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KLAMATH FALLS, OREGON BECOMES FIRST CERTIFIED BLUE ZONES COMMUNITY® IN PACIFIC NORTHWEST

Klamath Falls, OR — Healthy Klamath, Sky Lakes Medical Center, Sharecare, Inc. and Blue Zones, LLC today announced that Klamath Falls has achieved certified Blue Zones Community® status. The certification recognizes Klamath Falls' community well-being transformation through successful implementation of the Blue Zones Project® by Sharecare, a first-of-its-kind population health program that brings evidence-based best practices in built environment, policy, and social networks to participating cities.

The community is invited to celebrate this accomplishment by donning their Blue Zones Project t-shirts and sharing the positive impact Blue Zones Project has made in their lives on social media along with the hashtag #BZPKFalls.

"We are proud of Klamath Falls for achieving this milestone and honored to be recognized as the first certified Blue Zones Community in the Pacific Northwest," said Klamath Falls Mayor, Carol Westfall.

Brought to Oregon through an innovative sponsorship by Cambia Health Foundation in collaboration with Sharecare and Blue Zones, the local Blue Zones Project initiative encourages all Oregon communities to optimize their surroundings to make the healthy choice the easy choice. The project is a privately led, publicly endorsed initiative intended to inspire community members to improve their well-being.

Cambia Health Foundation, Sky Lakes Medical Center, Cascade Health Alliance, the City of Klamath Falls, and Klamath County provided financial backing to support the project in Klamath Falls.

In 2015, Klamath Falls was selected to be the first Blue Zones Project demonstration site in the Pacific Northwest. Since then, local leaders, volunteers, and organizations throughout the community have worked to achieve certification status. As a result of its efforts, Klamath Falls can celebrate:

- More than \$1.3 million in grant funding to support community well-being projects including Safe Routes to Parks, Safe Routes to Schools, a Cigarette Litter Prevention Program (resulting in a nearly 80 percent reduction in tobacco litter downtown), supporting a preventative food pantry, increasing wayfinding signage, and increasing park access.
- New ordinances that are paving the way for smoking cessation and tobacco prevention through smoke-free city parks, smoke-free events, and increased education around smoking cessation, leading to a 24 percent decrease in smoking rates since 2015.
- New city policies that support healthy eating through the creation of the county food policy council, the county nutrition options resolution, and the adoption of many healthy meeting protocols in workplaces across the community.
- Increased physical activity among approximately 4,400 students in the local schools by participating in Walking School Bus Days.

- Twelve approved restaurants that offer a combined 37 new healthier menu items for adults and children. Klamath Falls has also become home to a vegan eatery and juicing company, offering even more options to the community's residents.
- Increased demand for produce, which prompted a regionally owned grocery store to increase its produce section resulting in a 12% increase in produce sales.
- More than 1,113 individuals joined a Moai® walking group that promotes building friendships and moving naturally.
- More than 715 individuals have volunteered to support the Blue Zones Project in Klamath Falls.

“Certification as a Blue Zones Community is a tremendous achievement,” said Paul Stewart, president and chief executive officer at Sky Lakes Medical Center, a sponsor of the local Blue Zones Project and a staunch advocate for better health. “This accomplishment required the long-term cooperation, collaboration and commitment from individuals and organizations throughout the community.

“This certification is evidence that Klamath Falls takes seriously making well-being a way of life. The community's efforts towards better health continue to set a great example for other communities,” he added. “It also reminds us of what we can do as a community when we work together toward a common goal for the common good.”

Stewart noted the hard work is not over. “Improved health and a feeling of well-being is a journey, not a destination,” he said.

Klamath County Commissioner and Blue Zones Project Steering Committee Co-chair Kelley Minty Morris echoed Stewart. “2020 has underscored one thing we've known: Health is incredibly important and involves more than just our physical well-being,” she said. “I am proud of Klamath County for investing our time and energy to ensure we are moving towards a healthy community filled with purpose-driven people. We clearly care about each other, and our future. The success of the Blue Zones Project will continue to help our community prosper.”

