farmers markets, neighborhood gardens, mobile businesses, and more.

If current eating and exercise habits persist, it is estimated that 86 percent of the American population will be overweight or obese by 2030.¹²

Plate sizes are growing (from 9.5 inches in 1900 to 12.5 inches today) and so are our appetites. We're eating 27 percent more than we used to.

Food is fuel, and what we eat impacts our productivity. A 2012 study revealed that unhealthy eating is related to a 66 percent increase in the risk of lost productivity. Health-related employee-productivity loss accounts for 77 percent of all productivity loss and costs employers up to three times more in annual healthcare expenses.¹³

Beyond looking and feeling better, healthier eating creates material benefits: an estimated \$114.5 billion per year (in 2012 dollars) in medical savings, increased productivity, and reductions in heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and osteoporotic hip fractures.¹⁴ Poor diet is a major risk factor for these five health conditions, all of which reduce life expectancy.

Blue Zones Project focuses on shaping food policy to increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, in part ensuring access for all residents. To address the issue, **29 new food policies, plans, and sustainable programs** have been adopted so far to improve the food environment for individuals and businesses in Yuba-Sutter.



Key Actions and Innovations

- Co-authored and submitted a \$125,000 We Prosper Together Catalyst Pre-development grant for a regional Food Hub Feasibility Study. The proposed hub aims to centralize food aggregation and distribution, establishing the essential infrastructure needed to connect local Hmong, Latino, and small-scale farmers to institutional buyers such as local schools, hospitals, and Beale Air Force Base.
- Produced the landmark “A Taste of Tradition - Farm to Fork Feast” community dinner, drawing over 300 attendees to Downtown Marysville. Organized in partnership with the City of Marysville and Terra Madre Americas, the event used produce from local Hmong farmers to celebrate the region’s diverse culinary heritage while making a powerful policy case for sustained investment and institutional market access for small-scale growers.
- Submitted a \$407,330 Catalyst application for the “Seeds of Resilience” initiative to transition the YSFPC into a permanent regional backbone organization. This

POLICY: FOOD

project is structured to fund two full-time Food Systems Coordinators, manage five active working groups, host multilingual public forums, and establish a Regional Partner Learning Series targeting more than 100 stakeholders.

- Replicated a successful Built Environment joint-application strategy within the regional food policy arena. This coalition-building approach positions the organization as a strategic implementation backbone, creating a distinct competitive advantage when applying for major economic and infrastructure grants.



EXPANDING ACCESS TO FRESH, LOCAL FOOD

Since 2019, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) has secured nearly \$1 million to develop and implement local food security programs and policies. These efforts have significantly expanded access to fresh, locally grown produce, while supporting the regional agricultural economy.

MADD LOVE Sparks a Community Fridge Movement

In less infrastructure-rich areas, addressing food insecurity and minimizing food waste requires creative, grassroots solutions. In the Yuba-Sutter region, providing free, dignified, and barrier-free access to fresh food became a vital mission through a mutual aid model. The MADD LOVE Community Fridge is a testament to what happens when youth leadership and cross-sector partnerships unite to build lasting community impact.

It started with a single spark of inspiration. During a visit to New York City, Addalie Burns discovered a community fridge—an artistic, welcoming space open to all and fully stocked with fresh food. Inspired by the simplicity and dignity of this approach, she envisioned bringing the concept back to her neighborhood. Alongside her best friend, Mia Bumpus, the two young leaders committed themselves to tackling food insecurity right at home.

Finding a permanent location proved challenging in a smaller community. Recognizing the need for strategic

guidance and strong convening power, Addalie and Mia connected early on with the Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) team. Following six months of intensive planning and partnership development, BZPYS brought key partners to the table. Through these vital connections, they partnered with the Yuba-Sutter Food Bank and secured a permanent home for the fridge at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore, with generous support from John Nicoletti.

Launched in April 2025, the initiative established the first-ever community fridge in the Yuba-Sutter region. Placed in a visible, highly welcoming environment to normalize food access and eliminate stigma, the fridge offers free, no-questions-asked access to fresh produce, healthy snacks, and non-perishable staples.

The fridge stays consistently stocked thanks to the food bank, alongside surplus donations from local businesses, community members, grocery stores, and farmers markets. This collective action successfully reduces food waste while directly supporting local residents experiencing food insecurity.

The project's impact has been monumental, distributing 12,000 pounds of food between March 2025 and November 2025. To keep operations running smoothly, a trained volunteer team manages daily upkeep, cleaning, and safety monitoring under standardized protocols. To ensure the model can expand, the Blue Zones team developed a comprehensive, replicable Community Refrigerator Program: Playbook & How-To Manual.

Looking ahead, the team is focused on long-term sustainability by identifying additional host sites in underserved neighborhoods, launching a monthly sponsor program to cover ongoing costs like electricity and signage, and educating volunteers on food safety standards and the Good Samaritan Act.

Key Actions and Innovations

- Established the first community fridge in the Yuba-Sutter region, hosted at the Habitat for Humanity ReStore.
- Partnered with BZPYS and the

POLICY: FOOD

Yuba-Sutter Food Bank to organize site placement, fundraising, and equipment logistics.

- Distributed 12,000 pounds of food to residents experiencing food insecurity over a multi-month period.
- Authored a comprehensive Playbook & How-To Manual to build long-term capacity and offer a scalable model across the region.
- Developed standardized operational tools, including a volunteer log, cleaning checklist, and operational charter to strictly prioritize food safety and cleanliness.
- Mobilized a trained volunteer team to ensure consistent daily upkeep, cleaning, and safety monitoring.

Driven by shared community ownership and strong partnerships, the initiative continues to improve local well-being by increasing food access and promoting dignity. Ultimately, it stands as a powerful reminder of how youth leadership and a single bright idea can blossom into a lasting community impact.



STARTING STRONG

In its first eight months of operation, the MADD LOVE fridge distributed 12,000 pounds of food to local Yuba-Sutter residents.



Bridging the Gap in Yuba-Sutter's Food System

While the Yuba-Sutter region boasts a robust agricultural economy filled with diverse large- and small-scale growers, a persistent paradox has left many vulnerable residents struggling to access that very harvest. To repair this disconnect, a coordinated, regional strategy was required to transform how food is moved and distributed. In June 2023, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) stepped forward to spark the formation of the Yuba-Sutter Food Policy Council (YSFPC). This initiative aligns the region with a broader movement of over 30 food policy councils across California and hundreds more throughout the United States.

Rather than applying a generic solution, the Council designed an equity-driven strategic plan rooted directly in firsthand community feedback and hard data. They gathered a massive coalition—spanning school systems, grocery outlets, medical centers, farmers, and civic agencies—to cultivate a more resilient, sustainable local food economy. By coordinating across these historically separate sectors,

the council focused on expanding local markets for growers while systematically eliminating barriers to healthy food access for underserved populations.

The real-world impact of this collaboration materialized rapidly. In tandem with the Yuba-Sutter Food Bank, the Council captured a \$125,000 Catalyst Pre-development Funding grant to complete a comprehensive Food Hub Feasibility Study, moving the region a critical step closer to vital infrastructure upgrades. Simultaneously, the group rolled out Harmony Market, a targeted distribution initiative that has already nourished 526 families and improved coordination among local food access partners. Today, 15 distinct community organizations maintain an active seat at the table, ensuring long-term shared ownership over these neighborhood health strategies.

True sustainability requires shifting institutional policy, a milestone reached when both Yuba and Sutter Counties formally adopted the Council's strategic benchmarks into their local governmental planning. Looking ahead, the YSFPC is dedicated to making the local food landscape even more inclusive by

expanding direct outreach to historically marginalized food producers, including the local Hmong farming community. Through continuous performance tracking, local sourcing targets, and multilingual engagement, the council is restructuring the regional food network from the roots up. By weaving food equity directly into county infrastructure, Yuba-Sutter is proving that a community is at its strongest when it takes care of its own.

