

Life Style News **June 2009**

Exploring Longevity and Health

Throughout history explorers have set off to discover new lands. From Erik the Red to Marco Polo, the goal was to return home with astonishing treasures, tales of adventure, and superior knowledge of the world. Some explorers were successful; others were not.

Today, many will argue that few frontiers remain to be explored; however, the Blue Zones™ Longevity Quest team remains undeterred. In an effort worthy of Ponce de Leon, the Blue Zones' team has set forth to discover the secrets behind long lives. Working from the premise that lifestyle habits, rather than genetics, are the most significant determinants of longevity and health, the team is attempting to determine which choices have the greatest impact on lifespan by traveling to geographic regions that are inhabited by the world's most robust populations.

Where do people live longest?

Around the globe there are places that produce more centenarians, suffer a fraction of the diseases, and enjoy more healthy years of life. They include:

- *Okinawa, Japan*, which has the longest disability-free life expectancy in the world.
- *The Barbagia region of Sardinia, Italy*, which has the highest number of male centenarians in the world.
- *Loma Linda, California*, which has an average life expectancy that is nine to 11 years longer than that of other Americans.
- *The Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica*, in which middle-aged residents are about four times more likely than Americans to reach age 90.
- *The island of Ikaria, Greece*, on which people live longer and avoid many of the diseases that kill Americans.

What do these cultures have in common?

Dan Buettner, leader of the Blue Zone team, has said that the longest-lived people in each of these regions have a variety of things in common. They tend to:

- Eat plant-based diets
- Participate in regular, low-intensity activities
- Have an investment in family
- Share a sense of faith

They also have a strong sense of purpose. In many cultures, Buettner reports, the language includes vocabulary for describing a person's sense of purpose or reason for being. In Japanese, the term is 'ikigai,' which translates as the 'reason I wake up.' In Costa Rica, people have a 'plan de vida' or life plan.

Join the adventure

If you're interested in exploring this new frontier – or just finding out how to add a few years to your life – join the Blue Zone Quest. The team uses modern tools, like the Internet, to allow everyone who is interested, including students in classrooms, armchair explorers, or anyone else, to participate in the effort. All you have to do is log on to the Blue Zone website at <http://www.quest.bluezones.com> to participate.

Try a Little Hummus

As foods migrate from place to place, the name used to describe them often changes. For example, the legume used to make Hummus is called a chickpea in the Middle East, a garbanzo bean in Spain, and cece beans in Italy. Regardless of the name you use for the main ingredient, Hummus can be a delicious and healthy picnic snack. You can serve this recipe with toasted Pita bread or raw vegetables.

Hummus

- 1 16-ounce can of chickpeas
- ¼ cup lemon juice
- 1/3 cup tahini (sesame seed paste)
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 to 2 tablespoons olive oil

Drain the chickpeas. Combine the chickpeas, lemon juice, tahini, garlic, and salt in a food processor. Blend until mixture is smooth. Fill a serving bowl with the hummus and then drizzle olive oil over the mixture.

What Do You Know About Longevity Myths?

The Blue Zone Longevity Quest is a modern day search for a means of extending life, but it's not an original pursuit. Myths and legends about longevity have existed for centuries. Test your knowledge of longevity lore with this quiz:

1. Legend has it that anyone drinking from this cup would be granted an extraordinarily long life.
 - a. Fountain of Youth
 - b. Holy Grail
 - c. Ardagh chalice
 - d. World Cup

2. Tibetan Buddhists have taught of a peaceful kingdom secluded in the Himalayan Mountains where happiness, health, and long life abound. It is called:
 - a. Atlantis
 - b. Shangri La
 - c. Shambhala
 - d. Nirvana

3. Shangri La was created in a 1933 novel, written by James Hilton. The book was called *Lost Horizon*. Many people believe the location described in the book was based on a real place called:
 - a. Hunza Valley, Pakistan
 - b. Halabjah, Iraq
 - c. Goreme, Turkey
 - d. Aspen, Colorado

4. The Bible says that this person lived to be 969 years old. Who was it?
 - a. Noah
 - b. Adam
 - c. Methuselah
 - d. Gilgamesh

Brain Waves: They're Not Just for Thinking Anymore

Decades spent studying brains have produced a variety of insights. Today, we better understand differences in the ways that men and women think. We know that musicians' brain waves become synchronized when they play together. As it turns out, brain waves can even predict when a person will make a mistake, like spilling a cup of coffee or misspelling a word.

Needless to say, there are countless numbers of entrepreneurs who are creating new applications and original products based on these discoveries. Here are a few that are currently available or soon will be:

- **A baseball cap that can read your mind.** Well, it can read electroencephalogram (EEG) signals from your brain. The first version helps drivers recognize when they are too drowsy to operate a vehicle. Future versions may allow couch potatoes to operate home theater remote controls without having to move any part of their bodies!

- **Brain science marketing.** Focus groups may be obsolete. Advertisers no longer have to rely upon what consumers say about products, they can get more accurate information by scanning consumers' brains. Research giant Nielsen has teamed up with NeuroFocus to gauge the brain waves of potential customers with the goal of helping Japanese companies improve their marketing strategies.

- **Brain-Twitter.** In a development that is likely to give people who cannot speak or move the ability to communicate, researchers have found a way to use brain waves to direct computers. It's called brain-computer interface technology. Imagine: you can use your brain to tweet. Just keep it to 140 characters!

Brain waves will soon be informing and influencing equipment, toys, and games around the world. Maybe you can use brain waves to develop the next phenomenal app!

Answers:

1. **B** = Holy Grail
2. **C** = Shambhala
3. **A** = Hunza Valley, Pakistan
4. **C** = Methuselah