



news release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 15, 2008

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Wellmark Foundation Grant to Expand Breast Cancer Prevention Program for Underserved Women in South Dakota

(DES MOINES, IOWA) –The South Dakota Department of Health in Pierre, S.D., will use a \$120,000 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation to expand a breast cancer screening project for low-income and underinsured women in South Dakota. The project will be administered by the South Dakota Women’s Cancer Network through its *All Women Count!* Program.

Through a collaborative effort with the American Cancer Society, *All Women Count!* Program and St. Mary’s Foundation, the project will also provide outreach to the Native American population to address documented health disparities. In addition, the South Dakota Comprehensive Cancer Coalition will provide support to develop and implement a community awareness campaign promoting the initiative to the general public.

Making Mammograms Available to Low Income and Uninsured Women will target women 30-49 years of age who cannot be served by other funding sources due to funding limitations, says Jill Ireland, facilitator at the South Dakota Women’s Cancer Network. “This project will make mammography available to this underserved population of women, with the goal of achieving early diagnosis and successful treatment of breast cancer,” explains Ireland.

According to the American Cancer Society, 520 women in South Dakota will be diagnosed with breast cancer and 100 women will die from the disease this year, highlighting the importance of expanding screening efforts, says Ireland. The project will provide screening breast mammograms to women 40-49 years of age and women 30-39 years of age with risk factors. Supporting strategies will involve distribution of promotional materials including letters, instructional memos and posters, to the more than 300 *All Women Count!* health care providers across the state. Regional training sessions will be offered to *All Women Count!* clinic staff.

Other organizations involved in the program include Susan G. Komen for the Cure, Avera McKennan Foundation and Dakota Care. For more information on the *All Women Count!* Program and the expanded mammography screenings, contact the program at 1-800-738-2301.

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, which will provide a greatly needed health service to this underserved population,” 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.