Key Actions and Innovations

- Built a cross-sector coalition of 15 regional organizations to drive shared ownership and long-term execution of local food system strategies.
- Secured a \$125,000 Catalyst grant in partnership with the Yuba-Sutter Food Bank to conduct a comprehensive Food Hub Feasibility Study.
- Introduced the Harmony Market program, successfully delivering affordable, nutritious food access to 526 local families.
- Achieved formal policy integration by securing official adoption of food

POLICY: FOOD

system priorities from both Yuba and Sutter County governments.

- Deployed multilingual and culturally responsive outreach measures to engage diverse community members and underserved producers, including Hmong farmers.
- Designed a data-driven, equity-centered strategic plan utilizing direct community input to guide future regional infrastructure spending.

Through institutional policy integration and deep cross-sector collaboration, the Council is successfully cementing health equity directly into the local infrastructure. This enduring framework ensures that the region's agricultural abundance will reliably nourish and support every member of the community for years to come.

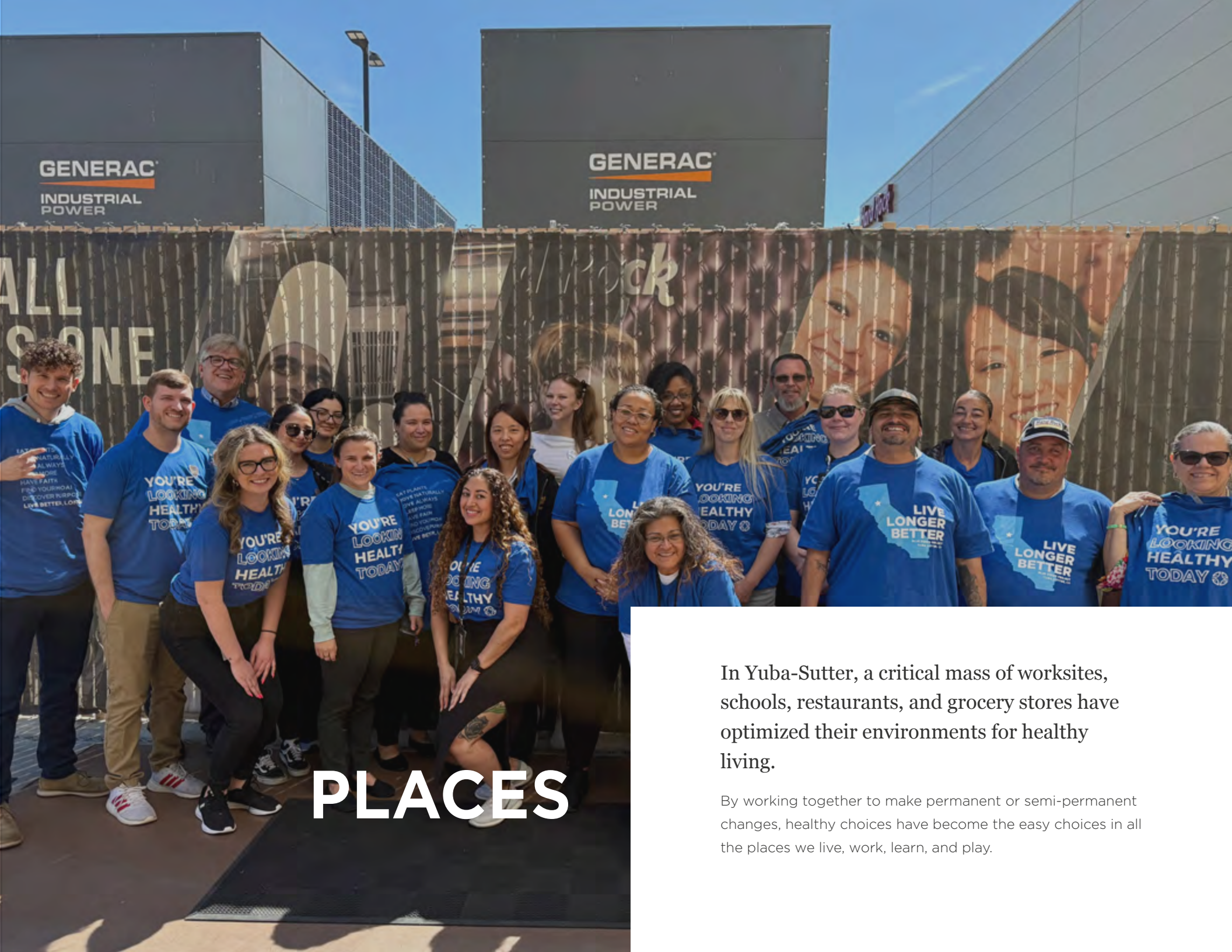




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WE BELIEVE THAT ACCESS TO FRESH, NUTRITIOUS FOOD IS A BASIC HUMAN RIGHT. BY COMING TOGETHER AS A COMMUNITY, WE CAN CREATE POSITIVE CHANGE AND ENSURE THAT NO ONE IS LEFT BEHIND.

Maria Ball, Executive Director, Yuba-Sutter Food Bank



PLACES

In Yuba-Sutter, a critical mass of worksites, schools, restaurants, and grocery stores have optimized their environments for healthy living.

By working together to make permanent or semi-permanent changes, healthy choices have become the easy choices in all the places we live, work, learn, and play.

WORKSITES

Worksites engage employees and support healthy choices.

Employers are in a powerful position to help us move more, eat better, and connect. About one-third of our waking hours are spent at work. Fewer jobs require moderate physical activity, a percentage that has fallen from 50 percent in 1960 to 20 percent today.¹⁶ Some 70 percent of Americans eat at their desk several times a week.¹⁷ As waistlines expand, so do medical costs for employers. Creating healthier work environments can shift that trend, trimming costs and enhancing productivity.

Our community saw 15 worksites take actions to support employees, from providing healthy snacks and produce to creating on-site walking paths and downshift rooms to become Blue Zones Project Approved™.



Impact of Healthier Workplaces

- **Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sacramento** established a supportive workplace culture by introducing several structural and programming changes aligned with employee well-being. The worksite clearly marked indoor walking routes with floor signage and designated a specific employee parking area farthest from the staff entrance to intentionally promote natural movement. Additionally, they introduced rotating Blue Zones-inspired items to the staff cafeteria menu, made blood pressure monitors available for employee check-out, and utilized an internal “Culture Club” committee to drive social connection and community volunteer engagement.
- **Yuba County** integrated well-being directly into its Strategic Plan to successfully scale comprehensive culture change across diverse government offices. To reduce sedentary time and encourage natural movement during the workday, the

county provided under-desk foot pedals and check-out bike pedals for staff, while equipping a majority of employees with sit/stand desks and ergonomic assessments. They also established a dedicated Wellness Committee, displayed walking route maps, and formed interdepartmental Walking Moais to build social connection and accountability, resulting in employees reporting that they felt healthier and less stressed.

- **Harmony Health** focused heavily on physical and policy-driven well-being by launching a fully funded, eight-raised-bed employee garden. This space serves as a hands-on learning environment and a source of fresh produce that directly feeds into “Farm to Break Room” opportunities for staff. Beyond the garden, the nonprofit updated its policies regarding paid time off and volunteering to improve work-life balance, built a dedicated quiet space for providers and staff to reset, and structured a comprehensive Blue Zones onboarding packet to introduce new hires to wellness resources from day one.

