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AVEDIS FOUNDATION AND HEALTHWAYS ANNOUNCE SHAWNEE AND POTTAWATOMIE COUNTY, OKLAHOMA, AS BLUE ZONES PROJECT DEMONSTRATION SITE

Shawnee and Pottawatomie County join 31 communities across the nation in well-being movement

SHAWNEE, Okla. — January 5, 2017 — Avedis Foundation, Blue Zones, LLC and Healthways, Inc. today announced the launch of Blue Zones Project® in Shawnee and Pottawatomie County, Oklahoma. Blue Zones Project® is a growing nationwide well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier—community by community—through permanent changes to environment, policy, and social networks.

Leveraging public-private partnerships, and founded by National Geographic Fellow and best-selling author Dan Buettner, Blue Zones Project draws upon more than 200 evidence-based practices to help restaurants, schools, churches, grocery stores and worksites make sustainable changes that encourage healthier choices.

Shawnee and Pottawatomie County will receive support from national Blue Zones Project experts to implement a comprehensive plan for improving community well-being. Outcomes are measured by the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index®.

"We applaud Avedis Foundation for leading the way in creating an enhanced quality of life for Shawnee and the broader area of Pottawatomie County," said Michael Acker, General Manager of Blue Zones Project. "Greater well-being translates to lower health care costs and higher productivity. Through this partnership, Avedis Foundation is helping Pottawatomie County residents live longer, better."

"Avedis is excited to welcome the Blue Zones Project to Pottawatomie County to further our vision to improve health, wellness and quality of life," stated Avedis Foundation president and CEO Michelle Briggs. "The feedback we received from our community after the Blue Zones Project introduction this past year has been overwhelmingly positive. It is obvious that Pottawatomie County is ready to take the next step in improving the quality of life throughout our communities and we believe that the Blue Zones Project is the right approach to achieve that level of transformation," Briggs concluded.

Year after year, the state of Oklahoma ranks 46 to 48 in the nation in overall health outcomes, and of the 77 Oklahoma counties, Pottawatomie County ranks 37th (per the County Health Rankings and Roadmaps). "Avedis, through its partnership with Blue Zones Project, looks forward to improved fruit and vegetable consumption, increased activity levels and overall improved health outcomes now and into the future," said Briggs.

Shawnee and Pottawatomie County join 31 communities in eight states that have launched Blue Zones Project. Community members and organizations in Shawnee and Pottawatomie County will be given the opportunity to get involved with Blue Zones Project programs and offerings.

Buettner identified the original Blue Zones as five regions of the world with the highest concentration of people living to 100 years or older. They are Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, California; Nicoya, Cost Rica; Okinawa, Japan; and Sardinia, Italy.

“The original Blue Zones areas are naturally designed to make healthy choices nearly inevitable,” Buettner said. “Blue Zones Project works with communities to adopt those best practices and create environmental change that support well-being. I’m looking forward to watching the transformation of Pottawatomie County.”

For more information on Blue Zones Project in Shawnee and Pottawatomie County, or to learn how to participate, visit bluezonesproject.com.

About Avedis Foundation

Avedis Foundation is a private foundation with 501 (c) 3, nonprofit status, established in Oklahoma in 2012. Avedis seeks to measurably improve the health, wellness and quality of life for the people of Pottawatomie County and its surrounding communities. Avedis Foundation supports projects that directly benefit people from the communities we serve, particularly those projects that support overall well-being for any age group. For more information, visit avedisfoundation.org.

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 bluezonesproject.com.

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(Photo descriptions below)



Accompanying photos:

Photo #1:

Healthways and Blue Zones Project executives join officials from the City of Shawnee and representatives of the Avedis Foundation's board of directors for the announcement of Pottawatomie County's launch of the BlueZones Project.

Pictured from left to right:

Charles Shields, Avedis Foundation Board Member
Dr. Kathy Laster, Avedis Foundation Board Member
Mike Adcock, Avedis Foundation Board Chair
Jon Werger, Executive Director, Community Programs, Healthways, Inc.
Michael Acker, General Manager, Blue Zones Project
Michelle Briggs, President & CEO, Avedis Foundation
Tony Buettner, Senior VP, Business Development, Blue Zones
Richard Finley, Mayor City of Shawnee
Justin Erickson, City Manger City of Shawnee

Photo #2:

A jubilant Michelle Briggs raises the plaque denoting the city of Shawnee and Pottawatomie County as a Blue Zones Project Demonstration Site.

Left to Right:

Mike Adcock, Avedis Foundation Board Chair
Jon Werger, Executive Director, Community Programs, Healthways, Inc.
Michelle Briggs, President and CEO, Avedis Foundation
Tony Buettner, Senior VP, Business Development, Blue Zones