

ASPIRE ADVOCATE

ISSUE 8 — SPRING 2019



Dear Member,

What do Okinawa, Japan; Sardinia, Italy; Nicoya, Costa Rica; Ikaria, Greece; and Loma Linda, California have in common? These five places, called “Blue Zones,” are rare longevity hot spots where people are thriving into their 100s.

At Aspire, we strive to provide you quality healthcare that includes focusing on the prevention and wellness that will help you live your healthiest life. But imagine the possibility that you could thrive into your 100s. Following the Power 9® lifestyle habits practiced by the inhabitants of these Blue Zone areas could help you to live longer and better.

The healthcare leaders of this county are embarking on a community-wide approach to well-being. It's called the **Blue Zone Project**, using secrets discovered in the original Blue Zones to live longer and better. Aspire is excited to share the details of this project in this latest issue. We hope you enjoy the lifestyle tips that explain the Power 9 habits found in Blue Zones. You'll see how Aspire supports this initiative through benefits like our Silver&Fit® program.

Also in this issue, we provide helpful tips to lower prescription costs to save you money. And, don't forget to check out the upcoming Community Connection classes. We are bringing back, by popular demand, the Mediterranean Diet and Line Dancing.

The Aspire Team is always here to ensure you are getting the quality healthcare services you need. Don't hesitate to call us if something is not right — give us the chance to make it right.

Finally, thank you again for your continued membership, and enjoy this Spring and all the beautiful colors.

Sincerely,
Laura Zehm
CEO, Aspire Health Plan

INSIDE



Blue Zones Project®



Making healthy choices



Move Naturally



Wine@5



Loved Ones First



Save on Rx



Upcoming events



Just when you thought Monterey County was a pretty amazing place to call home, you can look forward to the area becoming an even healthier, happier place to live, work, and play.

Enter the Blue Zones Project®.



Montage Health, Salinas Valley Memorial Healthcare System, Taylor Farms, Blue Zones, LLC, and Sharecare, Inc. have joined forces for this well-being improvement initiative. The project makes healthy choices and activities easier through permanent and semi-permanent changes to a community's buildings and space, policy, and social network.

The Blue Zones Project draws upon more than 200 evidence-based practices to help leaders, restaurants, schools, faith-based organizations, grocery stores, and worksites make sustainable changes that encourage healthier choices.

The project will begin its focus in Salinas before expanding to other areas of Monterey County. Although Salinas often carries the moniker "Salad Bowl of the World," many Salinas residents suffer from food insecurity, and 3 in 7 don't eat enough fruits and vegetables. Seven in 10 are overweight or obese, half of residents struggle with hope and purpose, and high diabetes and cancer rates are major concerns for patients and providers.

The project utilizes nine common characteristics to help communities improve their overall well-being by identifying a path that can lead to a possible **extra 12 years of healthy life**.

We will be sharing more detail about each of these in this newsletter over the next several months. In this edition, we focus on Loved Ones First, Wine at 5, and Move Naturally.

Making healthy choices the easy choice

In the places across the world where people live the longest, healthy choices come naturally.

People move through the day, eat healthy meals, connect with each other, and feel a sense of pride and purpose. Here in the "Salad Bowl of the World" we feed the health of nations. Yet many of us struggle with our own health and well-being.

For more information on the **Blue Zones Project in Salinas**, or to learn how to participate, visit www.bluezonesprojectsalinas.com

Blue Zones Project® Salinas is part of a nationwide movement to make healthy choices easier, community by community. It brings people, places, and policies together to shape the surroundings for the better.

Power 9® — the nine common denominators among those areas (or Blue Zones) with the highest proportion of people who reach age 100.

POWER 9

Live a longer, healthier life by applying these principles inspired by the people who have lived the longest.