PLACES: WORKSITES

- **Caltrans District 3** supported employee health and workplace connection by partnering with the statewide Healthier U program to offer ongoing training and resources focused on preventative health, mindful eating, and stress management. The district effectively expanded on-site nutritional access by helping 2 Bits Express—the restaurant located within its building—achieve Blue Zones Project approval to provide healthier menu options. Furthermore, they consistently promoted Employee Assistance Program (EAP) resources to support mental health and drove employee engagement through social events like potlucks, health fairs, and ice cream socials.
- **Yuba County Health and Human Services (YCHHS)** successfully embedded well-being into its daily operations, resulting in sustained employee engagement and reduced staff turnover. The department re-imagined its “Rethink Your Drink” initiative and bolstered employee usage of its “Zen Den” relaxation room. Employees also built active habits and workplace camaraderie

through structured Wednesday Walks, weekly Blue Zones T-shirt Days, and regular family-friendly social gatherings like an annual employee picnic and open house.



BY THE NUMBERS

Over 1,000 employees at Blue Zones Project Approved™ worksites have taken part in BZPYS activities, signaling strong momentum for well-being in the workplace.



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INSPIRED BY THE
BLUE ZONES PROJECT,
WE ARE REMINDED
THAT TRUE WELL-
BEING BEGINS
WITH AWARENESS—
EMPOWERING OUR
TEAM TO EMBRACE
THEIR BENEFITS,
LIVE WITH PURPOSE,
AND HELP BUILD A
HEALTHIER, MORE
VIBRANT COMMUNITY
TOGETHER.

Jennifer White, Registered Dietitian
Nutritionist, Harmony Health



Sutter County Chooses a Culture of Health and Well-Being

Sutter County takes well-being seriously, serving an estimated population of approximately 99,145 residents. As one of the region's largest employers, the County supports its community through more than 900 employees delivering essential services across Public Safety, Public Health, Behavioral Health, Tax Collection, and more.

Internally, Sutter County's Human Resources team is committed to fostering an enriching and dynamic work environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and professional growth. By prioritizing employee well-being alongside service excellence, the County recruits, develops, and retains a high-performing, diverse workforce while promoting a healthy, safe, and productive workplace culture. Recognizing the importance of employee well-being, Sutter County partnered with Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) to enhance its existing BeWell Sutter County Employee Wellness

and Incentive Program.

The BeWell program allows employees to personalize their wellness journey by setting goals aligned with their interests and engaging in activities that support five key areas of wellness: physical, mental, financial, occupational, and social. In launching this initiative, Sutter County aligned closely with the mission and evidence-based approach of the Blue Zones Project. Through coaching, insights, and collaboration, the County strengthened its employee wellness strategy by integrating proven practices that support physical, emotional, and social well-being.

Sutter County successfully embedded Blue Zones principles into its BeWell program through a range of practical, engaging, and sustainable initiatives. Through the partnership, the County has offered Personal Purpose Workshops, Walking Moais, and monthly cooking demonstrations—providing employees with tools and experiences that encourage sustainable, healthy habits both at work and at home. The collaboration has also connected the County with other organizations in the region, creating

shared learning and inspiration around well-being best practices.

These efforts have yielded significant outcome highlights across the workforce. A total of 696 employees completed the Wellness Assessment Survey, 382 completed at least four engagements, and 31 Wellness Clubs were established. The real-world impact is clear: 68.5% of employees reported an improved work-life balance, 72.2% met their established wellness goals, and 71.4% reported being happier at work.

To ensure these positive changes last, Sutter County designed the BeWell program with long-term sustainability in mind. Their ongoing plan includes maintaining annual health risk assessments and biometric screenings, continuing Walking Moais as a visible part of workplace culture, and strengthening communication strategies to engage employees across multiple worksites. Through these dedicated efforts, Sutter County demonstrates how a large, diverse public-sector employer can embed well-being into daily operations and sustain a culture of health over time.

Key Actions and Innovations

- Created regular opportunities for employees to move naturally, connect with colleagues, and build meaningful relationships through Walking Moais.
- Offered diverse programs including cooking demonstrations, purpose workshops, dance classes, yoga, and other community-based activities.
- Promoted community connection and service through participation in initiatives such as Santa for a Senior, National Walking Day, and International Women's Day.
- Encouraged natural movement at the Administration Office by designating further Blue Zones parking spaces for daily use.

Together, these innovative steps have successfully fostered a supportive workplace culture that makes healthy choices easier, more social, and more accessible across daily operations. By proudly participating in this movement, the County continues to inspire its workforce while encouraging other regional organizations to embark on their own well-being journeys.



PARTNERING WITH BLUE ZONES HAS BEEN A FUN AND EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY. THE COLLABORATION WITH BLUE ZONES YUBA-SUTTER AND THE OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT ARE WORKING WITH THEM HAS BEEN INSPIRING.

Veronica Baumgardner, Human Resources Director, Sutter County

SCHOOLS

Local schools create foundations for lifelong well-being.

Schools can shape healthy habits for life. Over the past 40 years, rates of obesity among children have soared.

Approximately 25 million children and adolescents (more than 33 percent) are now overweight or obese, or at the risk of becoming so.¹⁹

Physical activity and stretch breaks during the school day can improve grades, increase concentration, and raise math, reading, and writing test scores.²⁰ Simple changes in lunchroom design can nudge students toward healthier choices.²¹

In Yuba-Sutter, 19 schools across three districts earned a Blue Zones Project Approved™ designation.

Schools implemented policies and introduced food options that encourage healthy eating on campus, integrated physical activity into the day, and incorporated other Blue Zones principles into the curriculum and campus space. Multiple schools report a range of benefits, including increased focus and classroom engagement.

Impact of Healthier Schools

- **Linda Elementary School** integrated whole-child wellness into daily routines through its A-Z salad bar and Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to expand student access to nutritious foods. Additionally, the school introduced school gardens for hands-on nutrition learning alongside family connection events like monthly Family Reading Nights and a Color Run fundraiser, ultimately resulting in increased parent engagement and an enhanced sense of student belonging.
- At **Lincrest Elementary School**, a focus on active lifestyles and positive behavior led to the creation of monthly Walk to School days and the implementation of “ROAR” bucks for non-food rewards. Supported by these wellness-centered incentives and community events like the neighborhood Halloween Parade, the school successfully improved student attendance and fostered greater family participation across school activities.
- **River Valley High School** established a student-led Blue Zones Club to drive

campus well-being, leading initiatives like featuring healthier food options at school events and hosting lunchtime downshift practices such as rock painting and card making. Through these efforts, alongside school-wide Purpose Workshops and service projects delivering handmade cards to local seniors, the school achieved increased student awareness of Power 9 strategies and an improved student understanding of personal pathways to purpose.



WALKING HELPS KIDS

Children who walk to school are more alert and ready to learn, strengthen their social networks, and develop lifelong fitness habits. A Walking School Bus allows a group of children to walk to school under the supervision of an adult.^{22, 23}

YUBA-SUTTER STUDENTS GET MOVING

Eleven Walking School Buses were launched at area schools to get students, family, and faculty moving naturally and building community.

Empowering Purpose and Resilience at South Lindhurst High School

We traditionally see schools as institutions of learning, and teachers as conduits of information. In truth, both are foundational partners in student change and structural transformation. Students are in a season of unparalleled growth and development that happens just once in a lifetime. To successfully walk them through it, a school environment must be equally adaptive, compassionate, and focused on the whole child.

South Lindhurst High School deeply understands this truth, offering vital guidance, support, and opportunity to the 11th- and 12th-grade students who need it most across its two campuses. As an alternative high school within the Marysville Joint Unified School District, its core focus centers on credit recovery, early graduation, and providing a smaller, deeply supportive learning environment. Since teaming up with Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS), South Lindhurst has

seamlessly woven the Power 9 principles into its daily operations, actively nurturing healthy habits at school and at home. By emphasizing purpose and strong social connections, the school builds student resilience and outlines a positive pathway toward long-term college or career success.

