



news release

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Wellmark Foundation Grant to Support Children's Obesity Prevention Program

(Des Moines, Iowa) – Healthy Henry County Communities in Mt. Pleasant received a \$135,500 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation to enhance a childhood obesity prevention program targeting children in kindergarten through eighth grade. The program continues an ongoing wellness initiative to improve childhood weight issues in the county, which has been supported by previous Wellmark Foundation grants, a Harkin Wellness grant and other funders.

Wellness Journey, on the Road to Good Health will promote healthy food choices and increased physical activity of children in Henry County, says Linda Albright, community health director at Healthy Henry County Communities (HHCC). “*Wellness Journey* will focus on helping youth achieve energy balance, which will include self-responsibility for making healthy food and exercise choices,” explains Albright. “We will provide age-appropriate education through schools, youth service organizations and the community.”

According to Albright, the multi-faceted program will educate students, parents and families about nutrition and exercise. *Wellness Journey* will also include targeted outreach to young at-risk parents as well as the Hispanic population. Strategies will include mini-health fairs, education classes, community events and a group mentoring program for middle school youth. Train-the-trainer sessions on health education topics will also be provided to collaborating agencies serving youth.

Collaborating agencies and organizations include Iowa State University Extension, the four school districts in Henry County, New Iowans Center, Mt. Pleasant Park and Recreation Department, and Mt. Pleasant Recreation Center. For more information on *Wellness Journey*, contact Linda Albright at albrightl@hchc.org or 319-385-6128.

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 pleased to fund this grant that will support healthy lifestyle choices and prevent obesity in youth,” 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. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield and The Wellmark Foundation are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.