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# news release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **The Wellmark Foundation Awards \$149,833 Grant to Continue Senior Wellness Program**

*Grant Targets Older Adults in Cerro Gordo, Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Floyd, Franklin, Greene, Guthrie, Hamilton, Hancock, Humboldt, Kossuth, Mitchell, Pocahontas, Sac, Webster, Winnebago, Worth and Wright Counties*

**(DES MOINES, IOWA)** – The Wellmark Foundation awarded a \$149,833 two-year grant to the Elderbridge Agency on Aging in Mason City to continue a wellness program for older adults. The project was originally launched in 2007 through support of a Wellmark Foundation mini-grant to demonstrate how senior wellness activities might prevent type 2 diabetes.

Elderbridge serves older adults and family caregivers in a 20-county area which includes Cerro Gordo, Audubon, Calhoun, Carroll, Crawford, Floyd, Franklin, Greene, Guthrie, Hamilton, Hancock, Humboldt, Kossuth, Mitchell, Pocahontas, Sac, Webster, Winnebago, Worth and Wright.

*Better Living through Health Education and Strength Training* will replicate the program, which was piloted at the Congregate Meal Center in Gowrie, at 24 additional congregate meal centers in north central Iowa, says Beth Bahnson, M.S.W., nutrition and development director and Fort Dodge office supervisor of the Elderbridge Agency on Aging. “*Better Living* was designed to help participants prevent diabetes or self-manage their condition, and to encourage lifestyle changes for healthy aging,” says Bahnson. “Participants in the pilot program had exciting results, and we are pleased to expand the program to reach hundreds of additional older adults.”

According to Bahnson, the senior wellness program will include 30-minute exercise sessions offered three times a week, monthly health promotion classes, and regular health screenings and fitness assessments to track participant progress. Balance, flexibility and strength training, as well as nutrition and health education components will be incorporated.

Collaborating agencies and organizations include Worth County Public Health, Manly Senior Center and Lake Mills Chamber Development Corporation. For more information about *Better Living through Health Education and Strength Training*, contact Beth Bahnson at [bbahnson@elderbridge.org](mailto:bbahnson@elderbridge.org) or 515-955-5244.

The Wellmark Foundation has provided nearly \$14.7 million to fund 406 health-related grants in Iowa and South Dakota since 1997, including \$1,739,233 this cycle. “The Wellmark Foundation collaborates with non-profit and governmental organizations in Iowa and South Dakota to positively impact the health outcomes of individuals and communities in our states,” says Matthew McGarvey, director of The Wellmark Foundation. “We are happy to fund this grant that will support healthy lifestyles and improved fitness for seniors,” says McGarvey.

The Wellmark Foundation is a private, non-profit foundation created by Wellmark, Inc., doing business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa. Due to the Foundation’s recent significant support toward disaster relief efforts, the timeline for the second 2008 community responsive grant cycle has been modified. Letters of Interest (LOIs) are now due on September 23, 2008. Learn more about this funding opportunity during a grant applicant teleconference on July 21, 2008. For teleconference and LOI details, visit the Foundation’s Web site at [www.wellmark.com/foundation](http://www.wellmark.com/foundation). Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield and The Wellmark Foundation are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.