A central milestone of this partnership was a campus-wide Purpose Workshop conducted with all students. This unique engagement empowered learners to look inward and clearly identify their personal goals, individual strengths, and future career pathways. To extend this sense of meaning outward, South Lindhurst established an impactful Mentorship Program. Through this initiative, high schoolers connect directly with nearby elementary students, which beautifully strengthens their leadership skills, personal purpose, and mutual social connections.

Beyond campus borders, the school has prioritized building an interconnected school culture through family and community engagement activities hosted both on and off campus. In a particularly moving display of service, students partnered with local seniors at

Prestige Assisted Living. Together, the generations spent time painting and planting side-by-side, fostering profound intergenerational connections while giving back to the community. This initiative has directly fueled a massive boost in student engagement across local community organizations and service opportunities.

Students also get moving in their physical environment through the development of a brand-new school garden. Supported closely by BZPYS, this green space promotes hands-on learning, natural movement, and immediate access to healthy, fresh foods. Rather than existing as an isolated project, the garden is actively incorporated into the school's core science courses. Here, students focus on foundational best practices surrounding eating wisely, environmental care, and growing a tightly knit school community.

Back in the school building, the day-to-day culture has shifted away from sugary defaults. With the help of BZPYS, South Lindhurst transitioned to healthier, non-food student incentives through the creative “Noble Knight Cards” program. School events have also transformed to feature a much greater availability of

PLACES: SCHOOLS

nutritious food and beverage options for students, families, and staff alike. As Instructional Coach Sandra Munoz beautifully reflects, the collaboration has been an “exciting and innovative partnership” that has played a remarkably positive role across the entire school culture. Looking forward, the campus is fully committed to sustaining these habits by continuing milestone traditions like Back to School Night and Senior Sunrise, ensuring that well-being remains permanently embedded in the school’s identity.

By embedding purpose, mentorship, and healthy habits into the fabric of its alternative education model, South Lindhurst High School does far more than help students recover credits—it builds a foundation for lifelong resilience. In aligning its campus culture with well-being, this dedicated community ensures that every student is fully equipped to harvest a healthier, brighter future.

Key Actions and Innovations

- Conducted a comprehensive Purpose Workshop for all students to help them define personal goals, strengths, and future career pathways.
- Developed a brand-new school garden to promote natural movement, increase access to healthy foods, and support interactive learning.
- Blended the school garden environment directly into core science courses to teach best practices regarding eating wisely and ecological stewardship.

- Launched a unique mentorship network connecting high schoolers with nearby elementary students to build leadership and deeper social connections.
- Partnered with local seniors at Prestige Assisted Living for shared painting and planting activities, driving increased student engagement in community service.
- Transitioned to non-food and healthier rewards by utilizing the “Noble Knight Cards” program to encourage positive behaviors.
- Expanded the availability of healthier, more nutritious food and beverage options at all on- and off-campus school events.
- Formulated a long-term plan to host family-centered traditions—such as Back to School Night and Senior Sunrise—to continuously reinforce a supportive school culture.

By weaving purpose and connection into the heart of its alternative education model, South Lindhurst High School proves that a supportive environment can completely transform a student’s trajectory. In prioritizing both inner resilience and community engagement, this dedicated campus ensures its graduates walk forward onto a healthy, successful path.



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THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT HAS BEEN AN EXCITING AND INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH SOUTH LINDHURST HIGH SCHOOL TO SUPPORT HEALTHY LIVING AND STRENGTHEN OUR SCHOOL CULTURE. BLUE ZONES POWER 9 PRINCIPLES HAVE PLAYED A POSITIVE ROLE WITH STAFF, STUDENTS, AND FAMILIES IN INCORPORATING HEALTHY HABITS BOTH AT SCHOOL AND HOME. BLUE ZONES HAS SUPPORTED INCORPORATING MORE HEALTHY AND NON-FOOD REWARDS FOR STUDENTS AS PART OF OUR NOBLE KNIGHT CARDS. BLUE ZONES HAS ALSO BEEN AN EXTRAORDINARY PARTNER IN SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR NEW SCHOOL GARDEN. IT WILL BE INCORPORATED INTO OUR SCIENCE COURSES AND WILL FOCUS ON BEST PRACTICES AROUND EATING WISELY, PURPOSE, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND GROWING OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY.

Sandra Munoz, Instructional Coach, South Lindhurst High School

RESTAURANTS

Restaurant meals can weigh us down or lift us up.

Without accounting for an appetizer or dessert the typical American entree weighs in at 1,000 calories.²⁴ For the average adult, eating out just once a week roughly translates to a two pound weight gain per year. Yet evidence indicates that people appreciate healthy changes. In a five-year study of sales at U.S. restaurant chains, those that increased their better-for-you/low-calorie servings saw a 5.5 percent increase in same-store sales, while those that did not suffered a 5.5 percent decrease.²⁵

With nearly one half of every food dollar spent on meals prepared outside the home, it's important that restaurants make healthy choices easier for customers by offering healthy entrees.

Residents and visitors of Yuba-Sutter now have 10 Blue Zones Project Approved™ restaurants to choose from, and more than 47 Blue Zones-inspired dishes to enjoy.

In these restaurants, patrons may find smaller portion and split-plate options, healthier offerings highlighted through signage and staff-

customer interactions, expanded use of local produce, and more.

In the heart of Yuba City, **The Village Coffee Shoppe & Bistro** serves as a community-centered hub where neighbors gather and connect. They offer distinct Blue Zones-inspired dishes clearly identified on their main menu under “It’s a Blue Zones Project Thang”. Signature items such as the avocado toast and Yogi Bowl have quickly become customer favorites, with some guests even traveling from Marysville specifically to enjoy them. In response to this strong customer demand, plans are already underway to expand their Blue Zones-inspired menu options.

Innovative setups like **Lami Island Fusion**—notably the area’s first food truck to earn Blue Zones Project Approved distinction—are also seeing massive success. By leading the local charge to make grilled zucchini the default side dish, they sparked a major cultural shift. Team members and customers alike now regularly enjoy the vegetable, and customer demand has grown so significantly that many guests now visit the food trailer specifically for their zucchini dishes.

Both establishments show a deep commitment to well-being through extensive community

engagement. The Village Coffee Shoppe & Bistro hosts at least one community-facing event each month, including the Yuba-Sutter Shines Volunteer Event, Coffee Scrub Making Events, and Tasty Tuesdays. Additionally, co-owner Denise Landis served as Project Manager for the September 2025 Farm to Fork event. Meanwhile, Lami Island Fusion contributes far beyond its menu by hosting healthy cooking demonstrations at produce distributions, strengthening lunch partnerships with local worksites like Yuba County Health and Human Services, and donating fertilizer and worm castings to support local school and community gardens.

At a broader level, these and other Blue Zones Approved establishments in the Yuba-Sutter region demonstrate that delicious food and healthier choices can go hand in hand. This remarkable momentum highlights a growing popularity and demand for mindful dining options, showcasing how simple environmental changes can mean





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PERSONALLY, I’VE LEARNED SO MUCH FROM THE BLUE ZONES ORGANIZATION SINCE WE’VE STARTED THIS JOURNEY... IT’S NOT JUST ABOUT LIVING LONGER, IT’S ALSO ABOUT LIVING A RICHER LIFE. AMONGST THE TEAM, IT’S HELPED EXPAND THEIR PERSONAL MENU AND APPRECIATION FOR THE FOOD WE EAT AND SERVE.

