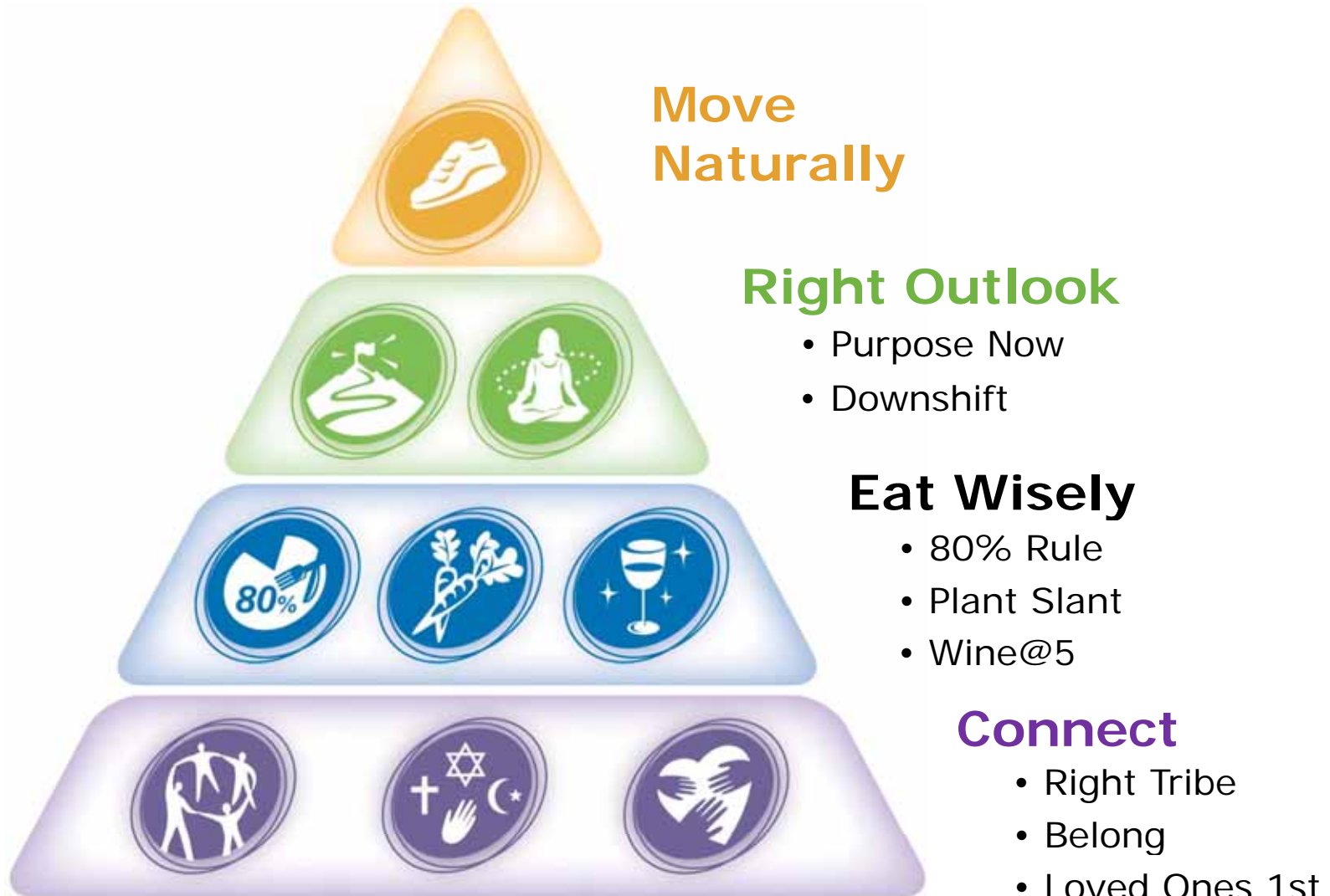


Keys to Blue Zones Success – The Albert Lea Story 2009



Supported by AARP and United Health Foundation

Welcome to the Albert Lea Vitality Project Book

Inside you will find descriptions of the major initiatives that we have accomplished in 2009. Many members of the community of Albert Lea are so thrilled with what has happened in our town in just under a year. We are looking forward to 2010 – a chance for all of us to take more positive steps toward a life of vitality. We, the Vitality Project team, invite you to explore some of the exciting opportunities for 2010. As the eyes of the world are on Albert Lea, we want to be true to our mission: A community of lasting vitality, and America's First Blue Zone City!



