

YES! I want to be part of the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project

sponsored by United Health Foundation®

I agree to join the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project sponsored by United Health Foundation. I am committed to taking advantage of the programming and services provided by some of the nation's leading experts in health and longevity. When completed, I'll print this off and turn in my signed pledge by either mailing it to the Vitality Project (724 N. First Street, Minneapolis, MN 55401) or dropping it off at Albert Lea City Hall in the Community Development office.

During the Vitality Project, I pledge to:

- Take the free Vitality Compass®. I will repeat this test in October to see how simple lifestyle changes have influenced my projected longevity.
- Use the Active Home and Home Eating Environment checklists to learn easy ways to set up my home in a way that helps me be healthier.



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During the Vitality Project, I will also do at least four of the following activities (for descriptions, see following pages):

- 1. I will attend a Purpose workshop
- 2. I will sign up for the online Vitality Coach®
- 3. I will participate in a "moai" walking club
- 4. I will add Longevity Grocery List items to my weekly menu
- 5. I will use 10-inch plates
- 6. I will remove the television from my kitchen and dining room
- 7. I will wear a hara hachi bu bracelet and practice the 80% Rule
- 8. I will weigh myself every day
- 9. I will walk kids to school as part of the walking school bus initiative
- 10. I will help my children participate in the Blue Zones education program
- 11. I will invite a friend or family member to join me at Vitality Project events
- 12. I will attend a worship service weekly
- 13. I will volunteer in the community
- 14. I will grow a garden

Name _____
Home Address _____
Email Address _____
Date _____
Signature _____

PARTICIPATION WAIVER: The following waiver is required because, like joining a gym, there is some minimal risk to participating in any program. In addition, there will be pictures/videos taken at many events in order to teach other communities how to succeed like Albert Lea. The waiver gives AARP and Blue Zones (Quest Network, Inc.) the right to use these images.

I, the undersigned, agree to be legally bound, hereby, for myself, my heir, executors and administrators, waive and release any and all rights and claim and damages I may have against AARP, Quest Network, Inc., the United Health Foundation, and any and all Vitality Project sponsors and their representatives, successors, and assigns for any and all injuries suffered by me in said program/event. Further I hereby grant full permission to any and all of the foregoing to use an photographs, videotapes, motion pictures, recordings, or any other record of this program/event for promoting the AARP/Blue Zones Vitality Project sponsored by United Health Foundation and any other reasonable purpose. I also allow my name to be listed among all Vitality Project participants.





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Vitality Project Program Descriptions

This project includes several components designed to help you change your environment so that a healthier lifestyle is natural to follow.

Vitality Compass®

What is it? This quick and easy online tool was developed by the University of Minnesota School of Public Health and Blue Zones to help people project their possible life expectancy.

How does it work? The Vitality Compass® is based on more than 300 scientific, peer-reviewed national health studies. After answering a few questions, you'll not only discover your projected life expectancy, but you'll also get recommendations on how to add years to your life (and life to your years). You can take the Vitality Compass® at: www.aarp.org/bluezonesproject.

Active Home & Healthy Eating Environment Checklists

What are they? Two simple checklists that allow you to quickly assess and optimize your home so that you'll eat fewer calories and burn more of them.

Why do they work? Scientists at Cornell University found that how you set up your kitchen greatly influences what and how much you eat. Other scientists at the Mayo Clinic found that by deconveniencing your home, you can burn up to an extra 200 calories daily without thinking about it. Checklists are in the pledge packet and at www.aarp.org/bluezonesproject.

Optional Activities

1. Attend a Purpose Workshop

What are they? Top experts will lead participants through a three-hour workshop that helps people identify their values, strengths and gifts—then offer suggestions where they might use and volunteer their talents.

Why do they work? According to a study on purpose, people who have a strong sense of purpose live seven years longer than those who lack clarity.

To find out about dates and to register, visit Albert Lea Area Schools Community Education (albertlea.k12.mn.us) or call (507) 379-4834. Thanks to the generosity of the United Health Foundation, we are able to offer the workshops free of charge to Albert Lea residents and workers.



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2. Use the Vitality Coach®

What is it? Our project's equivalent of a bathroom scale, this online coach offers a 30-second daily check-in for six weeks. Choose three areas of focus and the Vitality Coach® will measure your improvement by recalculating your projected life expectancy each day and keeping track of the days of projected life expectancy you're gaining.

Why does it work? Studies show that if you practice new behavior for five weeks, it is likely to become a habit.