Jose Basa, Co-Owner, Lami Island Fusion

Cultivating Community and Nourishment at Brick Coffee House Café

We typically see restaurants as places to eat, and chefs as curators of flavor. In truth, both are vital pillars in fostering neighborhood health and personal well-being. Patrons visit local dining spots to share moments, gather with loved ones, and fuel their bodies. To truly uplift a neighborhood, an establishment must weave health and connection directly into its hospitality.

The Brick Coffee House Café—affectionately dubbed “The Brick” by locals—perfectly embodies this philosophy, serving as a role model for other dining establishments in the region. As a beloved mainstay of downtown Marysville, this locally owned café serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner in a uniquely welcoming atmosphere complete with a beautiful outdoor brick patio. When Kymberly Matta stepped in as the owner, she enthusiastically embraced and strengthened the restaurant’s partnership with Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter

(BZPYS), continuing a shared mission to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

Under Matta’s leadership, the café has prioritized delicious, thoughtfully prepared meals that support well-being and celebrate local food systems. The Brick has seamlessly integrated multiple evidence-based best practices into its daily operations, starting right at the dinner table. To encourage mindful eating, the restaurant serves appropriate portions on 10” plates. Furthermore, the legacy soda fountain was entirely eliminated when ownership transitioned, and fresh fruit was made available for purchase directly at the point of sale to nudge patrons toward healthier alternatives.

Diners looking for plant-forward nourishment can easily find four clearly identified Blue Zones-inspired items integrated directly onto the main menu. This menu shift has enjoyed immense success, resulting in 8,732 Blue Zones-inspired meals sold over a two-year period. Among these dishes, the café’s signature avocado toast blossomed into the top-selling healthy item, inspiring the creation of a seasonal avocado toast featured as a recurring weekly special. To build on this momentum, a dedicated local team has

hosted dynamic “Tasty Tuesday” events to actively promote these nutritious menu offerings to the public.

Beyond adjusting what is on the plate, The Brick has expanded its commitment to the regional food economy by sourcing fresh produce directly from local farmers. Guests can see this dedication firsthand through a visible on-site display that proudly highlights the café’s local partners. Matta deeply values how BZPYS celebrates these regional relationships, allowing the restaurant to act as an anchor for local agriculture.

True wellness extends beyond diet, and The Brick has long been a versatile cornerstone for social connection, hosting everyday meals, work meetings, studying, and celebrations. The café served as the original meeting location and starting point for the Marysville Walking Moai—a community-led movement and social initiative spearheaded by Community Development Director and Sutter County Supervisor Dan Flores. Additionally, the restaurant actively supports the wider community by backing local fundraisers and beloved community events, such as the Bok Kai Festival and Marysville High School initiatives.

PLACES: RESTAURANTS

As the very first restaurant in Yuba County and Marysville to earn a Blue Zones Project Approved designation, The Brick is not slowing down. Its forward-looking sustainability plan includes maintaining its core well-being items, highlighting a unique local ingredient each season, and introducing future cooking demonstrations and “Friends at 5” social gatherings to keep the community thriving. By embedding healthy choices and genuine connection into its daily business model, The Brick is proving that a local restaurant can nourish both the body and the soul of a town. In choosing to champion community health one plate at a time, this beloved café ensures a vibrant, well-connected future for Marysville. It stands as an enduring testament to how local businesses can inspire long-term wellness from the inside out.

Key Actions and Innovations

- Became the first restaurant in both Marysville and Yuba County to achieve official Blue Zones Project Approved status.
- Integrated and clearly labeled four Blue Zones-inspired items on the main menu to make nutritious choices visible and easy.
- Sold 8,732 Blue Zones-inspired meals over a two-year period, reflecting powerful consumer demand for healthier dining.
- Developed a seasonal avocado toast as a recurring weekly special after the original version became the restaurant’s number-one selling Blue Zones item.
- Shifted to serving appropriate, mindful food portions utilizing 10” plates across daily operations.
- Completely eliminated the restaurant’s soda fountain under new ownership to reduce access to sugary beverages.
- Placed fresh, whole fruit available for purchase at the checkout counter to encourage immediate healthy choices.
- Expanded the use of locally sourced ingredients and established a visible partnership display to support the regional food economy.
- Utilized a local team to host “Tasty Tuesday” events dedicated to promoting and sampling Blue Zones menu options.
- Served as the initial starting point and meeting location for the Marysville Walking Moai connection and movement group.
- Maintained strong neighborhood partnerships by actively supporting local fundraisers, Marysville High School initiatives, and the Bok Kai Festival.
- Outlined a future growth plan to host “Friends at 5” social gatherings, offer cooking demonstrations, and highlight a rotating seasonal local ingredient.

By proving that flavor and wellness can seamlessly share the same menu, The Brick Coffee House Café is showing that healthy choices can easily become a community’s favorite tradition. In nourishing both its neighbors and the regional food economy, this downtown cornerstone continues to pave the way for a healthier, more connected Marysville.

GROCERY STORES

Local grocery stores promote healthy foods and cooking skills.

Grocery stores influence food decisions. The actions we take to determine what we eat begin at the store. **About 60 percent of the food we purchase is highly processed, fatty, salty, or sugary.**²⁶ Grocery store promotions and design layout can influence those choices for the better.

In the U.S., healthy eating could generate an estimated savings of \$114.5 billion per year through reduced medical costs, increased productivity, and decline in heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, and osteoporotic hip fractures.²⁷

Americans visit the grocery store almost twice a week on average, and their food choices impact their health and productivity. The design of many grocery stores and the deals they promote often point people to unhealthy foods.

Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) created awareness around these issues, and

five local grocers took steps to implement best practices and become Blue Zones Project Approved™ grocery stores.

La Superior Supermercados is a family-owned and operated grocery store chain with nine locations across Northern California. Recognized for its commitment to serving diverse communities with fresh, culturally relevant foods, it became the second Blue Zones Project Approved grocery store and the first ethnic market in the region to earn this designation. Since its official approval in July 2024, the store has expanded its produce section, consistently stocked grab-and-go fresh fruit options, and hosted five cooking demonstrations focused on healthy, culturally relevant meals.

Operating as an important cultural and community hub, **L.A. Merchandise** is a natural fit for BZPYS because the majority of the foods it sells are vegetarian and plant-based, naturally supporting healthier eating patterns. Co-owner Baksho Visla has enthusiastically demonstrated strong support for the mission by welcoming the installation of BZPYS marketing materials, actively supporting multilingual translation

efforts, and encouraging participation in the annual Nagar Kirtan Festival.

Other measures taken by these and other Blue Zones Approved grocery stores to facilitate healthier choices include using floor and grocery cart signage to direct customers toward nutritious options, clearly labeling approved items in multiple languages, and prominently placing nuts and seasonal produce near the front of the store. Additionally, participating grocers make wellness-inspired recipes readily available at cash registers and foster health-forward retail environments by entirely excluding alcohol and tobacco products from their shelves.



WHY IT MATTERS

Sixty percent of purchases are unplanned. Placing attractive produce or other healthy products at the front of the store, at the deli, or at the checkout area can encourage “impulse” purchase of these healthy items.²⁸



Revolutionizing Community Vitality at New Earth Market

While a grocery store might seem like nothing more than a pit stop on your weekly to-do list, it actually plays a much bigger role in your daily well-being. Shoppers visit local markets multiple times a week to nourish their families and fuel their daily routines. To truly support a community, a marketplace must look beyond the shelves and transform its aisles into spaces where the healthy choice is the easiest choice.