Move Naturally: Find ways to move more. You'll burn calories without thinking about it



Purpose: Wake up with purpose each day and add up to seven years to your life



Down shift: reverse disease by finding a stress-relieving strategy that works for you



80% Rule: Eat mindfully and stop when 80% full



Plant Slant: Put more fruits and vegetables on your plate



Belong: Belong to a faith-based community and attend services regularly to add up to 14 years to your life



Wine at 5: If you have a healthy relationship with alcohol, enjoy a glass of wine with good friends each day



Loved Ones First: Invest time with family — and add up to six years to your life



Right Tribe: Surround yourself with people who support positive behaviors — and who support you



Move Naturally

How many well-intentioned workouts have stalled on the incline? Sputtered to a halt when after 7 days of religiously making it to the gym, the 8th day had a scheduling conflict... then 8 turned into 9, 9 into 10, and, well, it was just easier to go back to not going back to the gym?

You turned to Plan B. Maybe changed the focus. Set more realistic, bite-sized goals; started slowly; mixed up the workouts. But, still, the struggle was real.

Blue Zones proponents might offer some hope with a bit different approach. Moving naturally. Being active without having to think about it. If that sounds promising — full disclosure — it's a tad more complicated than that. But completely doable? Absolutely.

Those who have lived the longest haven't been marathoners; they've been sheep herders. They aren't people who are bound and determined to make up for a week of inactivity by going full bore on a Saturday and/or Sunday. They are those whose activity is part of their being.

Low-intensity, physical activity most every day.

Big-picture, long-term exercise.

Since most of us aren't shepherds, it involves a combination of aerobics, muscle strengthening, and balance. Think yoga. Taking the stairs. Parking farther away. Bikes and rakes and brooms. And walking -- whenever, wherever. Just make sure you get at least 30 minutes (but try for an hour) five times a week.

How often do you Move Naturally?

We've already learned that those who live the longest are the ones who engage in low-intensity, physical activity most every day. How often do you move naturally?

100%

Always — Every day I spend 30 minutes in physical activity (walking, exercise class, riding my bike, etc.)

Usually — I walk, or do other low-intensity activity (vacuuming, raking, gardening) 4 or 5 days a week.

Often — Three days a week I move naturally, either walking or doing chores.

50%

Sometimes — 50% of the time I complete some sort of physical activity. (Two days a week, I complete 30 minutes of activity.)

0%

Never — I never complete 30 minutes of "moving naturally".

Take note of where you are now, and challenge yourself to increase your activity – naturally.

Wine@5



It's long been the source of conjecture, and even controversy. That evening glass of wine, the gleefully anticipated post-work pour.

Should you do it? Is it healthy?

Which study is right?

If you're a Blue Zones inhabitant or researcher, the answer is clear – yes. (Health conditions permitting, of course.) Yes, go ahead and have Wine at 5. It's what “The Blue Zones. 9 Lessons for Living Longer from the people who've lived the longest” author Dan Buettner refers to as the “Grapes of Life.”

There's something about the moderation, the consistency, the “artery-scrubbing polyphenols” (organic chemicals that can help fight plaque buildup in your arteries) in red wine specifically, the tendency to eat slower when you have a glass of wine you're also enjoying, and maybe something about the social connection with friends or family.

But lest you are tempted to be less measured — thinking about, say, saving up your weekly allocation for a rousing weekend of wining and dining — remember, this is about daily moderation and consistency. As Buettner says: “A serving or two per day of red wine is the most you need to drink to take advantage of its health benefits. Overdoing it negates any benefits you might enjoy, so drink in moderation.”

Loved Ones First

Family. Sometimes, you can't live with them, can't live without them. Right?

Not if you live in a Blue Zone. It's loved ones first. Making family a priority. Lesson Eight of Nine in the pursuit of healthy longevity.

Think of the family as the center, surrounded by daily ritual, duty, and togetherness. Sitting down to dinner together. Creating a home for and taking care of the seniors in your life. Spending frequent time with spouses and partners, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, children and grandchildren. Making consistent, compassionate deposits in the emotional bank. Ensuring reciprocated love.

As life marches along in the Blue Zones model, **those who reach senior-hood and still live with their families “stay sharper longer than those who live alone or in a nursing home,”** says Blue Zones researcher Dan Buettner in his book “The Blue Zones. 9 Lessons for Living Longer from the people who've lived the longest.” “Investing in our children when they are young helps assure they'll invest in us when we're old.”

