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## Beach Cities Health District Blue Zones Project

Wellbeing and Engagement in BZP Programs Memo

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To Whom It May Concern,

Gallup defines and measures **wellbeing** as a function of five interdependent, essential elements: career (also known as purpose), social, financial, physical and community. Gallup has administered the **Gallup National Health and Well-Being Index** survey (previously Gallup-Healthways and Gallup-Sharecare) to over 2.8 million U.S. adults since its creation in 2008. Since 2010, Gallup has also administered the survey in over 45 **Blue Zones Project** (BZP) communities nationwide, including seven times across the three Beach Cities. The Well-Being Index score is an overall composite mean score of all metrics measured as a part of the instrument, and scoring for it and each of the five elements has been **measured and trended** nationally and across many BZP communities since its inception.

This memo is meant to summarize Gallup's measurement of people's awareness of, and participation in, Blue Zones Project activities in the Beach Cities and elsewhere — and what has been observed regarding the wellbeing levels of those who are aware of the BZP and have engaged in its activities, compared with those who are aware of the BZP but who have not engaged in its activities. Analyses across several BZP communities, including the Beach Cities, have consistently shown that those who report having directly engaged in BZP programs and offerings have statistically significantly ( $p < .05$ ) superior wellbeing, compared with those who are aware of the BZP in the area but who report not engaging in BZP work.

Gallup's perspectives on this topic are based, in part, on data collected from the **Gallup Panel**, a nationally representative, probability-based panel of adults recruited via randomly generated outbound telephone or (as of 2020) address-based sampling. First formed in 2004, Gallup's Panel has historically had at least 50,000 panelists nationally and currently comprises over 120,000 individuals. Panelists are typically invited to participate in about two surveys per month, allowing for long-term, longitudinal measurement of thousands of the same individuals across a variety of topics.

Gallup's experience in successive measurement of several thousand of the panelists — both in and out of the formal workforce — over multiple years has revealed aspects of the relationship between employee wellbeing and employee engagement, and how engagement and wellbeing are related to people's awareness of wellbeing-related programs and their subsequent participation in those programs. Many of these findings are externally published and are useful in understanding the effectiveness of Blue Zones Project work in communities. These include the following:

- Three out of five (60%) employees of large (1,000+) organizations report being **aware of wellbeing-related programs** in their workplace and 40% of those who are aware report participating in at least some of them.
- **Employee engagement** and employee wellbeing are highly related and have exhibited a **reciprocal causal relationship** in large-scale longitudinal studies involving several thousand of the same workers, measured over a multiple years. As such, employees who are “engaged” at work are substantially more likely to have high wellbeing, both currently and in the future.
- Engaged workers with higher wellbeing are **more comfortable discussing** wellbeing-related topics with their managers, enhancing the probabilities of their awareness of wellbeing-related programs and offerings in the workplace.

- Engaged employees are **28% more likely** to participate in wellbeing-related programs and offerings than average employees, reflecting an enhanced psychological connection with their employer, more trusting dialogue with their manager, and enhanced awareness of programs.
- Engaged employees' increased likelihood to participate in wellbeing-related programs and offerings is also likely related to a **contagion effect**, which is characterized by direct reports of employees reporting 15% higher wellbeing in the future when managed by supervisors who also have higher wellbeing.

Certain basic assumptions can be derived from these findings that are relevant to the successive random samples of general adults Gallup has gathered as part of BZP measurement. These are the following:

1. Given the array of wellbeing-related activities commonly introduced by the BZP into clients' communities, individuals who have higher preexisting wellbeing are generally expected to be more likely to recognize the presence of the BZP in their area, reflecting a type of "self-sorting" effect where high wellbeing among some individuals is more likely to influence their subsequent awareness of local BZP presence, as opposed to their awareness of the local BZP presence influencing their current wellbeing or changed wellbeing over time.
2. High wellbeing residents are expected to be more likely to report participation in BZP activities, but a substantial part of this inclination is due to the prerequisite of their being more likely to be aware of them in the first place. Restricting our inquiry to only residents who report being aware of the BZP in their communities, therefore, those who have higher wellbeing are generally not expected to be substantially more likely to engage in Blue Zones Project programs than their lower wellbeing counterparts after their awareness-levels are accounted for. As such, "self-sorting" to reporting BZP program involvement as a function of previously existing high wellbeing is substantially less anticipated in our community samples, after controlling for the awareness levels of the respondents.

These assumptions enable us to make reasonable interpretations of the general impact that involvement in Blue Zones Project activities has on those who directly engage with them. Stated simply, if awareness of the presence of the BZP in the community is controlled for, reasonable comparisons can be made between the wellbeing of community residents who have engaged with Blue Zones Project programs and those who have not, thus providing useful insights into the degree to which the Blue Zones Project programs are influencing the wellbeing of the residents who embrace them.

In practice, Gallup has conducted analyses that examine both the awareness of, and engagement with, the BZP in relation to wellbeing in nine prior Blue Zones Project communities across five states (Florida, Texas, Oregon, Oklahoma and Hawaii). In all cases, Gallup saw the following:

- Residents who reported awareness of the BZP in their area also reported statistically significantly ( $p < .05$ ) higher overall Well-Being Index scores, as well as higher scores in most or all five of the elements than those who were unaware of the presence of the BZP, findings consistent with expected results.
- Residents who were aware of the BZP and reported engagement with BZP activities also reported statistically significantly ( $p < .05$ ) higher overall Well-Being Index scores, as well as higher scores in most or all five of the elements than those who were also aware of the BZP but who did not report being involved in BZP programs or offerings, findings that are also consistent with expected results.

In the case of the Beach Cities, those who reported being aware of the BZP in their area and engaged with BZP activities reported statistically significantly ( $p < .05$ ) higher overall Well-Being Index scores, as well as higher wellbeing in four of the five elements: career/purpose, social, financial and community (physical wellbeing was also higher for this group, but at a lower confidence level).

It should be noted that these observations do not provide conclusive, causal evidence of the relationship between explicit participation in BZP activities in any given community and *improved* wellbeing over time for any given individual. Large-scale longitudinal studies of the same residents over multiple years would be required to demonstrate that type of causal relationships statistically and conclusively, and no such studies have been conducted. These results do, however, provide a compelling indication that such relationships likely exist.

Finally, it should be noted that across the entirety of the adult population — regardless of awareness of, or engagement with, the Blue Zones Project — the wellbeing of Beach Cities residents has shown statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) and meaningfully large improvement across several key indicators of wellbeing since the onset of measurement in 2010, the baseline year of Blue Zones Project involvement in the Beach Cities. These indicators include smoking rates, exercise rates, above normal weight, significant daily physical pain and general life satisfaction. While this does not prove that the Blue Zones Project is the sole factor in such large-population improvements, it is reasonable to postulate that the large-scale investment in the Blue Zones Project work played a substantive role.

I am available to discuss these findings and conclusions with Blue Zones Project sponsors and stakeholders at their convenience. I can be contacted at [danwitters@gallup.com](mailto:danwitters@gallup.com).

Thank you,

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