New Earth Market perfectly captures this vision, serving as a premier destination for health and longevity in Yuba City. Founded in 2011 by Kevin Cotter, the market was born from a simple but powerful purpose: to help people get

to the root of their health through food. This mission was deeply personal, inspired by Kevin's own chronic health challenges and his daughter Jordan's childhood asthma, both of which were traced back to underlying food intolerances. After discovering how eliminating inflammatory foods dramatically improved their quality of life, Kevin recognized a glaring gap in the local landscape. At the time, finding clean, natural, and allergen-conscious foods required exhausting trips completely outside the region.

Driven to meet the needs of his community right at home, Kevin made a bold pivot after spending nearly 30 years in the trucking industry. Rallying the enthusiastic support of family, friends, and community partners, he successfully opened New Earth Market. Today, the store stands as Yuba City's top independent and locally owned choice for natural, organic, and healthy options.

Rather than viewing their space as just a standard place to shop, the New Earth Market team treats the store as a living example of how food environments can actively support healthier lifestyles and long-term vitality. The market has intentionally expanded the visibility and accessibility of plant-based, whole-food options. Customers are welcomed by vibrant

bilingual signage celebrating plant-based “longevity foods”—or *comidas para la longevidad*. To ensure a seamless and supportive shopping experience, the store features a permanent Blue Zones Checkout Lane alongside a dedicated, rotating end-cap display highlighting seasonal wellness items and the Power 9 principles. This commitment to well-being extends behind the scenes as well; the store beautifully refurbished its employee break room into a peaceful “Zen Den” to directly nurture the daily health and mindfulness of its own staff.

True to the core philosophy of collective well-being, New Earth Market's leadership reaches far beyond its retail walls. Owner Kevin Cotter serves as an active champion on the local Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) Steering Committee, passionately advocating for policy, environmental, and cultural changes across the broader Yuba-Sutter area. In 2024, the store further cemented its role as a neighborhood anchor by installing a prominent Blue Zones Project mural, beautifully reinforcing community identity and positive health messaging for every passerby. Looking ahead, the market's sustainability plan focuses on maintaining these foundational design choices while continuing to host quarterly Blue Zones Project-related events for local families. Reflecting on this ongoing partnership, Cotter notes that the store is deeply “appreciative of the opportunity to partner with

PLACES: GROCERY STORES

Blue Zones to be part of the collective effort...to enhance the quality of life in our community.”

By turning daily grocery shopping into an intentional act of well-being, New Earth Market is proving that optimal health begins right in the neighborhood market aisles. Through its enduring dedication to clean foods, staff care, and regional policy leadership, this independent grocery cornerstone continues to nourish a healthier, more vibrant future for Yuba City.

Key Actions and Innovations

- Achieved status as the first grocery store and the first overall organization in the Yuba-Sutter region to receive official Blue Zones Project Approved designation on September 12, 2022.
- Substantially increased the visibility and customer accessibility of plant-based, whole-food options throughout the store.
- Installed educational store displays featuring bilingual descriptions

highlighting plant-based “longevity foods” (comidas para la longevidad).

- Created a permanent Blue Zones Checkout Lane to make positive, health-forward choices effortless during the final stages of shopping.
- Maintained and continually refreshed a dedicated Blue Zones end-cap display focused on seasonal products and the Power 9 principles.
- Prioritized staff health and mental downshifting by refurbishing the standard employee break room into a calming employee “Zen Den”.
- Owner actively serves on the local BZPYS Steering Committee to advocate for structural culture, policy, and environmental shifts across the community.
- Installed a dedicated Blue Zones Project mural in 2024 to visually reinforce well-being messaging and strengthen community identity.
- Formulated a long-term sustainability plan to host quarterly Blue Zones

Project-related community events to keep local shoppers connected and educated.

By turning the daily grocery run into an intentional act of wellness, New Earth Market continues to fulfill its foundational purpose of helping people get to the root of their health through food. In beautifully reshaping the local food environment, this independent marketplace stands as an enduring champion for a healthier, more vibrant Yuba City.



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WE ARE APPRECIATIVE
OF THE OPPORTUNITY
TO PARTNER WITH
BLUE ZONES TO
BE PART OF THE
COLLECTIVE EFFORT,
AS ONE OF MANY
LOCAL RESOURCES,
TO ENHANCE THE
QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR
COMMUNITY.

Kevin Cotter, Owner, New Earth
Market

PEOPLE

Blue Zones Project encourages people to optimize their homes and social environments through Purpose Workshops, walking groups, cooking demonstrations, volunteer opportunities, and other community-based activities. These experiences help participants develop healthy habits, strengthen social connections, and create supportive environments that contribute to long-term well-being.



STRONG SOCIAL CONNECTIONS HELP RESIDENTS MOVE MORE, EAT BETTER, CONNECT, AND DOWNSHIFT

Our connections to friends, family, and those around us are very powerful. They can shape our lives in more ways than we realize.

Research shows that even your friends' friends' friends—people you don't even know—can affect your health, happiness, and behaviors.²⁹

In Yuba-Sutter, people of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds united to affect positive change in their communities through Blue Zones Project. From the program's initial launch in 2021 to its community certification in 2026:

12,645

individuals involved in the Project.

758+

residents donated their time, skills, and passions toward volunteer opportunities tracked as part of Blue Zones Project.

1,433

residents participated in Purpose Workshops to rediscover and apply their gifts in their daily lives.

208

people met up with a Moai for connecting to walk or eat healthier together.

2,353

individuals attended free plant-based cooking classes offered in the community.



WHAT'S A MOAI?

Moai is a concept from Okinawa, Japan, that roughly means coming together for a common purpose. When you find your Moai, you find your personal board of directors — a committed group of individuals supporting each other and working collectively to improve well-being, for life.



PEOPLE

The world's longest-lived people in blue zones areas have always understood the power of social connectedness. In Okinawa, "moais"—groups of about five people who commit to each other for life—provide social connection, emotional, and sometimes financial support in times of need. Moai members have the stress-shedding security of knowing there is always someone there for them.

Spending time with people who positively influence one another is crucial. In Yuba-Sutter, we embrace the power of social connections to bring citizens together through groups, clubs, and community organizations.

Move more. Over **200 individuals** joined Walking Moais that were created throughout the community, building long-lasting friendships while exploring our community on foot.

Eat better. A total of **168 cooking classes and demonstrations brought 2,353 people together** to learn to cook new plant-based dishes.

Connect and have the right outlook. Blue zones centenarians also put an emphasis on connecting with their reason for being. Whether through family, career, or community, living with purpose pays off. Blue Zones researchers have found that people who have a clear sense of purpose in life tend to live about seven years longer than those who don't.³⁰

Through volunteering and Purpose Workshops, Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter encourages individuals to discover their innate gifts. We help our community members match their passions and commitment to volunteer opportunities that deepen their sense of purpose.

More than **1,433 people sought to discover their gifts at a Purpose Workshop** and put their skills to work by giving back to Yuba-Sutter through volunteer work. **With over 2,739 hours donated, volunteers in Yuba-Sutter have generated at least \$114,353.25 in value for the community.**³¹

Today, **46.1 percent of Yuba-Sutter residents report they are living in the perfect place for them, compared to 39.9 percent in 2022.**



WHY IT MATTERS

Residents across Yuba-Sutter are showing up for each other in big ways. Today, 69.2 percent of adults report having someone in their lives who always encourages them to be healthy, up from 63.1 percent in 2022.





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I'M SO BLESSED TO HAVE GOTTEN INVOLVED WITH THIS GROUP...WE HAVE A GREAT TIME; I LOOK FORWARD TO OUR TUESDAY WALKS AND BESIDES THE HEALTHY LIVING, AND THE HEALTHY ADVICE, I'VE MADE SOME REALLY GREAT FRIENDS.