Creating family, he notes, is about dedicating physical space as a place to meet regularly; establishing rituals like eating one meal a day together; displaying pictures of our loved ones to provide a sense of context, connection, and history; and prioritizing time with partners, children, and parents.

Family.





Save on Rx

**“Americans spend more on prescription drugs...
than anyone else in the world.”**

There is a recent Bloomberg analysis that ran in the *Washington Post* is an eye opener for anyone concerned about rising prescription drug prices.

Startling and worrisome? Certainly. But there are things Aspire Health Plan and our members can do to save money on their prescriptions.

What Aspire can do

Aspire partners with CastiaRX, a Pharmacy Benefit Manager (PBM), to administer our prescription drug plan. PBMs save health plans and consumers on drug benefit costs in several ways, including negotiating rebates from drug manufacturers, lowering the cost of home delivery, and reducing waste and improving adherence.

What we all can do

- **Check for generic drug options.** Medicare plans have their own list of covered drugs, called a formulary. Take a look at the plan formulary from time to time to check if generic drugs are available for your prescription. Generics can provide big savings at the pharmacy counter.
- **Apply for Medicare “Extra Help.”** Medicare recipients can apply for a low income subsidy (LIS) to help pay for their Part D monthly premium, annual deductible, and co-payments. Your annual income and assets must be below the government’s eligibility limits, or you must support others who live with you. You can apply at www.socialsecurity.gov/extrahelp, or by calling (800) 771-1213. You also can call the Aspire Advocate to assist you.
- **Save money through mail order.** Aspire offers a mail order program that allows our members to pay a two-month copay for the price of three. A chain or neighborhood pharmacy, on the other hand, would require you to pay a three-month co-pay for a three month supply. Our program can add up to big savings. Plus, you will save yourself travel, gas, and time by having your medications delivered to your door.
- **Take advantage of our Medication Therapy Management program.** Aspire offers a free Medication Therapy Management (MTM) program for qualifying members to better manage their prescriptions and reduce costs when possible. To participate, you must fill seven or more maintenance Part D prescriptions within three months; have a chronic condition such as diabetes, heart disease, mental illness, Alzheimer’s disease, high cholesterol, or COPD; and spend more than \$4,044 a year on covered prescriptions.

Upcoming events

Community Connections, 10-11:30 a.m.

Classes are open to the public. Bring a friend.

Wednesday, April 17

MEDITERRANEAN DIET

8 Simple steps to a healthy lifestyle

Montage Wellness Center, 1910 N. Davis Rd., Salinas

Tuesday, April 23

SPRING CLUTTER BUSTER

Easy tips for organizing your home from a professional organizer.

SVMC Diabetes & Endocrine Center
355 Abbott Street, Suite 200, Salinas

Wednesday, April 24

LINE DANCING

Dance like nobody is watching. Join us for an easy introduction to line dancing, where having fun is as important as learning the steps.

Oldemeyer Center Dance Studio, 986 Hilby Ave. Seaside

Tuesday, May 21

SUGAR SCOOP

Discover hidden facts about sugar and how it affects your overall health

SVMC Diabetes & Endocrine Center
355 Abbott Street, Suite 200, Salinas

REGISTER: www.aspirehealthplan.org/connections2019 or

call (877) 663-7651. *Topics, locations, dates, and times are subject to change. Seating is limited.*



COMMUNITY ROUNDUP

Looking for a new activity or hobby? Want to meet new people with similar interests? Come learn about the variety of fun activities available around the county. Representatives from local activity programs will be available to answer questions.

Friday, May 24

Montage Wellness Center
2920 2nd Ave., Marina

Coming in June

Montage Wellness Center
1910 N. Davis Rd., Salinas

Archive: www.aspirehealthplan.org/members-newsletter.php

Share your thoughts: feedback@aspirehealthplan.org



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ASPIREHEALTHPLAN

10 Ragsdale Drive, Suite 101
Monterey, CA 93940-9933
www.aspirehealthplan.org

Health and Wellness Information

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**Grow
with us**

We love referrals. The greatest compliment you can give Aspire is a referral to your friends and family. Thank you for your membership in Aspire Health Plan. Help us grow by sharing Aspire with the people you care about.