Walking Moai

Contact: Catherine Buboltz at 377-0835

How we did in 2009

WOW! What amazing participation we had in the walking moai program! Many thanks to all who formed moais and participated in this program. We have heard amazing stories of how this program has had a positive influence in people's lives as well as forming a sense of community in our neighborhoods.

How can I participate in 2010?

With winter just around the corner we want to encourage moais to continue to walk or participate in events in our community.

Moais are invited to walk at local malls and Brookside Education Center when the weather becomes too cold to walk outside. Albert Lea Community Education is also a great resource offering ongoing winter activities, such as snowshoeing and Nordic walking. There are a variety of volunteer opportunities for moais to participate in as well.

Please stop by our table this evening to further discuss the above options or if you would like to join a moai, would like help in setting up your own moai, or are willing to complete a survey on the moai competition this summer. We will also have sign-up sheets for folks looking for special interest moais (such as horseback riding and square dancing). We are hoping to schedule some community walks in the coming year.



Restaurant Initiative

Contact: Cathie Purdie at restaurantideas@yahoo.com

How we did in 2009:

Several area restaurants are actively participating in the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project. Food experts, Dr. Brian Wansink and Dr. Leslie Lytle have been visiting with area restaurant managers to expand healthy food choices in direct and subtle ways. As providers of food and nutrition to Albert Lea residents, workers and visitors, our restaurants are working to make healthy choices easy choices. Enjoying new healthy meals, substituting fresh fruit, vegetables or a side salad for French fries and ordering ½ size portion meals are all on the rise since the start of this program.

How can I participate in 2010?

Celebrate these positive changes by thanking area restaurant owners/managers. Have another great idea? All suggestions e-mailed to restaurantideas@yahoo.com will be forwarded to participating restaurants for their consideration. It's a great start, and there is more to come. Watch for even more healthy food choices coming to your area restaurants.



Walking School Bus

Contact: Kristin Heinz, 373-1617 kristinheinz@yahoo.com

How we did in 2009:

The Walking School Bus has gotten a lot of kids walking to school in Albert Lea. Many of the elementary schools in town have at least one "Walking School Bus" getting kids to and from school. Some school buses start from home and pick up kids as they go along, and others are made up of people who live farther away and meet at a location from which they then walk to school. This program has proven to be fun and beneficial for both the students and the chaperones who walk with them. We are excited to have it be a part of our community.

How can I participate in 2010?

You can become involved in the walking school bus by contacting Kristin Heinz at kristinheinz@yahoo.com, by stopping by the walking school bus booth tonight, or by contacting an Albert Lea schools walking school bus volunteer.

In the coming year, we are planning on keeping the Walking School Bus going. Each elementary school will have a permanent Walking School Bus committee to plan and oversee the walking buses in their school.

We are also hoping to get service clubs involved in walking with students.



Employer Initiative

Contact: Randy Kehr or Sue Axsmith
507-373-3938, alfccoc@albertlea.org

How we did in 2009:

The Employer Initiative reaches out to the Albert Lea community and asks businesses to make changes that will positively impact the lives of their employees. By using the Employer Pledge and additional suggestions, employers can encourage natural movement, better eating habits, and a greater sense of community amongst their employees.

How can I participate in 2010?

