

# Media Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Mount Vernon Submits Blue Zones Application to Help Residents Thrive**

Mount Vernon, Iowa –Mount Vernon is seeking to be one of ten cities in Iowa designated as a Blue Zones community.

The Blue Zones project is part of Iowa's initiative to become the healthiest state in the nation. Chosen communities will receive a share of \$25 million in support to assess needs and create blueprints for lasting change. On January 4, 2012, Mount Vernon submitted an application to be selected as one of ten demonstration communities in Iowa.

The application included the naming of an Advisory Board that brings experience in city government, commerce, business, education, and community. The Board members are Rick Elliott, Paul Tuerler, Neil Rud, Heidi Levine, Debra Hermann, Richard Hermann, Peg Kerr, Lori Cranston, and Peter Wilch.

The application also set out 14 Initiatives with Co-Chairs for each one:

1. Physical Health/Fit Families: Crystal Eskelsen, Donna Johnson Herring, Kelly May
2. Physical Health/Gardening & Eating Locally: Erin Krob, Jen Rothmeyer
3. Physical Health/Healthy Eating: Ilona Lichty, Diane Legore
4. Well Being /Developmental Assets: Natalie Hayslip, Annie Hawker, Jan Moore, Deanna Mlynarczyk
5. Well Being/Drug Free Community: Amy Jackson, Doug Shannon, Mark Winder
6. Mental Health/Peer Mentoring: Steve Brand, Chris Chrogan, Jennifer Holub
7. Social Connections/Community Wellness Center: Jim Baty, Brad Kluver, Rory Weibel
8. Community Education/Lifetime Enrichment: Charley Liberko, Scott Rose
9. Community /Traditions & Celebrations: Nicole Rentschler, Denae Steine
10. Nature/Trails & Parks: Chris Goodwin, Lisa Nagle, Ben Pospisil
11. Nature/Get Moving Clubs: Sean Leuth, Monte Marti, Kirk Wischmeyer
12. Culture/Art in Action: Mark Benesh, Laurie Zaiger
13. Purposeful Living/ Service Learning: Brent Brase, John Rhomberg
14. Purposeful Living/Inter-generational Learning: Monica Keleher, Dodie Rilett

Bethany Campbell Tvedt is serving as Initiatives Manager. Jennifer Rothmeyer, the project's Community Engagement Director, will oversee the implementation of community outreach

efforts. She is working closely with Angie Cannon, the Volunteer Coordinator, to recruit and direct volunteers toward the goal of becoming a Blue Zones Project demonstration site.

The key selection factors the Blue Zones committee will use to make its choices are a streamlined municipal structure (one mayor, one city council, one public school system); residency (a majority of people living and working in the community); stakeholder commitment (support from mayor, city council, business leaders, school superintendent, other key civic leaders); local communications support (newspaper, TV, radio, church bulletins and other key groups helping drive participation); volunteer network (strong network with a proven track record); resource commitment (providing administrative assistant, office space, and other essentials); and citizen support (a minimum of 25% of residents pledging to participate in the Blue Zones Project).

The greatest continuing need is to rally citizen support. Our community is currently at 13% ([www.bluezonesproject.com/scoreboard](http://www.bluezonesproject.com/scoreboard)). **All citizens can do their part by pledging support at [www.bluezonesproject.com](http://www.bluezonesproject.com) or by texting BZP to the number 772937.**

Mount Vernon will be notified about being chosen as a final demonstration community on February 10. The goal is to exceed the minimum community pledge level by this date.

**The next Blue Zones Community Meeting is Thursday, January 19, at 7pm at City Hall.**

The Agenda will include an update on the application process by Project Manager Mollie Marti and the planning of a Blue Zones Community Rally.

Any questions about Blue Zones may be directed to [mollie@bestlifedesign.com](mailto:mollie@bestlifedesign.com) or [jen@emsun.org](mailto:jen@emsun.org).

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