



# news release

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Wellmark Foundation Provides Funding for Childhood Obesity Prevention Project in South Dakota**

**(Des Moines, Iowa)** – Youth & Family Services, Inc. (YFS) in Rapid City, S.D., received a \$150,000 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation to implement a childhood obesity prevention program in western South Dakota.

The Choose to Move Childhood Obesity Prevention project will prevent obesity and promote healthy lifestyles among YFS children, families, and staff, says Susan Fedell, executive director of Youth & Family Services, Inc. “Choose to Move will strive to integrate physical activity and wise nutrition choices into the daily routines of nearly 2,000 children enrolled in YFS’s direct service programs, including Prenatal to Five Head Start, Child Care, Girls Incorporated, and Boys’ Health.”

According to Fedell, the project will utilize and expand on the research- and evidence-based childhood obesity prevention approach, I Am Moving, I am Learning, that has been used effectively in more than 100 Head Start programs nationally since 2006.

Program components include classroom physical activities and nutrition education, community outreach activities, and ongoing obesity prevention training and education for hundreds of parents. Expected outcomes include: increased physical activity and healthy nutrition of children and parents; modified YFS policies, procedures and programming; and establishment of wellness groups in the community.

The YFS Health Advisory Committee, comprised of health care professionals and parents from the community, will guide the project. Additional collaborating partners include the YFS Childhood Obesity Wellness Team, staff and parents of children enrolled in YFS programs. For more information about Choose to Move, contact Susan Fedell at [yfsed@rapidnet.com](mailto:yfsed@rapidnet.com) or (605) 342-4195.

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. “Choose to Move is a far-reaching program that will touch the lives

of hundreds of children, parents and staff involved with Youth & Family Services, providing them with the knowledge and skills to lead healthy, active lives.”

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 Foundation is offering two new grant programs in 2009. The **Growing Up LEAN: Living to be Energetic, Active, and 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 as well as a list of previous grant recipients. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield and The Wellmark Foundation are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.