To find out ways your employer can participate in 2010 initiatives, please stop by the Employer Initiatives booth tonight, or contact Randy or Sue at 507-373-3938, or alfccoc@albertlea.org

We will continue to encourage businesses to sign the employer pledge. We will give a copy of the employer pledge to new members.

We will champion with employers that the changes that they make can impact their health care costs and those of their employees.

We will continue to emphasize healthy movement and foods at meetings.

We will hold Tobacco-Free Worksite luncheons to get information to interested members.



Faith Initiative

Contact: Angie Hoffman,
angie.hoffman@albertleatribune.com

How we did in 2009:

The Faith Initiative goal is to promote getting connected through worship in our city, recognizing that doing so provides participants with a healthy support system. We also aim to help worship groups promote health and vitality. In 2009 18 Albert Lea area churches participated in a church-wide vitality pledge day. Most of the 18 churches also participated in Open Door Month in September – a city-wide promotion of church attendance that focuses on making places of worship welcoming places to be. Also, a vitality potluck day was attended by over 100 Albert Leans – all who took home some great healthy recipes for their own congregations.

How can I participate in 2010?

You can become involved in the faith initiatives by contacting Angie Hoffman at angiehoffman@albertleatribune.com, or by stopping by the faith initiative booth tonight.

You can start up a group discussion moai in your church to help members to connect with each other, and to discuss how health, vitality and spirituality connect.

You can continue promoting healthy options for after-service treats and potlucks.

You can encourage your worship group to participate in vitality projects next year, including the open-door month and vitality potluck.

You can participate in ShineFest, a multid denominational community volunteer project that is happy to join forces with the Blue Zones team this year.



Cooking Classes

Contact: Amy Pleimling R.D., L.D.
apleimling@hy-vee.com or 507-379-4834

How we did in 2009:

Cooking classes were held all over town in 2009 at sites like Hy-Vee, Crescendo Restaurant, and the Great Grains Market and Café. They went very well overall and were very well received. All of the evaluations were extremely positive and all said they would recommend the class to others.

How can I participate in 2010?

You can become involved in the cooking classes by contacting Amy Pleimling at apleimling@hy-vee.com, or by stopping by the cooking class booth tonight, or by keeping an eye out for more classes in 2010 in the community education booklet.

In 2010 we will continue doing Healthy Living Cooking Classes for adults and kids, and continue to advertise these in the Community Education booklet.

Also, keep an eye out for a cooking moai at Hy-Vee that will meet monthly on a different topic.



Community Gardens

Contact: Jennifer Davis 507-377-4370, or
jdavis@city.albertlea.org

How we did in 2009:

In 2009 there was a tremendous interest in community gardens and 46 plots were added to make a total of 116 plots. Albert Leans grew fresh vegetables, herb, and flowers. There was also a garden contest, where gardens were judged in different categories including fruit and vegetable garden, fruit and vegetable container, flower garden, and flower garden container.

How can I participate in 2010?

You can become involved in the community gardens by contacting Jennifer Davis at 507-377-4370, jdavis@city.albertlea.org, or by stopping by the community gardens booth tonight. You can sign up for next year's plots starting on April 1, 2010.

Keep an eye out in the spring, because due to popular demand, plans are being made to add even more community gardens in 2010.

Next year, garden contests will be held in August.



Neighborhood Park Parties

Contact: Alice Englin 507-377-5504, alice.englin@co.freeborn.mn.us

How we did in 2009:

Over 875 people in Freeborn County participated in 17 + neighborhood park parties which took place during the last 2 weeks in July and early August 2009. The goal of these parties was to get to know your neighbors and build community. Local volunteers took on the role of coordinating a party at the park in their neighborhood. Operation Respect donated \$3,000 towards this effort. Thrive Initiative donated bubbles and sidewalk chalk. Many in-kind donations were received including 100% beef hotdogs from Cargill, Buns from Kwik Trip, salad from Mrs. Gerry's, ice from Lou-Rich, paper products from Martin Bros., orange drink from McDonalds, watermelon from Hy-Vee and more.

