



news release

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Des Moines Area Religious Council receives Wellmark Foundation grant to create mapping tool to improve health in greater Des Moines

DES MOINES, IA (January 4, 2010) – The Des Moines Area Religious Council (DMARC) has received a one-year, \$25,000 grant from The Wellmark Foundation to create an interactive resource and mapping tool to improve the health of low income families in greater Des Moines.

Mapping an End to Hunger in Greater Des Moines (Phase I) will create an electronically accessible food security map of the greater Des Moines designed to reduce hunger and improve the health of low-income families through enhanced access to nutritionally adequate and affordable food, says Sarai Schnucker Rice, executive director of the Des Moines Area Religious Council.

“Mapping an End to Hunger will result in an accurate snapshot of the current landscape and inventory of the food system by assembling comprehensive information on food sources for low-income families, as well as information from consumers about food acquisition and use patterns,” says Schnucker Rice. “The resulting mapping tool will strengthen the food security system, ultimately helping to reduce hunger, and improve health and wellness in Polk County.”

According to Schnucker Rice, the project will facilitate systems-wide dialog and planning, and will serve as a catalyst for the creation of a coordinated, community-wide response to hunger. The map will reveal food accessibility barriers including transportation, hours of operation, prohibitive food costs, limited fresh-food options, etc. Intended map users include social/health services and advocacy organizations, policy making groups, public health systems and universities.

Resulting data is expected to guide public policy, influence the location of food retailers and

food program sites, enhance resources for public food assistance, and expand service partnerships and collaboration.

Collaborating agencies and organizations include AmeriCorps, Better Information Group, Central Iowa Shelter and Services, Healthy Polk 2020, Mary Swalla Holmes, Iowa Homeless Youth Centers, Iowa Institute for Community Alliances, Iowa State University Extension, Polk County Health Department, Primary Health Care, Project Hope, United Way of Central Iowa and other community partners.

For more information on Mapping an End to Hunger in Greater Des Moines, contact Schnucker Rice at 515-277-6969 or visit www.dmreligious.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. “Mapping an End to Hunger is a comprehensive project that will yield great results for the entire community, including reducing hunger and increasing health and wellness in Polk County.”

- 30 -

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