



news release

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Wellmark Foundation funds leadership development program to strengthen Wellness in Van Buren County

DES MOINES, IA (January 4, 2010) – The Wellmark Foundation has awarded a two-year, \$116,765 grant to Van Buren County to implement a leadership development program designed to support and strengthen a county-wide wellness program.

Creating Lasting Wellness Through Leadership will focus on training local volunteer leaders who can help recruit, motivate and retain participants in the *Healthy Villages* program and other county wellness initiatives, says Dixie Daugherty, director of outreach health at Van Buren Hospital. Healthy Villages is a county-wide wellness program created in 2008 through a Harkin Wellness grant.

“We believe we can increase participation in Healthy Villages and other community wellness initiatives by developing, strengthening and reinforcing local volunteer health and fitness leaders, who are key in keeping participants motivated to continue,” says Daugherty. “This effort will create a solid foundation for the Healthy Villages program and have the residual effect of strengthening other county volunteer-led efforts.” Leaders will also receive training in fundraising techniques, which will be used to sustain the programs in the future.

According to Daugherty, the short-term goal of *Creating Lasting Wellness Through Leadership* is to create an expanded, strengthened and funded county-wide fitness program with empowered, networked volunteers; the long-term goal is to improve the overall health Van Buren County residents.

Program partners include health care providers, schools, senior meal sites, community business owners, county agencies and county government. For more information on *Creating Lasting Wellness Through Leadership*, contact Daugherty at 319-293-3171 or dixie.daugherty@vbch.org.

The Wellmark Foundation has provided more than \$17 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 Foundation Director Matthew McGarvey. “By working to increase the skills of existing health volunteers and leaders, and recruiting new ones, Creating Lasting Wellness Through Leadership will improve the county’s wellness program and the health of its residents.”

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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.