

# BLUE ZONES

“What can be added to the happiness of a man who is in health, out of debt, and has a clear conscience?” – Adam Smith



While resilience can have different meanings for different people, at a community level, it embodies the ability for organizations, individuals, and institutions to support one another. SUBMITTED

## Community leaders discuss building and sustaining resilience in Southwest Florida

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With the onslaught of constant threats like hurricanes, a global pandemic and raging fires out west, the concept of resilience has been getting a lot of attention lately. While resilience can have different meanings for different people, at a community level, it embodies the ability for organizations, individuals, and institutions to support one another.

Blue Zones Project of Southwest Florida reached out to some of our community leaders to get their own perspective on resilience, learn how their organizations are building resilience for the community, and offer their advice on ways we can support resilience.

**Scott Burgess, chief executive officer, David Lawrence Centers for Behavioral Health (DLC)**

**Q:** What does community resilience mean to you?

**A:** Community resilience means the community’s ability to share strength, vision, talents, skills, and resources to overcome any and all obstacles, together. In so doing, we work to ensure everyone not only survives but also thrives.

**Q:** What role does DLC play in strengthening that resilience?

**A:** DLC is committed to individual, family, and community wellness. We believe there is no health without mental health, and we are here to help restore and rebuild lives that are negatively impacted by mental health and/or addiction challenges. Through effective treatment, recovery is the expectation, not the exception and a pathway to ensure all thrive.

*For more information and to learn how you can support DLC, visit [davidlawrencecenter.org](http://davidlawrencecenter.org).*

**Emily Ptaszek, chief executive officer, Healthcare Network**

**Q:** What does community resilience mean to you?

**A:** Community resilience means taking care of our most vulnerable citizens in ways that are comprehensive and

sustainable. While on the surface, resilience refers to economic, social, physical, mental, and spiritual health, I believe that the level of community resilience can only be measured by how our most vulnerable neighbors are doing — a fact that is often easily overlooked, unless of course you’re really looking. Our collective resilience depends upon us really looking.

**Q:** What role does Healthcare Network play in strengthening that resilience?

**A:** Healthcare Network is a medical home for anyone who needs comprehensive and integrated primary healthcare. We broadly define primary healthcare to include medical, dental, and behavioral healthcare, and various clinical support services.

**Q:** What steps can community members take to support building resilience now and into the future?

**A:** One of the best ways to support resiliency is to become involved. When residents, organizations, and businesses are engaged, they understand the issues and challenges facing their community. Additionally, organizations and businesses need to proactively engage people from different backgrounds. Diverse groups bring different opinions and perspectives that support effective solutions. By working together, we can make our community a better place for all.

*For more information and to learn how you can support Healthcare Network, visit [healthcareswfl.org](http://healthcareswfl.org).*

**Steven L. Sanderson, president and CEO, United Way of Collier and the Keys**

**Q:** What does community resilience mean to you?

**A:** Community resilience is a measure of our community’s collective ability to understand, fight, survive, and thrive through any adversity that affects the common good of its residents to not only recover, but also succeed and lead.

**Q:** What role does United Way play in strengthening that resilience?

**A:** United Way seeks to understand and address core issues affecting the re-

silience and success of our community. We strive to be an active leader, partner, and team player in finding solutions through collective creativity, providing information, referral, innovation and leadership. These become necessary as we assess and evaluate this uncharted territory with COVID-19’s effect on our community. We are a willing and collaborative partner who is not afraid to take on new initiatives, programs, and services that are required for those who need it most in our community.

**Q:** What steps can community members take to support building resilience now and into the future?

**A:** Community members must trust themselves, other leaders, and the community as a whole. When no roadmap is charted, it must be developed. Also, the answers are not found in a textbook. Instead, they are within us. We must innovate and create, and not be afraid to seize opportunities while exploring how we operate in a world that conducts business differently. Lives are at stake and we do not have the luxury of waiting for someone else to research and point us in the right direction. We must acknowledge we are the experts and we will figure this out.

*For more information and to learn how you can support United Way of Collier and the Keys, visit [unitedwayofcolliercounty.org](http://unitedwayofcolliercounty.org)*

**Stephanie Vick, administrator, Florida Department of Health in Collier County**

**Q:** What does community resilience mean to you?

**A:** Community resilience means that we, as a whole, have the ability to adapt to adversity and continue to evolve in a way to make us stronger for the future. Rather than “surviving” an event, a resilient community responds to crisis and change that transforms a community. This brings to mind Hurricane Irma when Collier County was Ground Zero. In its aftermath, Irma cut off our county from essential services, media updates, and many were left without power for over a week. Residents assisted each

other and community partners responded to the hardest hit areas. Together, we persevered.

**Q:** What role does public health play in strengthening that resilience?

**A:** The Florida Department of Health is the first-in-the-nation national accreditation as an integrated department of health through the Public Health Accreditation Board. This signifies that the unified Florida Department of Health, including the state health office and all 67 county health departments, has been rigorously examined and meets or exceeds national standards for public health performance management and continuous quality improvement. This integration allows the department to respond to potential public health threats using a coordinated and standardized approach, directing resources and personnel where they are most needed.

**Q:** What steps can community members take to support building resilience now and into the future?

**A:** We find ourselves in unprecedented times. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected our families and friends. For some, it has affected employment and access to health care. As a community, it is important, now more than ever, to work together to ensure that no resident is left behind. Addressing the needs of the community, including health equity, is more important now than ever.

*For more information on the Florida Department of Health in Collier County, visit [collier.floridahealth.gov](http://collier.floridahealth.gov).*

*Brought to Southwest Florida by NCH Healthcare System, in collaboration with Sharecare, Inc. and Blue Zones, LLC, Blue Zones Project is part of Southwest Florida’s well-being improvement initiative that encourages changes in the community that lead to healthier options. For more information about Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida, visit [southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com](http://southwestflorida.bluezonesproject.com).*

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