Karen, Mall Walking Moai Participant

Sowing Seeds of Well-Being at St. Andrew

Many wise people have said that global change starts with local action. In the Yuba-Sutter region, a dedicated congregation took that to heart.

Instead of waiting for others to create a health-conscious environment, St. Andrew Presbyterian Church made a plan. They became a model Blue Zones Project Participating Organization by integrating well-being directly into their ministry, programs, and spaces.

From more than two decades of hope and planning, a long-envisioned movement sprang forth. The church partnered with Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) to bring a vibrant community garden to life, creating not only a space to grow fresh produce, but also a place where neighbors could gather, learn, and connect.

As the garden flourished, so did opportunities for community engagement. The space has become a hub for learning, connection, and hands-on experiences through its community gardening club. Open to all residents at no cost, the club has hosted a variety of educational

and interactive events, including seed-starting workshops and swaps, tomato and pepper growing classes, build-a-garden-bed workshops, and community plant swaps. These activities have brought people together, encouraged the sharing of gardening knowledge, and provided accessible opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation and social connection.

As the garden continues to grow, future harvests may provide opportunities to share fresh produce with community members through entities such as Mother Hubbard's Cupboard, to residents who could benefit from increased access to healthy foods. The garden installation successfully mobilized more than 100 on-site volunteers during the Yuba-Sutter Shines Day of Service on April 26, 2025.

Often, an organization's effort to achieve well-being inspires those in their immediate circle. But when a congregation creates space and opportunity for an entire neighborhood to change their lives, the impact is limitless.

St. Andrew's partnership with BZPYS also expanded the reach of its wellness initiatives. The congregation consistently strengthens healthy choice environments,

movement, and social connection by hosting cooking demonstrations, Friendsgiving gatherings, youth hikes, and a weekly community walk at the Feather River Parkway.

For many, these programs provide pockets of peace, fostering intergenerational engagement, enhanced dignity, and sustained ownership within a shared, educational space.

St. Andrew's congregation and local volunteers have also taken over ongoing maintenance to ensure long-term sustainability. Their leadership is a testament to the fact that a community-driven faith organization can spark a world of change.



CULTIVATING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The St. Andrew Community Garden project engaged more than 100 volunteers in a single-day garden installation and integrated sustainable food practices supported by approximately \$6,000 in funding.

Re-imagining Systemic Health in Yuba-Sutter

True community transformation is built on a foundation of sustainable, long-term investment. In the Yuba-Sutter region, philanthropic leaders embraced this philosophy to ensure health-forward progress continues to thrive for generations.

Rather than relying purely on short-term programming, the Sutter Yuba Community Foundation chose to permanently weave wellness into the very fabric of the area. To do this, they established the Sutter Yuba Community Well-Being Fund—a dedicated \$100,000 capital commitment focused entirely on uplifting local neighborhoods.

This substantial endowment provides structural backing for grassroots initiatives that make healthy decisions intuitive. The fund is strategically structured to simplify healthy choices across all the spaces where residents live, learn, work, and connect.

Looking ahead, local schools, civic organizations, and neighborhood groups will gain direct access to these resources to

fund their own local health ideas beginning in the summer of 2026. The rollout marks a monumental milestone, which was celebrated publicly alongside donors and regional leaders at the foundation's annual holiday gathering.

While standalone wellness projects are highly valuable, true longevity occurs when health priorities are seamlessly embedded into a region's permanent financial infrastructure. This fund successfully bridges the gap between temporary campaigns and lasting, structural stability.

The collaborative efforts with Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter (BZPYS) have effectively reshaped how local leaders approach regional philanthropy. This shared vision has inspired a shift toward cross-sector ownership and collective accountability for health across the counties.

Moving forward, these financial resources will breathe life into vital community-led assets, supporting public gardens, natural movement options, and inclusive programs that deepen social belonging.

By housing this capital within a trusted local foundation, the community has secured an enduring vehicle for positive change. It stands as a prime example of how forward-thinking institutions can transition from time-limited projects into locally owned, sustainable systems.



SECURING FUTURE RESOURCES

The creation of the \$100,000 Sutter Yuba Community Well-Being Fund successfully integrates health-focused priorities into the region's philanthropic infrastructure, creating an accessible grant pathway for schools and local groups starting in summer 2026.



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THE BLUE ZONES PROJECT GOALS COMPLETELY COMPLEMENT THE SUTTER YUBA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION’S GOALS BY SUPPORTING OVERALL COMMUNITY WELL-BEING AND MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES EASIER ACROSS YUBA-SUTTER. WE WANT TO SUPPORT BOTH INITIATIVES AIMED TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY CAPACITY AND IMPROVE QUALITY OF LIFE.

Karin Jelavich, Sutter Yuba Community Foundation



Step by Step, Yuba-Sutter Walking Moais are Shaping Community and Health

It is often said that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, but the journey becomes infinitely more rewarding when that step is shared. Human beings thrive on connection, yet modern routines frequently isolate physical activity from social life. In the original blue zones communities, however, movement is rarely done alone. People walk, talk, and build relationships simultaneously—a natural spirit that has firmly taken hold in Yuba-Sutter through two distinct walking communities.

What began as a simple idea to create a safe, accessible place to walk quickly grew into something far more meaningful: the Mall Walk Moai. When the initiative first launched in December 2024, only a single person showed up, willing to move and see what might come of it.

Today, that solitary step has multiplied into a consistent group of 10 to 12 men and women who gather every Tuesday and Friday. Meeting in a safe, climate-controlled, and accessible indoor environment, the

participants have completely reframed “exercise” into time spent with friends. Laughter fills the space, and step counts take a backseat to meaningful conversation. As participant Karen notes: “I’m so blessed to have gotten involved with this group... I look forward to our Tuesday walks and besides the healthy living, and the healthy advice, I’ve made some really great friends.”

Outdoor movement found an equally powerful rhythm on the paths of Regency Park through Walking Wednesdays. For longtime community member Clark Buschmann—a seasoned tennis player, gifted musician, and publisher of *The Shopper*—the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly disrupted his active lifestyle when his regular tennis group came to a sudden halt.

Hoping to reconnect with the physical and social vitality he once enjoyed, Clark and his wife, Glynis, discovered Walking Wednesdays. The low-barrier group provided the perfect environment to heal that pandemic-induced gap. The health impacts spoke for themselves: Clark lost 5 pounds within the first few weeks and a total of 11 pounds over the summer, while experiencing a noticeable boost in his energy, mood, and motivation.

As Clark puts it: “Walking is easy and convenient. It doesn’t feel like exercising because we’re just talking.”

A third notable walking group can be found in Plumas Lake, where Yuba County Supervisor Gary Bradford has led a community walk since the beginning of Blue Zones Project. Held each Monday morning from National Walking Day through the fall time change, the walks combine physical activity with meaningful community engagement. Participants not only enjoy the health benefits of regular movement, but also have the opportunity to hear local updates, ask questions, and connect with neighbors along the way. The longevity of the group speaks to its success as a community-led, self-sustaining tradition that continues to bring residents together year after year.

All of these initiatives beautifully illustrate the core Blue Zones Power 9 principles, most notably Move Naturally and Positive Pack. By encouraging regular, conversational walking, these groups eliminate the rigid pressure often tied to structured fitness obligations, turning movement into a joyful, organic habit.

PEOPLE

Furthermore, the social connections built during these walks have naturally expanded beyond their original borders. Mall Walk participants have discovered shared neighborhoods, organizing additional walks in local parks, embarking on hikes, and gathering around fire pits together. Similarly, the Walking Wednesdays group has formed deep, genuine bonds that now include celebrating shared holidays and spending regular time together outside of scheduled program hours. In Plumas Lake, the Monday morning walks have fostered a strong sense of community engagement, creating a space where residents can stay informed about local happenings, share ideas, and strengthen relationships with both neighbors and local leadership. Together, these groups demonstrate that walking can be about far more than exercise, it can serve as a catalyst for connection, belonging, and community involvement.

