



news release

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The Wellmark Foundation Supports After-School Program to Prevent Obesity in Children

(DES MOINES, IOWA) – The Wellmark Foundation awarded a \$105,000 two-year grant to the Iowa Health Foundation to pilot a national childhood obesity prevention program in after-school programs in the West Des Moines and Perry Community School Districts. Blank Children’s Hospital will administer the grant, which will implement work planned through a previous Wellmark Foundation capacity-building grant received in 2007.

The Obesity Prevention Program will pilot the after-school curriculum of the Coordinated Approach to Children’s Health (CATCH) in cooperation with Kids West in West Des Moines and PACES in Perry, says Julia Richards Krapfl, obesity prevention program coordinator at Blank Children’s Hospital. “CATCH is an evidence-based, dynamic program that educates children about making healthy lifestyle choices regarding nutrition and exercise,” says Richards Krapfl.

More than 1,100 children are projected to participate in the pilot program at the two school districts. According to Richards Krapfl, CATCH incorporates daily exercise through more than 300 easy to follow games and activities utilizing balls, jump ropes, beanbags, cones, hoops and more. The program also includes a weekly nutrition lesson and teaches children about healthy food choices, portion control, preparation methods and ingredients. CATCH program implementation in other communities throughout Iowa is a long-term goal of the project.

In addition to implementing the CATCH after-school curriculum, the *Obesity Prevention Program* will also use various community outreach strategies, such as Web site development, postcard distribution, monthly electronic news updates and individual assistance to children and families as needed.

Additional collaborating organizations include Iowa State University and the Center for Advocacy and Outreach at Blank Children’s Hospital. For more information on the *The Obesity Prevention Program*, contact Julia Richards Krapfl at krapflj@ihs.org or 515-241-3317.

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 instill healthy exercise and nutrition choices 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.