3. Form a Moai

What is it? Moai is an Okinawan word that refers to a small social group that meets regularly. A moai can help reinforce healthy behaviors in its members. For the Vitality Project, we'll help you form moais, including moai walking clubs.

Why does it work? Surrounding yourself with people who make health a priority creates a subtle but powerful effect on your own behaviors. A study showed that if your friends are obese, you're twice as likely to be obese yourself.

4. Use the Longevity Grocery List

What is it? A handy grocery list of foods that promote health and longevity.

Why does it work? The Cornell University Food and Brand Lab found that if your house is stocked with healthy food, you're more likely to eat in a way that you'll live longer and lose weight.

5. Switch to 10-Inch Plates

What is it? Replace dishes in your kitchen with 10-inch plates, small bowls, and skinny glasses.

Why does it work? The Cornell Lab also found that people who eat off of typical 12-inch plates regularly consume 27 percent more at meals than those who eat off of smaller 10-inch plates. A small plate fills up with less food sending a visual cue that we're eating more food.

6. No TV During Dinner

What is it? Make a habit of eating without a TV by removing the temptation from the kitchen and dining room.

Why does it work? Research shows that we mindlessly eat more calories when we eat while watching TV. The habit of eating without a TV makes it more likely we'll eat slower and consume fewer calories.



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7. Say “Hara Hachi Bu”

What is it? “Stop at 80%.” This Confucian-inspired adage has helped Okinawans consume less food for over 2,000 years. People say these three words before meals to remind them to quit eating when their stomachs are 80% full.

Why does it work? This simple saying, said before meals, helps make you conscious of how much you're eating and hence more likely to keep from overeating. A free bracelet for all Vitality Project participants is an easy reminder to start this practice.

8. Weigh Yourself Daily

What is it? The habit of stepping on the scale EVERY day.

Why does it work? We can only sustain losing a pound or two a week. Stepping on a scale every day takes just a few seconds and it rewards us if our weight has gone down or stings us if our weight has gone up. Whether you're trying to lose weight or maintain your current weight, this helps set up our behaviors for the day. A University of Minnesota study that split women up in groups found that the group that weighed themselves every day for two years weighed on average 17 pounds less than the group that never weighed themselves.

9. Join the Walking School Bus

What is it? This initiative gets parents and seniors to walk children to and from school. The Vitality Challenge Team will help identify walking routes and mobilize participants.

Why does it work? A recent poll of Albert Lea parents and grandparents revealed two things: 1) they walked to school as children 2) most children today do not walk to school because of perceived traffic safety concerns. A walking school bus is an effortless way to get more daily exercise into the lives of children, their parents, and nearby retirees.

10. Participate in Blue Zones Education programs

What are they? Albert Lea Schools will feature the following programs:

Blue Zones Challenge® – This program empowers kids to take control of the most powerful behaviors that determine if they will grow up healthy. It was designed by two top childhood obesity experts. Requires some parent participation.

Legacy Project – Lets kids identify and learn from “Longevity All Stars” in their families and neighborhood.

Why do they work? These in-school programs, designed by health and education experts, have been tried and tested for over five years as ways to help each student set personal goals around health. Ask your student's teacher if your children are participating in any of these programs.



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11. Buddy up

What is it? There will be numerous Vitality Project events. Invite a friend or neighbor to attend one (or many) with you.

Why does it work? Studies show that you're more likely to succeed at new behaviors if you buddy up with someone.

12. Explore Faith

What is it? You may want to consider attending a faith-based service every week. If you've drifted away from or never been engaged in religion, you may want to explore your religious roots or explore religions that may suit your current beliefs.

Why does it work? Studies show that people who attend religious services increase their life expectancy. One study found that those who attend religious services at least four times per month live seven to fourteen years longer when compared to people who don't participate in religious services.

13. Volunteer

What is it? If you are not volunteering much or at all, take on new volunteer activities that use your gifts, talents, or interests.

Why does it work? Studies show that people who volunteer have lower rates of cancer and heart disease, as well as lower health care costs. Moreover, they are less likely to be depressed, possibly because of higher activity levels and elevated sense of purpose.

14. Garden

What is it? This spring, plant a garden – a potted garden on a balcony, one in your yard, or a plot in a community garden.

Why does it work? Vegetable gardening is a central activity in all the world's Blue Zones. It provides regular, low-intensity range-of-motion exercise, stress reduction, and fresh vegetables. To join a community garden, contact Jennifer Davis, Recreation Program Supervisor, Albert Lea Parks & Recreation at jdavis@city.albertlea.org or call her at 507-377-4370.



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