



NEWS RELEASE

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Columbus Junction wins Wellmark ‘Set the Pace’ Challenge for 2022 Grand Blue Mile

DES MOINES, Iowa (July X, 2022) — Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® announced the community of Columbus Junction will receive \$10,000 for winning the Wellmark Set the Pace Challenge as part of the 2022 Grand Blue Mile. The annual challenge encourages Iowans to develop sustainable, healthy habits, highlighted by participation in the Grand Blue Mile.

“Columbus Junction is thrilled to be named the 2022 Wellmark Set the Pace Challenge winner,” said Beverly Nielsen, Columbus Junction Parks and Recreation board member. “We sincerely appreciate Wellmark sponsoring this initiative to promote healthy lifestyles for Iowans and look forward to using the award funding to purchase new playground equipment for Chautauqua Park, which is celebrating its 100th year.”

Columbus Junction had the highest percentage of its residents participating in Grand Blue Mile (either virtually or in-person) — measured by the number of registrants for a given ZIP code against the community’s total population. After a runner-up finish in 2021, residents of Columbus Junction rallied to secure first place in 2022. In all, nearly Iowa and South Dakota 150 communities were represented in this year’s challenge.

“Wellmark and the entire Grand Blue Mile team applauds the residents of Columbus Junction and the collective commitment to the health and vitality of their community they displayed in winning this award,” said Chris Verlengia, Wellmark’s marketing activation and alliance lead and Grand Blue Mile co-race director. “We hope their example inspires other communities to continue embracing this friendly challenge and prioritizing their own well-being.”

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About the Grand Blue Mile

Grand Blue Mile, a Drake Relays event, is an annual one-mile fitness run/walk presented by Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield to engage individuals at all stages of fitness, encourage healthy habits and celebrate personal achievement. The annual wellness event, established in 2010, includes recreational, competitive and invitational events featuring a field of elite male and female track and field athletes from around the world. Proceeds from the event benefit Iowa Kidstrong, Inc., an organization dedicated to promoting healthy, active lifestyles among youth. For more information, visit grandbluemile.com.

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