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# news release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Wellmark Foundation Funds Project to Increase Use of Colorectal Cancer Screenings, Increase Community Awareness**

**(DES MOINES, IOWA)** – The Wellmark Foundation awarded a \$100,504 two-year grant to the Mercy Medical Center Foundation in Sioux City to increase community wellness through implementation of a colorectal cancer screening project.

*New Links to Colorectal Cancer Prevention* will increase awareness and use of colorectal cancer screening among Siouland adults, with a special emphasis on adults 50 years and older, says Amy Slevin, director of clinical program development at Mercy Medical Center Foundation. “*New Links* will implement two broad strategies, including a targeted effort to reach adults 50 years and over who have not undergone recommended screenings, and a community awareness campaign,” explains Slevin.

Physician clinic data will be used to identify persons who have not undergone recommended colorectal cancer screenings, and their personal primary health care providers will contact these individuals to encourage screening. The community awareness campaign will include media promotion, community and school health events, and a 40-foot long Colossal Colon® exhibit.

According to Slevin, local rates of colorectal cancer occurrence and mortality are significantly higher than state and national averages. The goals of *New Links* are to increase community awareness of the need for screening, and to identify and reach out to individuals currently in need of screening. These approaches should improve rates of colorectal cancer in the Siouland area.

Collaborating agencies and organizations include Siouland District Health Department, Mercy Medical Laboratories and Mercy Hereditary Cancer Prevention Clinic. For more information contact Amy Slevin at [slevina@mercyhealth.com](mailto:slevina@mercyhealth.com) or 712-279-5936.

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 community wellness project that will increase awareness and use of colorectal cancer screening among older adults in the Siouxland area,” 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.