

news release

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The Wellmark Foundation funds six health improvement projects in Iowa, South Dakota

DES MOINES, IA (January 4, 2010) – The Wellmark Foundation has funded six health improvement grants in Iowa and South Dakota – **totaling \$447,395** – at its recent board of directors meeting. Organizations receiving grants in the *Healthy Communities: Supporting a Culture of Wellness & Prevention* program include:

- **Black Hawk County Health Department** in Waterloo, Iowa received a two-year \$112,375 grant to implement a wellness program for older adults focusing on fall prevention. Fall Prevention in Older Adults will implement a coordinated program to prevent falls and related injuries, and to improve overall wellness among adults 60 years and older. The innovative approach utilizes balance assessment, fall risk stratification, consumer education and referral, and an evidence-based fall prevention model, A Matter of Balance.
- **The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC)** received a one-year \$25,000 grant to create an interactive resource and mapping tool to improve the health of low-income families in the Des Moines community. Mapping an End to Hunger in Greater Des Moines (Phase I) will create an electronically-accessible food security map of the community designed to reduce hunger and improve the health of low-income families through enhanced access to nutritional and affordable food.
- **The Iowa Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics** will use a two-year \$23,511 grant to promote childhood literacy through expanding the Reach Out and Read (ROR) Program in Iowa. Early Literacy through Reach Out and Read in Family Medicine Residency Programs, which will continue ROR work funded through a previous Wellmark Foundation mini-grant in 2008, will establish ROR programs in Iowa's nine Family Medicine Residency Programs (FMRPs).

- The **Iowa Department on Aging** was awarded a two-year \$144,744 grant to expand a disease self-management program designed to improve the health of older adults in the state. Iowa Healthy Links/Wellmark Foundation Initiative will expand the successful Iowa Healthy Links' evidence-based Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) primarily designed for Iowans 55 years and older into 19 mostly rural Iowa counties.
- **South Dakota State University** (SDSU) in Brookings, S.D. was awarded a one-year, \$25,000 grant to implement a community-wide health planning program. Brookings County Strides to a Healthier Community will implement a program developed in 2005 by the South Dakota Department of Health, which provides a framework for working with communities to positively impact health. The project will conduct a community-wide health assessment in Brookings County in order to increase health and wellness in the community.”
- **Van Buren County** in Keosauqua, Iowa will use a two-year, \$116,765 grant to implement a leadership development program designed to support and strengthen a county-wide wellness program. *Creating Lasting Wellness Through Leadership* will focus on development of well-trained local volunteer leaders who can help recruit, motivate and retain participants in the local Healthy Villages program and other wellness initiatives in the county.

The Wellmark Foundation has provided approximately \$17.43 million to fund 428 health-related grants in Iowa and South Dakota since 1997, including \$447,395 in the current funding cycle. “The Wellmark Foundation works to improve the health of Iowans and South Dakotans,” says Matthew McGarvey, director of The Wellmark Foundation. “These are remarkable grantee organizations that have great influence in their communities. Their comprehensive projects will positively impact the health of thousands of Iowans and South Dakotans.”

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The Wellmark Foundation is a private, non-profit foundation created by Wellmark, Inc., doing business as Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Iowa. Visit The Wellmark Foundation's Web site at www.wellmark.com/foundation for future funding opportunities. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield and The Wellmark Foundation are independent licensees of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.