While groups were initially launched with the guidance and evidence-based frameworks of the BZPYS, they have successfully achieved the ultimate goal: complete self-sustainability.

These walking communities no longer rely on external facilitation to endure; they continue because the participants genuinely want to be there for one another. Clark and Glynis have fully taken the reins to lead, schedule, and guide Walking Wednesdays, keeping it a dependable weekly rhythm rain or shine, through hot or cold evenings alike. Meanwhile, the Mall Walk participants have taken complete ownership of their meetups, stepping up to expand the group's reach into the broader community. And in Plumas Lake, residents also continue to look forward to the seasonal walking tradition led by Supervisor Gary Bradford.

By turning simple walks into authentic traditions of belonging, Yuba-Sutter residents are proving that genuine connection and everyday movement are the ultimate ingredients to living better, longer.



CONGRATS, YUBA-SUTTER!

We did this together. By putting our personal and collective well-being first, we're making healthy choices easier, creating more economic opportunities, and ensuring a better quality of life for everyone. **Here's to making Yuba-Sutter one of the healthiest regions in the nation, where residents are living better, together.**



CONCLUSION

WITH GRATITUDE

Blue Zones Project is a testament to the effectiveness of collective impact. We have seen tremendous improvement in the health and well-being of our community and its residents over the past five years.

The improvements we've seen would not have been possible without the passion and dedication of hundreds of volunteers, organizations, and our sponsor—Adventist Health.

Thank you to every community leader, committee member, ambassador, community partner, and organization for the countless hours invested, not just in the work of Blue Zones Project, but in making Yuba-Sutter a healthier place to live, work, learn, and play.

Thank you for believing in the dream of a healthier community, and for putting your passions and resources to work. Because of you, Yuba-Sutter is experiencing tremendous well-being improvement.



POWERED BY **Adventist Health** 

CONCLUSION

If there's one thing the story of Blue Zones Project demonstrates, it's that many people and many organizations play an essential part in community success. Those recognized here contributed significant time, effort, and resources to the cause. Special thanks to these leaders—and applause to all who continue to help make Yuba-Sutter a healthier, happier community.

Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter Team (Past and Present)

Marni Sanders
Alexandria Jones
Cristina Espinoza
Jennifer Jelavich
Judy Brogden
Ricky Samayoa
Courtney Finstad
Steve Kroeger
Eric Paredes
Amanda Sztoltz

Steering Committee (Past and Present)

Amanda Husted	Gary Bradford	Kevin Cotter
Bob Harlan	Gustavo Becerra	Kurt Hilbers
Brent Hastey	Jackie Sillman	Michael Ziegenmeyer
Chris Champlin	Jeff Stephens	Remmington Kostas
Christine Ivory	Jennifer Vasquez	Rob Gregor
Doreen Osumi	Jim Schaad	Sandee Drown
Erika Summers	John Cassidy	Shon Harris
Fal Asrani	Karm Bains	Stephanie McKenzie
Francisco Reveles	Kathy Walker	Tony Kurlan

Leadership Team (Past and Present)

Alicia Wright	Maria Ball
Diana Langley	Mike Lee
Ericka Summers	Pheong Luu
Janell Willis	Robert Summa
Jim Anderson	Rocco Greco
Malissa Taylor	Veronica Baumgardner

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Blue Zones Project Yuba-Sutter Sector Committee Members (Past and Present)

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Bill Evans
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Daniel Paterson
Diana Langley
Jeramy Chapdelaine
Josh Wolfe
Mike Lee
Neal Hay
Summer Lopez
Vincenzo Corazza

BZPYS Tobacco Policy Committee

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Audrey Howes
Chaya Galacia
Dulia Aguilar

Elizabeth Meza
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Food Policy Council

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Amber Green
Brittany Lathrop
Cheryl Hoke
Faith Barsotti
Jamie Bartholome
Jennifer Jelavich
Jennifer Vasquez
Jennifer White

John Fleming
John Nicoletti
Judy Brogden
Julius Murphy
Kristen Lambert
Leah Northrop
Lexy Kidd
Lovena DeCamp
Margaret Fowler
Maria Ball
Mark Covington
Michele Blake
Nu Contreras
Pierre James
Ricky Samayoa
Rosalina Palega
Steven Dambeck
Veronica VanCleave-Hunt

BZPYS Worksites Committee

Alondra Morales
Amira Lindbloom
Ashley Carr
Brian Gault
Gabriel Moreno

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BZPYS Worksites Committee (cont.)

Jennifer White

Karisa Williams

Mandy Nix

Remmington Kostas

Sheleen Loza

Veronica Baumgardner

BZPYS Schools Committee

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Jolie Critchfield

Kristin Lambert

Lee Mcpeak

Louise Miller

Melissa Pahli Ussery

Monica Quimby

Rocco Greco

Selene Munoz

Veronica Van Cleave-Hunt

BZPYS Retail Food Committee

Diana Coggan

Jeremy Delay

Sandee Drown

Sinil King

Tim Styczynski

BZPYS Engagement Committee

Analiz Ramirez

Bob Harlan

Celeste Brown

Citali Garcia

Courtney Trumm

Jim Anderson

Juan Villagrana

Mandy Nix

Sonya Pimentel

Special Thanks

Blue Zones Project Engagement Committee

Blue Zones Project Worksite Committee

Blue Zones Project Schools Committee

Blue Zones Project Retail Food Committee

Blue Zones Project Built Environment Policy
Committee

Blue Zones Project Tobacco Policy Committee

Yuba-Sutter Food Policy Council

Community planners and elected officials who
are implementing best practices to make our
communities safer for pedestrians, cyclists, and cars.

Teachers, school staff and administrators who
prioritize student well-being in every facet of their
work.

Champions who led the work in over 50
organizations that are making healthy choices easier
for those they serve.

Our many ambassadors who say “yes!” to well-being.

Designated Organizations

Blue Zones Worksites

Caltrans District 3 - Marysville
City of Yuba City - City Hall
E Center
Hard Rock Hotel and Casino
Harmony Health
Hilbers, Inc.
Sunsweet Growers, Inc.
Sutter County Administration Office
Sutter County Superintendent of Schools
Yuba County Child Supportive Services
Yuba County District Attorney
Yuba County Health and Human Services
Yuba County Probation Department
Yuba County Sheriff's Department
Yuba Water Agency

Blue Zones Schools

April Lane Elementary School
Andros Karperos School
Barry Elementary School

Bridge Street Elementary School
Covillaud Elementary School
Ella Elementary School
Johnson Park Elementary School
Kynoch Elementary School
Lincrest Elementary School
Lincoln Elementary School
Linda Elementary School
Lindhurst High School
Marysville High School
Olivehurst Elementary School
Paragon Collegiate Academy
Park Avenue Elementary School
South Lindhurst High School
Twin Rivers Charter School
Yuba Environmental Science Charter

Blue Zones Grocery Stores

Grocery Outlet
L.A. Merchandise
La Superior Supermercado

New Earth Market
Olivehurst Food Center

Blue Zones Restaurants

2 Bits Express
Cisco's Taqueria
Lami Island Fusion
Pete's Restaurant and Brewhouse
Rolling Stone Pizza Company
Sopa Thai Cuisine
Steele House Cafe
The Brick Coffee House Café
The Happy Viking
The Village Coffee Shoppe & Bistro

Other Participating Organizations

Harkey House
St. Andrew Presbyterian Church
Yuba-Sutter Training Zone

Sources

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