How can I participate in 2010?

All coordinators said the neighborhoods would like to have these parties occur annually, and all coordinators said that they would help coordinate their local party next year. Funds donated were mainly for 'extras' and the parties could easily take place without funding. Some parks even had sign-up sheets for people who wished to help plan next year's party. Party Coordinators have already decided to meet in April of 2010 to begin planning for next summer's parties.

Stop by the Park Parties booth tonight, or contact Alice Englin 507-377-5504 for more details.



Tobacco Free Worksites

Contact: Alice Englin 507-377-5504, or
Randy Kehr 507-373-3938, alfccoc@albertlea.org

How we did in 2009:

Employers in Albert Lea were given the AARP/Blue Zones Employer Pledge with the option to participate. Included in the pledge options are three statements regarding anti-tobacco initiatives at the worksite. Special information sessions were held to educate Albert Lea CEO's regarding options for tobacco-free worksites. In total, over 20 employers attend these presentations. We continue to follow up with employers particularly interested in the three tobacco related pledge items.

How can I participate in 2010?

You can become involved in the tobacco free worksites initiative by contacting Alice Englin or Randy Kehr, or by stopping by the employers initiative booth tonight.

In 2010 the Chamber of Commerce will host two special event luncheons detailing the process, resources, and information on exploring the possibility of a Tobacco-free worksite. You can speak with your employer about attending the meetings and supporting this initiative.

The tobacco free team will continue to follow up with any interested employers.



Purpose Workshops

Contact: Tricia Dahl 507-377-4703, dahl.patricia@mayo.edu or David Larson at davidlarsonleadership@gmail.com

How we did in 2009:

People who have a clear sense of purpose, live longer, healthier lives. Attendance at “Finding Purpose” workshops has helped over 1000 people in our community discover their personal sense of purpose and has introduced them to volunteer opportunities that match their interests.

How can I participate in 2010?

To find out more about purpose workshops, contact Tricia Dahl or David Larson, or stop by the purpose booth tonight. To find out more about volunteerism, contact Ann Austin at director@unitedwayfc.org or 507-373-8670.

In the coming year, we are planning to offer additional workshops with such topics as **Living Life On Purpose: Following Your Inner Map to Happiness, The Joy of Now: Receiving Love in Every Moment, The "I" of the Storm: Living Peacefully in a Chaotic World.**

We are developing a toolkit of resources that will be available to individuals or groups to help them discover or further explore their purpose. In addition, we will continue to work on methods to help match individuals with volunteer organizations that are in alignment with their sense of purpose.

New Initiatives for 2010

Keep an eye out for these exciting additions to our vitality family in 2010:



SHIP: Freeborn County Public Health is one in a nine county partnership to receive funding through the Minnesota Department of Health's Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) Grant. SHIP's projects and interventions involve improving health through several initiatives.

CHIP: This 40- hour, 5-week intensive lifestyle course is back by popular demand in 2010. Keep an eye out in the community education booklet for classes in May.

YMCA: Our local "Y" has won a major grant to help our community take back our health and vitality. Keep your eyes peeled for "Pioneering Healthy Communities."

Vitality Team 2010

- AL School District – Chris Chalmers
- City of AL - Victoria Simonsen, Bob Graham
- CVB – Susie Peterson
- Chamber of Commerce – Randy Kehr
- ALMC – Patti Hareid
- Freeborn County Public Health – Lois Ahern



Vitality Team 2010 Initiatives

- Moai - Catherine Buboltz
- Walking School Bus - Kristin Heinz
- Restaurants - Cathy Purdie
- Purpose - David Larson, Patricia Dahl
- Community Gardens - Jenny Davis
- Park Parties – Alice Englin



Vitality Team 2010 Initiatives

- Faith Initiative – Angie Hoffman
- CHIP - Stephanie Nainani
- Biking – John Schulz, Lynn Scheevel
- SHIP – Lois Ahern
- YMCA – Dennis Dieser

