



NEWS RELEASE

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Wellmark's Set the Pace Challenge returns to Grand Blue Mile *Iowans can win \$10,000 for a health improvement project in their community*

DES MOINES, Iowa (March 9, 2023) — The Set the Pace Challenge will return to the 14th annual Grand Blue Mile presented by Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Registrants can participate in the Grand Blue Mile virtually or in person on April 25 in downtown Des Moines for a chance to win \$10,000 for their community.

As part of the challenge, the community with the highest percentage of its residents participating in the Grand Blue Mile — measured by the number of registrants for a given ZIP code against its total population — will be awarded \$10,000, courtesy of Wellmark, to use on a project that promotes safe, inclusive, and accessible places in which to be active, such as a park, playground or trail. Additional information and resources, including past project videos and a digital toolkit to encourage and facilitate community participation, are available [here](#).

“Wellmark is deeply committed to improving the health of our communities and the Set the Pace Challenge provides a tremendous incentive for Iowans to enjoy a family-friendly physical activity, while working together to enhance the well-being of their own hometowns,” said Chris Verlengia, Wellmark’s marketing activation & alliance manager and Grand Blue Mile co-race director. “By continuing to host the event in a hybrid format, we’re inviting participants across the state to engage in the Grand Blue Mile in a setting that suits them best.”

Columbus Junction, Iowa, was most recently recognized as Wellmark’s Set the Pace Challenge winner following the 2022 Grand Blue Mile. The eastern Iowa community used the award funding from Wellmark to purchase new playground equipment for Chautauqua Park in conjunction with its centennial celebration. [Learn more](#) about how they used their funds.

Enter your community for a chance to win, register today

Registration for the 2023 Grand Blue Mile presented by Wellmark is now open at GrandBlueMile.com. Registration is \$15 for youth and \$20 for adults. As part of Wellmark’s commitment to improving the health of Iowans, all proceeds benefit Iowa Kidstrong youth fitness programs and support student participation in the annual Drake Relays.

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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.

About the Drake Relays

The Drake Relays presented by Xtream powered by Mediacom has served as “America’s Athletic Classic” since its first running in 1910. The annual competition, hosted by Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, is recognized internationally as a destination for the world’s premier track & field athletes across multiple professional and amateur divisions. In 2020, the Drake Relays was named a Silver Level event on the World Athletics Continental Tour, one of only two meets in the United States to earn Silver Level status. In addition to its signature stadium competition, the Drake Relays includes two marquee road running events open to the general public — the Grand Blue Mile presented by Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield and the Drake Road Races. For more information, visit drakerelays.org.

About Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield

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