



---

# news release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 8, 2008

**CONTACT:** Angela Feig

Senior Corporate Communications Consultant

Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

636 Grand Avenue, Station 111

Des Moines, Iowa 50309

515-245-4551

feigab@wellmark.com

## **Wellmark Foundation Grant to Support School Health Literacy Project to Prevent Childhood Obesity**

**(DES MOINES, IOWA)** – Iowa State University will use a \$148,909 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation to develop and pilot a school-based nutrition health literacy program designed to prevent childhood obesity.

*Promoting Health Literacy through the School Nutrition Environment* will focus on childhood obesity as impacted by health literacy in the school environment, says Ruth Litchfield, Ph.D., R.D., L.D., state nutrition extension specialist at Iowa State University. “The program will increase healthy food choices available in Iowa schools through collaborative interventions that will engage school staff, students and local food industry representatives,” explains Litchfield.

The multi-faceted program will be piloted in six school districts located throughout the state. The project will focus on competitive foods, which are food items available in school but outside of school menus, such as vending machine items and ala carte lunchroom choices. Interventions will include identification of best practice nutrition guidelines for competitive foods, development of a model for schools to implement identified nutrition guidelines, creation of health literacy messages promoting healthy competitive food choices, and development of a tool to examine the nutrition health literacy of students, states Litchfield.

Collaborating organizations will include selected school districts and various local vendors. For more information on *Promoting Health Literacy through the School Nutrition Environment*, contact Ruth Litchfield at [litch@iastate.edu](mailto:litch@iastate.edu) or 515-294-9484.

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 program that will support healthy food choices at schools 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](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.