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# news release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Wellmark Foundation Supports School-Based Youth Wellness and Obesity Prevention Program**

**(DES MOINES, IOWA)** – The Trinity Health Foundation in Fort Dodge received a \$145,500 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation to expand a school-based wellness and obesity prevention program targeting youth in kindergarten through eighth grade. Trinity Regional Medical Center will work closely with the Fort Dodge Community School District to implement the program.

*THRIVE: School-based Partnership to Fight Childhood Obesity* is a multi-faceted program designed to help slow the tide of youth obesity, and improve health and wellness of youth in Fort Dodge, says Randy Kuhlman, director of community and government relations at Trinity Health Systems. “*THRIVE* will focus on providing elementary students with education, resources and proven programming to increase physical activity, improve nutrition and nurture healthy lifestyles,” explains Kuhlman.

The program will consist of multiple components, including student education/awareness, parent education, physical education enhancements, health screenings, exercise initiatives and a community health promotion campaign. Specific strategies include curriculum enhancements, daily physical education classes, a walking initiative, and an after-school swimming program provided in collaboration with the Fort Dodge YMCA.

The unique relationship between Trinity Regional Medical Center and the Fort Dodge Community Schools will enable the project to directly impact students’ knowledge of fitness, nutrition and lifestyle choices, ultimately helping youth to reach their full potential as students and citizens, states Katie Moser, *THRIVE* coordinator.

The University of Iowa’s College of Public Health will also contribute to the project by measuring and evaluating the programming. For more information about *THRIVE: School-based Partnership to Fight Childhood Obesity*, contact Randy Kuhlman at rkuhlman@ihs.org or 515-574-6507.

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 program that will educate youth to make healthy nutrition and exercise choices, and lead them toward a lifetime of wellness,” 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.