



## Corry, Pennsylvania, becomes first certified Blue Zones Community in the Northeast

May 23, 2022

*Three-year Blue Zones Project initiative reports significant well-being gains*

CORRY, Pa., May 23, 2022 /PRNewswire/ -- Sharecare (Nasdaq: SHCR) and Blue Zones, LLC, announced today that Corry, Pennsylvania, has been designated a certified Blue Zones Community, marking the first Blue Zones Community in the Northeast and the only one in the state of Pennsylvania. Certification recognizes Corry's well-being transformation through the successful implementation of Blue Zones Project by Sharecare, a pioneering population health initiative that brings evidence-based best practices in built environment, policy, and social connection to participating communities.



Brought to Corry through the collaborative efforts of Highmark/AHN Saint Vincent; Corry Memorial Hospital, an affiliate of LECOM Health; and UPMC, the well-being improvement initiative focuses on optimizing surroundings to make healthy choices easier so people live longer, healthier, and happier lives.

"Corry has, and continues, to achieve incredible outcomes as a result of the long-term vision, coordination, and commitment of partners, organizations, and residents. The sponsor collaboration for the Corry Blue Zones Project serves as a healthcare industry breakthrough case for 'collectively accountable' community change and improvement," said Ben Leedle, CEO of Blue Zones and co-founder of Blue Zones Project. "It is remarkable that the local integrated health systems that compete on traditional care every day, came together as partners for the community. Along with Erie County leadership, they should all be commended for their collaboration, without which the project would have never been possible."

Since February 2019, local leaders, volunteers, and community organizations in Corry have worked together to achieve certification status, and according to the [Sharecare Community Well-Being Index](#), Corry's investment in well-being is paying off. The city's overall 2022 Index score rose to 60 out of 100, a gain of more than six points since 2019. Each point increase in well-being for a population leads to an approximately 2% reduction in ER visits and hospital utilization, and to an approximately 1% reduction in total health care costs.

Over the same three-year period, Corry has shown improvement in purpose, social, financial, community, and physical well-being — the five core elements of individual well-being measured by Sharecare's Index. Sixty-two percent of Corry residents now report they are thriving compared to 45% in 2019, 15% fewer Corry residents report high cholesterol, and tobacco use declined by nearly 27%.

"Corry's jump in well-being establishes it as a best practice example for Pennsylvania and the nation of what a community can achieve when it sustains a focused commitment to well-being. The work of Blue Zones Project in Corry is playing a significant role in expanding the community's well-being culture and improving its health outcomes," said Michael Acker, Sharecare's senior vice president and general manager of community and urban services.

As a result of its efforts, Corry has made it easier for residents to move naturally, eat better, develop healthy social circles, and live with purpose. Highlights include:

- **Nearly 4,000 individuals involved.** More than 15% of Corry residents have taken the Blue Zones Project personal pledge for better well-being or participated in a Blue Zones Project activity, such as a walking group, plant-based cooking demonstration, or Purpose Workshop. Community residents volunteered more than 460 hours of their time. In 2022, Corry experienced 11% fewer health risks than expected if the community had followed state trends since 2019. The risk avoidance in the most conservative analysis equates to \$4 million in avoided medical and lost productivity costs over five years.
- **Better well-being on the job.** Ten employers (Corry Counseling Services, D&E Machining, Ltd., Corry Memorial Hospital, YMCA of Corry, Corry Area School District, FurHaven Pet Products, Corry Fabrication, Tonnard Manufacturing, Hensa STMP, and Viking Plastics) have implemented policies that improve well-being, such as designating a quiet place for colleagues to downshift, establishing well-being committee and employee gardens, and encouraging microbreaks for staff to stretch and move.
- **Better well-being at school.** All three buildings within the Corry Area School District, impacting more than 1,850 students,

have taken steps to become Blue Zones Project Approved. Improvements include the establishment of youth well-being ambassador groups (Beaver Blue Crews), water refill system installations at the primary and intermediate buildings, and Wellness Wednesday Healthy Tip of the Day education in morning announcements by the Beaver Blue Crew members.

- **Healthier choices at restaurants.** Sixteen new Blue Zones-inspired dishes have been added to adult and children's menus at Ploss' Lunch Box and The Juice Shop, providing more healthy options for customers.
- **Healthier options at the grocery store.** Healthy choices are easier for shoppers at Sander's Market, which has highlighted Blue Zones-inspired foods through store tours and cooking demonstrations, distributed healthy recipes, and created a Blue Zones checkout lane that prominently features items like fruit, nuts, and water rather than unhealthy alternatives.
- **Thirteen new healthier community policies.** Notable community improvements include finalizing the city's Active Transportation strategic plan and Rails to Trails Master Plan to enable more natural movement throughout the community, leading to a seven-point increase in Corry's WalkScore and a 12-point increase in the city's BikeScore. Research shows living in walkable and bikeable areas is linked to lower cardiovascular and chronic disease rates compared to less walkable neighborhoods.
- Blue Zones Project worked alongside the City of Corry as it adopted tobacco policies making city-owned property and city-sponsored events smoke-free, contributing to a nearly 27% reduction in tobacco use since 2019. Additionally, Corry residents now have better access to fresh produce thanks to policies and programs that support Corry's Farmer's Market and local food bank.
- **Greater economic investment.** The Corry community saw nearly \$4 million in grant funding to support healthy city policies. Overall grant dollars awarded to the City of Corry increased 37% over the first three years of the project and Impact Corry saw a 2,880% increase from \$31,000 (2018) to \$892,859 (2020) through the use of Blue Zones Project data and grant application assistance.

"At LECOM Health's Corry Memorial Hospital, caring for the health and well-being of our community has been our mission for more than 125 years. As one of the three sponsors of the Blue Zones Project Corry, we have witnessed many people getting involved in the Blue Zones activities and working together to make the Corry area a better place to live a longer, happier, and healthier lifestyle," said Barb Nichols, president and CEO of Corry Memorial Hospital.

#### Next Steps

Community leaders and volunteers continue to champion the work of Blue Zones Project by developing a sustainability plan to further Corry's progress toward optimal health and well-being.

"It is clear the community has much to be proud of, and the vision and passion of its leaders will continue to drive meaningful change. Many of the programs initiated by Blue Zones Project will continue through the support of local partners, including community cooking classes, walking groups, trail support, community cleanups, and city beautification," said Jennifer Eberlein, community manager for Blue Zones Project Corry. "The strong collaborative nature of our community partners ensures Corry will remain engaged in this transformative work to improve the well-being of its citizens. Our community champions are truly dedicated to seeing this community thrive."

For more information and updates please visit [corry.bluezonesproject.com](http://corry.bluezonesproject.com) or follow us on Facebook at [facebook.com/bzpcorry](https://facebook.com/bzpcorry).

#### 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. 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 which will move a community toward optimal health and well-being. Currently, 71 communities across North America have joined Blue Zones Project, impacting more than 4.5 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; and communities in Southwest Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Wisconsin. Blue Zones Project is a partnership between Blue Zones, LLC, and Sharecare, Inc. For more information, visit [bluezonesproject.com](http://bluezonesproject.com).

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