

For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT:

Name: Jodi Hansen

Title: Blue Zones Community Lead, Muscatine

Phone: 563-263-8895

Email: jhansen@muscatine.com

**Muscatine Earns Recognition During
Second Annual National Blue Zones Project Summit**
*Innovators and thought leaders from Blue Zones Project Communities
across the country come together to share successes, best practices*

MUSCATINE, Iowa — (Oct. 27, 2016) — Muscatine earned special recognition Oct. 18 during the second annual Blue Zones Project[®] National Summit held in Fort Worth, Texas, that brought together leaders and influencers passionate about transforming the health and well-being of their communities. Blue Zones Project, a growing nationwide well-being improvement initiative, is helping communities optimize the places people live, work, and play to make healthy choices easier. Muscatine has been involved in the initiative since 2012 and became a certified Blue Zones Community[®] in 2014.

Muscatine received the Blue Zones Healthy City-Making Award for its work in leadership, partnership and a champion-spirit toward built-environment change.

In 2013, the Muscatine city council passed a Complete Streets policy that was nationally recognized as one of the top policies in the country by Smart Growth America. Two major complete street projects have been completed, the reconstruction of Cedar Street and Colorado Street. The Cedar Street corridor, which connects the students and community around Muscatine High School, Jefferson Elementary School, Central Middle School YMCA, and Trinity Muscatine Hospital, was made into a safe and attractive route for pedestrians and bicyclists, through adding a new trail, sidewalks, and a roundabout designed to reduce traffic accidents. The Colorado Street reconstruction project added sidewalks and safe crossing zones so students could move naturally and safely to Colorado Elementary School, for the first time.

Finally, with the support of Blue Zones Project and walkability expert Dan Burden, this new riverfront renovation is underway, putting an emphasis on livability and vitality along the Mississippi Drive corridor.

After launching Blue Zones Project, Muscatine saw a 17 percent improvement in exercise levels and a 13.6 percent decline in stress levels. Muscatine is seeing more than \$425 million invested in businesses and infrastructure, revitalizing the core of one of America's iconic river towns.

During the summit, champions from more than 30 Blue Zones Project communities across eight states heard from national experts — including Dan Buettner, Blue Zones Project founder and National Geographic Fellow, and Michael Greger, MD, a *New York Times* best-selling author and internationally recognized speaker on nutrition, food safety, and public health issues.

“Leaders in Blue Zones Project cities are on the front lines of community transformation using a strategic, environmental approach to improvement well-being,” said Buettner. “In addition to having healthier citizens, communities benefit from lower healthcare costs, less chronic disease, and improved productivity.”

For Muscatine, the recognition is one to be shared and celebrated across the community — at schools, worksites, restaurants and grocery stores that have joined the Blue Zones Project movement — and with individuals who incorporate Blue Zones Project principles into their daily lives.

“It was an honor to receive the Blue Zones Healthy City-Making Award on behalf of our community and the many community volunteers, businesses, industries and staff that invested so much time and energy into Blue Zones Project and built environment efforts! This is a recognition of the commitment our community has made to enhancing the well-being of its citizens, and a testament to the community leaders and volunteers who are making that promise a reality,” said Gregg Mandsager, City Administrator, City of Muscatine. We are at the forefront of a well-being movement that is gaining traction across the country and we are seeing the results that improvements to a city’s built environment can have on the overall health of its community and its residents.”

“Re-thinking how we look at our existing environments and having the ability and foresight to transform Muscatine’s environments into a safe, walkable, bike-able community where individuals can increase their well-being is truly inspiring,” said Jodi Hansen, Blue Zones Project, Muscatine Community Lead.

Brought to Iowa through an innovative sponsorship by Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield, in collaboration with Healthways, Inc. and Blue Zones, LLC, Blue Zones Project is a community-by-community well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to environment, policy and social networks. Based on principles developed by Dan Buettner, National Geographic Fellow and New York Times best-selling author of “The Blue Zones” and “The Blue Zones Solution,” Blue Zones Project is designed to enable community members to live longer, happier lives with lower rates of chronic diseases and a higher quality of life.

About Blue Zones Project

Blue Zones Project® is a community-led well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to a city’s environment, policy, and social networks. Established in 2010, Blue Zones Project is inspired by Dan Buettner, a National Geographic Fellow and New York Times best-selling author who identified five regions of the world—or Blue Zones—with the highest concentration of people living to 100 years or older. Blue Zones Project incorporates Buettner’s findings and works with cities to implement policies and programs that will move a community toward optimal health and well-being. Currently, 31 communities in eight states have joined Blue Zones Project, impacting more than 2 million Americans. The movement includes three beach cities in California; 15 cities in Iowa; Albert Lea, Minnesota; the city of Fort Worth; and communities in Hawaii, Southwest Florida, Wisconsin and Oregon. Blue Zones Project is a division of Healthways, a Sharecare company. For more information, visit www.bluezonesproject.com.

About Wellmark

Wellmark, Inc. (Wellmark.com) does business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa. Wellmark and its subsidiaries and affiliated companies, including Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota and Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc., insure or pay health benefit claims for more than 2 million members in Iowa and South Dakota. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa, Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota, and Wellmark Health Plan of Iowa, Inc. are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.