



news release

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The Wellmark Foundation Provides Funding for Nutrition Improvement Project Focused on Vending Machines

(DES MOINES, IOWA) –A \$105,000 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation will allow the Polk County Agricultural Extension District to improve community wellness through a nutrition improvement project focused on vending machines.

The *Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey (NEMS) – Vending* will raise community awareness of the nutrition environment and food availability in vending machines, explains Susan Klein, nutrition/health field specialist for the Polk County Agricultural Extension District. “The project will create and pilot a tool to examine the nutritional value of food offered in vending environments in six Iowa communities,” says Klein.

The new tool will be patterned after NEMS, a nationally recognized survey instrument currently used to measure nutritional value of food sold in grocery stores, convenience stores and restaurants. According to Klein, this additional NEMS tool focused on vending machines is needed to achieve a more complete picture of nutrition in a community, as vending machines often present the only food source choices in many rural settings and workplaces.

Project strategies include development of an online reporting process, report card and recognition system to highlight communities that make significant improvements in their healthy food environments.

Iowa State University Extension will collaborate on the project by providing regional training on the new tool. For more information about the *Nutrition Environment Measurement Survey (NEMS) – Vending* contact Susan Klein at sklein@iastate.edu or 515-261-4213.

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 project that will promote improved nutrition and healthy lifestyles for 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.