“Klamath Falls has demonstrated its dedication to improved well-being and is well deserving of Blue Zones Community certification,” said Michael Acker, Senior Vice President, Blue Zones Project by Sharecare. “The community has seen positive results through upgrades to local parks and trails systems, impactful food and tobacco policies, and inspired leadership from the Blue Zones Project Klamath Falls steering committee and sponsors. Klamath Falls' residents and organizations will experience the benefits of these efforts for years to come.”

Klamath Falls achieved Blue Zones Community status after reaching the following key milestones, which are required goals to achieve certification:

- 50 percent of the top 20 identified worksites became Blue Zones Project Approved™.
- 25 percent of schools became approved.
- 25 percent of restaurants became approved.
- 25 percent of grocery stores became approved.
- 50 percent of the top 20 identified faith-based organizations became approved
- 25 percent of citizens have committed to the Blue Zones Project and completed at least one well-being improvement action. More than 4,000 individuals have taken the Blue Zones Personal Pledge.
- The community has successfully completed the Blue Zones Community Policy bundle.

Data from the Gallup-Sharecare Well-Being Index in Klamath Falls in 2018 confirm the efficacy of the Blue Zones Project approach to improve well-being in the community. Since the project was introduced in Klamath Falls in 2015, the community has held steady in purpose, social, and overall well-being, while the rest of the state and U.S. declined. Smoking rates have declined from 17 percent to 13 percent and 40 percent of residents report feeling pride in their community - up from 35 percent when the project launched.

Residents engaged with Blue Zones Project report higher overall well-being, more positive life evaluation and social support, and higher rates of exercise and produce consumption compared to those who are not as engaged.

Klamath Falls has outperformed rural Oregon well-being trends since 2015, seeing 11.8 percent fewer health risks than expected if the community had followed state trends. This risk avoidance equates to over \$900,000 in avoided medical and productivity costs to the community from 2015 to 2018.

Ben Leedle, Blue Zones CEO and Co-founder of Blue Zones Project said, “We congratulate Klamath Falls for boldly taking the lead in the Pacific Northwest by investing in community well-being, which leads to healthier and happier people, a more productive workforce, and a more vibrant, resilient economy.”

The community’s collective work to move Klamath Falls toward optimal health and well-being was recognized by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in 2018, when Klamath County was awarded The Culture of Health prize, honoring and elevating U.S. communities working at the forefront of advancing health, opportunity, and equity for all.

Two communities in Oregon are currently transforming local well-being as part of the Blue Zones Project. For more information, please visit www.bluezonesproject.com or www.healthyklamath.org/bluezones.

About Sky Lakes Medical Center

Sky Lakes Medical Center is a community-owned, internationally accredited acute-care hospital located in Klamath Falls, Oregon. It is licensed for 176 beds and offers a full range of inpatient and outpatient services, a home health agency, and a primary care clinic and a variety of specialty physician clinics. The Sky Lakes family also includes the award-winning Sky Lakes Cancer Treatment Center and Cascades East Family Medicine Residency and clinic.

Sky Lakes is proud to be part of the Blue Zones Project in Klamath Falls and honored to be a part of making our community a healthier place to live. We’re pleased to continue to provide investments and leadership that will help make this possible.

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 based on research by Dan Buettner, a National Geographic Fellow and New York Times best-selling author who identified five cultures 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, 56 communities across North America have joined Blue Zones Project, impacting more than 3.8 million citizens. The population health solution includes two Health Districts in California; 15 cities in Iowa; Albert Lea, Minnesota; the city of Fort Worth, Texas; Corry, Pennsylvania; Brevard, North Carolina; the Walla Walla Valley in Washington; and communities in Southwest Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Wisconsin. Blue Zones Project is a partnership between [Blue Zones, LLC](http://BlueZones,LLC), and [Sharecare, Inc.](http://Sharecare,Inc) For more information, visit bluezonesproject.com.

Klamath Falls is Oregon’s first Blue Zones Project Demonstration Community. To learn more about Blue Zones Project, contact the Blue Zones Project team in Klamath Falls at BlueZonesProject@healthyklamath.org, or visit www.healthyklamath.org/bluezones.

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