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# news release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The evolution of health coverage: Wellmark celebrates 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary in Iowa**

DES MOINES, IA (September 28, 2009) – Wellmark Blue Cross Blue Shield is celebrating 70 years of service to its Iowa members in 2009. And while health insurance has changed dramatically over that time, Wellmark’s goal of providing outstanding service to its members and health care providers has remained the same.

The early days of Blue Cross and Blue Shield plans marked the birth of pre-paid health care coverage in America. Originally, Blue Cross plans were formed to cover the cost of hospital care, while Blue Shield plans were established to cover physicians’ services. Today, these plans are combined to provide a full range of health care coverage.

What we know today as Wellmark began in 1939:

Legislation was enacted in Iowa that year permitting the creation of non-profit health service corporations. Hospital Service Incorporated of Iowa, which later became known as Blue Cross of Iowa, was founded in Des Moines by hospital administrators whose hospitals assumed all financial risk.

That same year, another non-profit health services corporation, Associated Hospital Service, was created by the Archdiocese of Sioux City. Its name was later changed to Blue Cross of Western Iowa and South Dakota.

In 1945, Iowa Medical Service, later known as Blue Shield of Iowa, was created by physicians to provide the public affordably priced health services.

In 1989, Blue Cross of Iowa, Blue Cross of Western Iowa and South Dakota, and Blue Shield of Iowa merged to form IASD Health Services Corp. (IASD), which operated as Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa and Blue Cross of South Dakota. South Dakota Blue Shield merged with IASD in 1996.

IASD and most of its subsidiaries adopted the Wellmark name in 1997. Wellmark, Inc., a mutual company organized under Iowa law, does business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa in Iowa, and Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota in South Dakota.

Today, Wellmark offers a full range of health insurance and related products to 1.8 million Iowans, including 11,000 employer groups, 46,000 federal employees and 346,000 individuals.

“We’re proud that so many Iowans choose Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield as their health insurance provider,” said John Forsyth, Wellmark’s chairman and CEO. “Our employees work every day to earn their trust, spend their money wisely, and collaborate with hospitals and physicians to ensure high quality health care.”

While no one can predict what the *next* 70 years will bring, Forsyth notes one thing is certain. “We’ll still be working to make Iowa one of the healthiest states in the nation.”

Visit [www.wellmark.com](http://www.wellmark.com) for more information on Wellmark’s history, products and services.

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