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SOCIAL SERVICES CORNER

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IN THE PINK IN THE BLUE ZONES

Question: I keep reading about Blue Zones and longevity. Are there any Blue Zones in the U.S.?

Answer: In 2001, researchers traveled to Okinawa, Japan, to find out why so many Okinawans lived past 100. They published “The Okinawa Program,” which has spawned cookbooks and lifestyle books based on Okinawans’ simple, healthy lifestyle. In 2005, *National Geographic* magazine published a story by Dan Buettner about other world cultures that experience longevity in large numbers. Buettner went on to write the bestseller *The Blue Zones* in 2008.

Blue Zones are located in Ikaria, Greece; Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; Loma Linda, California; and Nociya, Costa Rica. The people who live in these places incorporate diet, exercise, spirituality and community into their overall well-being, allowing them to achieve good health and long lives.

Inspired by this research, Gallup Poll and Healthways (a company that helps health insurers understand trends in health care) teamed up to measure how Americans can improve their health in their own communities. They asked American cities to apply for

grants to turn their communities into Blue Zones. The grant winners were Albert Lea, Minnesota; a cluster of ten small cities in Iowa; and the Beach Cities in Los Angeles County, California. Here is a partial list of the changes made in the winning communities:

- Banning smoking in public places
- Asking parents and children to walk to school instead of drive
- Building bike lanes and walking paths
- Requesting healthier options at local restaurants
- Planting community gardens
- Teaching people how to cook fresh vegetables
- Finding purposeful connections by volunteering
- Finding way for people to connect in person

You don’t have to live in a Blue Zone to embrace these lifestyle changes. You can make changes by eating more vegetables than meat, knowing your neighbors, and creating a peaceful existence that will lead to good health and a long life. Learn more at www.bluezonesproject.com.

Sources: *The Okinawa Program*, Daniel J. Willcox and Craig D. Willcox, Clarkson Potter, 2001. *The Blue Zones*, Dan Buettner, *National Geographic*, 2008.

JOKE OF THE MONTH

“You know the movie you’re watching is a ‘chick flick’ if you wake up and your wife is crying.”

— Rick Oie, *The Mammoth Book of Zingers, Quips, and One-Liners*

Laughter is known to boost the immune system, lower blood pressure, burn calories and release pleasure-inducing chemicals in the brain.

Go Green!

Receive *Social Services Corner* by email.

Call (888) 994-3863, ext. 2370, or email info@wrmail.org.

Do you or does someone you know need our assistance? Call toll-free (888) 994-3863 or visit www.wrpioneers.org to find out more about our assistance programs.



The Motion Picture Pioneers Assistance Fund is a program of the Will Rogers Motion Picture Pioneers Foundation.



REMINISCENCE THERAPY



Telling stories is good for you. Talk therapy, after all, is telling your story to a therapist. Research has also recently shown that telling your stories

to family members is therapeutic. Whether you tell your whole story from the beginning, as a narrative, or share your life stories in pieces or scenes, learn the benefits of telling.

Sharing with peers: Younger people may not always appreciate why the old folks sit around talking about “old times,” but it’s fun. Whether you are reminiscing with loved ones or with someone who hails from the same era or place as you, it feels good to be connected to a communal history. It feels great to be understood.

Sharing with a professional: When you share your personal and family stories with a mental health or medical professional, it can have a therapeutic

effect. It’s called reminiscence therapy, and it can reduce depression in older adults. Many therapists believe that when a person tells their story, they realize how resilient and capable they are and how much richness they have derived from and given to life. These remembrances can combat depressive feelings of worthlessness in old age.

Sharing with children: Recent research has shown that children who grow up hearing the stories of their families are better equipped to cope with life’s challenges. The theory is that children who know they are part of something larger than themselves feel supported and understand that despite setbacks, people—like families—forge ahead. Children like a sense of belonging. Being able to tell others exactly where they belong in the family story is comforting to them and, as a result, they develop higher self-esteem and healthier lives.

Now that you know the benefits of sharing stories, go tell someone you care about!

Sources: “The Stories That Bind Us,” Bruce Feiler, *The New York Times*, March 15, 2013. “Effect of reminiscence therapy on depression in older adults: a systematic review,” Wang JJ Hsieh, *International Journal of Nursing Studies* [2003, 40(4):335-345].

NEW ADDITIONS TO THE MPPAF’S NATIONAL RESOURCE DIRECTORY

New LifeStyles Online, www.newlifestyles.com, (877) 881-7907

New LifeStyles Online provides a national database of licensed and nonlicensed senior housing and home health and hospice agencies. The website offers a variety of information with links to sites or email addresses, downloadable brochures and other helpful resources.

American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association National Housing Corporation (ANHC), www.ahepahousing.org, (317) 845-5890

ANHC, a national nonprofit organization, provides affordable housing to low-income elderly and disabled. There are nearly 4,700 apartments in 21 states with on-site management, including supportive services teams ensuring that all residents have access to necessary and desired services. Visit the ANHC website to learn more about these supportive services or to locate ANHC housing.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

“Civilization has taught us to eat with a fork, but even now, when nobody’s around we use our fingers.”

—Will Rogers



To view our entire National Resource Directory, please visit www.wrpioneers.org.