

Script – Print - Going Blue to Stay in the Pink

OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony takes leadership role in health/wellness initiative

A healthy employee is a more productive and happy employee. Sounds simple, but believing it and actually making it happen are two very different things. However, OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center believes it's found a solution and is already well on its way to proving it.

It's called the Blue Zones Project and it has already showing promise in at least 10 sites around the country. It began locally with OSF Saint Anthony helping to fund an assessment of Rockford by Blue Zones as part of an initiative called Transform Rockford, aimed at making Rockford a top 25 community in the next six years.

Blue Zones says it's designed to surround populations with support that makes healthy choices second nature and all the benefits that accompany such a shift.

Paula Carynski, President of OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony, believes the initiative is a great fit for the often high-stress environment of healing and caring for patients and provides our Mission Partners, employees, the resiliency they need.

"The first thing we hope to accomplish is to show our Mission Partners that we're very committed to their wellbeing," says Paula Carynski, President of OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony Medical Center. "And secondly, we want to put in the best practices within our organizations so that they can choose healthy options easily within our organization. If they want to go and de-stress and have, on a nice walking path, that we have a walking path. If they want to select a healthy food, they can select health food. If there's an area they need to relax and rest, then we have those environments so that their overall wellbeing can be nurtured and facilitated."

Since May OSF Saint Anthony has been putting the pieces in place and ramping up the Blue Zones initiative. Plans call for indoor and outdoor walking paths, plus walkways. Healthier food offerings in both the medical center cafeteria and vending machines, plus purpose workshops for Mission Partners to adopt a healthier lifestyle in and outside of work.

Led by OSF Saint Anthony Wellness Manager Nathan Hammon, it all began with a review of policies, the physical environment and culture.

"Do our policies help our Mission Partners to downshift, to take time off?"- says Nathan Hamman, Manager of Wellness at OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center. "Healthy behaviors, our physical environment, is there opportunities to move naturally - have outdoor walking paths, healthy eating choices? There'll still be some things that aren't healthy, but the healthy choice should be easy, most visible choice for people to make. And also about the connectivity for people, so the social aspect of wellness, as well as helping people to find their purpose."

Ultimately, OSF Saint Anthony is seeking to attain Blue Zones Project certification, which would be a first for an Illinois employer.

Paula Carynski is also optimistic that the medical center's lead can encourage other Rockford business to adopt Blue Zones.