



# news release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## The Wellmark Foundation Funds Two Health Improvement Projects in South Dakota

(Des Moines, Iowa) – The Wellmark Foundation funded two health improvement grants in South Dakota totaling \$167,725 at its recent board of directors meeting. The ***Growing Up LEAN: Living to be Energetic, Active, & Nutrition Grant Program*** supports childhood obesity prevention efforts of healthy eating and appropriate physical activity that can be incorporated into home, child care, school and community settings. The following organizations received awards this cycle.

- The Education Resource Center of South Dakota in Sioux Falls, S.D, received a one-year \$21,087 grant to implement KidZ Health Club, a multiple media project designed to teach healthy habits to children in kindergarten through third grade. Project elements will be incorporated into existing classroom curriculum areas of math, science and language, and will include lesson plans, materials, games and activities. The project, which will partner with the successful South Dakota Health EDventure Program, will reach 4,000 students in 200 classrooms throughout the state.
- South Dakota State University in Brookings, S.D., will use a two-year \$146,638 grant to implement Bountiful Backpacks, an obesity prevention project targeting elementary students living on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota. The project will provide food and education to elementary children in extremely low-income families. Activities will include distribution of healthy grocery items through the backpacks each Friday during the school year to address nutrition and food security issues, and interactive nutrition and cooking lessons to increase children’s awareness of healthy eating habits and food preparation skills.

The Wellmark Foundation has provided approximately \$16.98 million to fund 422 health-related grants in Iowa and South Dakota since 1997, including \$656,627 this ***Growing Up LEAN: Living to be Energetic, Active, & Nutrition Grant*** 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 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.