



news release

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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 Sexual Health Education Program in Waterloo

(DES MOINES, IOWA) – Communities in Schools of Cedar Valley, Inc. in Waterloo received an \$88,974 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation to enhance a successful school-based sexual health education program.

Community Health Education is designed to prevent teen pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and to increase self esteem among youth ages 12-19 years, with a specific focus on African American girls, says Joni Spencer, Together for Youth coordinator. The program will expand the Together for Youth's (TYF) Health Education programming beyond local schools to agencies and other community groups that serve youth in the area.

“The project will educate youth about a variety of sexual health topics, with the goal of reducing the number of teen pregnancies and STIs in the county,” says Spencer. According to Spencer, in the past few years there has been a strong correlation between the increase of Together for Youth's Health Education programming and the decline of teen births in Black Hawk County. “We want to continue to build upon the success of the Together for Youth Health Education school-based programming by reaching even more middle and high school aged youth outside of the school day.”

Topics will include abstinence, contraception, healthy relationships, STIs, parental communication about sexuality, and sexual consent. Strategies will include delivery of 350 general sessions on sexual health issues in local schools and youth serving agencies, development of a Youth of Color Coalition, and implementation of a summer program for African American girls offered at Allen Women's Health.

Collaborating organizations include the Waterloo Community School District, Allen Women's Health, Pathways, ISU Extension, and other youth service agencies and community funders, such as R.J. McElroy Trust, which is contributing matching funds. For more information about *Community Health Education*, contact Joni Spencer at spenceje@ihs.org or 319-274-6768.

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 happy to fund this grant that will support community-based wellness and prevention among teens,” 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.