



# news release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mar. 3, 2009

## CONTACT:

Kevin Teale  
Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield  
636 Grand Avenue, Station 111  
Des Moines, Iowa 50309  
Phone: (515) 248-5683  
E-mail: tealek@wellmark.com

## The Wellmark Foundation Funds Five Health Improvement Projects in Iowa and South Dakota

**(Des Moines, Iowa)** – The Wellmark Foundation funded five health improvement grants in Iowa and South Dakota totaling \$593,558 at its recent board of directors meeting. Organizations receiving grants in these two new grant programs are listed below each grant program and description. All awards are two-year grants unless otherwise noted.

The ***Growing Up LEAN: Living to be Energetic, Active, & Nutritious Grant Program*** supports childhood obesity prevention projects. Two projects, totaling \$243,558, were selected for funding in this priority focus.

- Youth & Family Services, Inc. (YFS) in Rapid City, S.D., received a \$150,000 grant to implement and expand a childhood obesity prevention program targeting 2,000 children in western South Dakota. The project will utilize the evidence-based childhood obesity prevention approach, *I Am Moving, I am Learning*, which has been used effectively in more than 100 Head Start programs nationally since 2006.
- The Burgess Foundation in Onawa received a \$93,558 grant to implement a childhood obesity prevention project in Monona County. The project will promote lifelong physical activity and healthy habits among children through community capacity-building, policy, youth programming and family programming. Plans include working with the school board to approve new policies, training volunteer staff to supervise before and after school use of fitness equipment, and implementing family activities including mini-health fairs and family fun nights.

***Healthy Communities Grant Program: Supporting a Culture of Wellness and Prevention*** is designed for community-based wellness and prevention projects. Three projects, totaling \$350,000, were selected for funding within this priority focus.

- The Community HealthCare Association of the Dakotas (CHAD) in Sioux Falls, S.D., received a \$150,000 grant to implement a preventive oral health program. The program will target 600 individuals by hosting the Delta Dental's Dakota Smiles mobile dental program

at 24 clinics in three underserved Community Health Center (CHC) service areas. Services provided will include oral health education to patients, outreach activities in the communities, tobacco cessation counseling and training CHC clinical staff on basic oral health techniques.

- The Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) was awarded a twenty-two-month \$150,000 grant to create a statewide health data warehouse. The warehouse will collect, organize and disseminate important health information from multiple sources across Iowa. A 2007 capacity-building grant from the Foundation supported establishment of a user-group as part of the research phase in the warehouse development plan. The warehouse will provide local public health partners and other stakeholders with online, interactive access to health data, which they will use to conduct evidence-based needs assessments and to identify health priorities and prevention targets in their communities.
- Catholic Social Services in Rapid City, S.D., will use a \$50,000 grant to support a wellness and prevention curriculum for elementary students living on the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Reservations in South Dakota. The culturally specific curriculum will teach 800-1000 elementary students how to live a healthy lifestyle based on their Lakota tradition. The program will also offer knowledge and resources on how to resist peer pressure, abstain from substance abuse and avoid violence. This Wellmark Foundation grant will provide matching funds to leverage a four-year, \$330,284 Local Funding Partnerships grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and a three-year, \$210,213 grant from The Bush Foundation supporting this program.

The Wellmark Foundation has provided nearly \$16.3 million to fund 412 health-related grants in Iowa and South Dakota since 1997, including \$593,558 this cycle. “The Wellmark Foundation works to improve the health of Iowans and South Dakotans,” says Matthew McGarvey, director of The Wellmark Foundation. “These are strong and active grantee organizations that have great influence in their communities. Collectively, these comprehensive projects will positively impact the short-term and long-term health of thousands of Iowans and South Dakotans,” 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. The ***Growing Up LEAN: Living to be Energetic, Active, & Nutrition Grant Program*** supporting childhood obesity prevention projects has an application deadline of April 21, 2009. The deadline for the ***Healthy Communities Grant Program: Supporting a Culture of Wellness and Prevention*** supporting community-based wellness and prevention projects is September 3, 2009. Visit The Wellmark Foundation's Web site at [www.wellmark.com/foundation](http://www.wellmark.com/foundation) for grant application instructions. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield and The Wellmark Foundation are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.