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# news release

January 4, 2010

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## **American Academy of Pediatrics receives Wellmark Foundation grant to promote early literacy through Reach Out and Read Iowa program**

DES MOINES, IA (January 4, 2010) – The Iowa Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics has received a two-year \$23,511 grant from The Wellmark Foundation to promote childhood literacy through expanding the *Reach Out and Read* (ROR) Program in Iowa. The project will continue ROR work funded through a previous Wellmark Foundation mini-grant in 2008.

*Early Literacy through Reach Out and Read in Family Medicine Residency Programs* will establish Reach Out and Read programs in Iowa's nine Family Medicine Residency Programs (FMRPs), says Mary Ann Abrams, M.D., M.P.H., ROR-Iowa coalition leader and medical director. "Reach Out and Read is an evidence-based intervention program that promotes early literacy and school-readiness in children's health clinics nationwide by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud," she says. "ROR is designed to make literacy promotion a standard part of children's primary health care, so that children grow up with books and a love of reading."

ROR-Iowa is a coalition of 72 individual programs around the state that serve approximately 51,000 children each year; and part of the national ROR effort that includes 4,500 individual programs that collectively serve more than 3.8 million children and families annually.

According to Abrams, this statewide project will serve an additional 6,500 Iowa children, distribute more than 12,000 books to ROR-Iowa sites, and train more than 100 residents and faculty staff at FMRPs in the ROR model, which has been nationally recognized for its ability to help improve health literacy and prepare young children to succeed in school and in life.

When the project is complete, approximately 70 new physicians who are familiar with the ROR model will enter medical practice in Iowa, providing primary care for children and families at

FMPRs in rural and underserved areas, supporting ROR in their practice settings, and serving as ROR champions in their communities.

ROR-Iowa will provide outreach, technical assistance, training, and start-up or on-going book support for the FMRP sites, with special emphasis on furthering early outreach in programs at Mercy North, Mason City; NE Iowa Medical Education Program, Waterloo; and Siouxland Medical Education Foundation, Sioux City. Additional participating residency programs include Broadlawns Medical Center, Des Moines; Cedar Rapids Medical Education Program; Iowa Lutheran Hospital, Des Moines; Mercy Medical Center, Des Moines; Genesis Family Practice, Quad Cities; and the University of Iowa.

For more information on Early Literacy through Reach Out and Read in Family Medicine Residency Programs, contact Abrams at 515-471-9788 or [abramsma@ihs.org](mailto:abramsma@ihs.org).

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 this *Healthy Communities: Supporting a Culture of Wellness & Prevention* funding cycle. “The Wellmark Foundation works to improve the health of Iowans and South Dakotans,” says Matthew McGarvey, director of The Wellmark Foundation. “Reach Out and Read is a remarkable program that reaches thousands of children and families in Iowa each year. We are pleased to support this project, which will help to increase the health literacy and life skills for many Iowa children.”

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