



news release

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Wellmark Foundation Grant to Support 25-Mile Community Wellness Trail in Central Iowa

(DES MOINES, IOWA) – The Wellmark Foundation awarded a \$150,000 two-year grant to the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation to support construction of a 25-mile paved trail in central Iowa. The trail is designed to increase community wellness through exercise and healthy lifestyle choices.

Ankeny to Woodward Trail will connect the communities of Ankeny, Sheldahl, Slater, Madrid and Woodward across four counties, and will encourage Iowans and visitors to live a more active lifestyle, says Mark Ackelson, president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. “The *Ankeny to Woodward Trail* is a unique project that will combine wellness opportunities with land conservation, public art and community outreach,” explains Ackelson.

Trail planners anticipate more than 100,000 annual visits to the trail by people of all ages and abilities for walking, bicycling, in-line skating and other non-motorized uses, states Ackelson. The trail will be open to the public for free.

Funding will also support other initiatives to encourage use of the trail for health improvement. Milestone markers will be placed to help users gauge distance traveled. Activity prescription pads with trail information will be created so local health care professionals can easily promote use of the trail as a means to fitness. In addition, a survey of trail users will be conducted to understand their motivation for using the trail and how it might be improved.

Collaborating agencies include the Iowa Department of Public Health, the cities of Ankeny, Sheldahl, Slater, Madrid and Woodward, and county conservation boards in Boone County, Polk County, Dallas County and Story County. For more information about the *Ankeny to Woodward Trail* contact Lisa Hein at lhein@inhf.org or 515-288-1846.

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 support this exciting project that will encourage healthy, active lifestyles for many Iowans,” 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.