



news release

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The Wellmark Foundation Funds Childhood Obesity Prevention Project in Monona County

(Des Moines, Iowa) – The Burgess Foundation in Onawa received a \$93,558 two-year grant from The Wellmark Foundation to implement a childhood obesity prevention project in the West Monona School District.

Got 2 Move will prevent childhood obesity by promoting lifelong physical activity and healthy daily habits among children in the West Monona School District, says Sue McLaughlin, RN, CDE, diabetes program coordinator and grant coordinator at the Burgess Health Center. “Got 2 Move will provide fun, free activities and fitness equipment for children at school and community sites. Increased exercise will ultimately lower their risk for obesity and other serious health conditions.”

A community coalition will lead the project, which will include community capacity-building, policy, youth programming and family programming to motivate children to stay physically active and healthy, explains McLaughlin. The coalition will work with the school board to approve new policies, train volunteer staff to supervise before and after school use of fitness equipment, and implement family activities including mini-health fairs and family fun nights.

Goals include 20 percent increase in the usage of fitness equipment on school grounds and community sites, 60 percent increase in the number of students who pass the Presidential Physical Fitness Test, and 20 percent decrease in the number of students at or above the 85th percentile for body mass index (BMI).

Got 2 Move will be modeled after guidelines from the Center for Disease Control and the University of Iowa Nursing Interventions Research Center. According to McLaughlin, while the initial emphasis will be on West Monona elementary school students, project planners plan to formally expand the program to all youth in Monona County in the near future.

Project partners include Burgess Health Center, West Monona Community Schools, Monona County Public Health Nursing, City of Onawa: Summer Park and Recreation, Onawa Public Library, ISU Extension – Monona County and the Family Medicine Clinic. For more information on the Got 2 Move project, contact Sue McLaughlin at smclaughlin@burgesshc.org or (712) 423-9268.

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. “Got 2 Move will create a rural model for a community and school approach to prevent childhood obesity. The project will help students and their families establish lifelong, physical activity patterns and healthy daily habits.”

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 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.