



Debra L. Sears

# Let's Get Walking in the Right Direction...

**A**s I continue to be a Top 1% Producer for Wellmark sales in Iowa, I visit with many individuals and business owners. Invariably, we have conversations regarding health

as it pertains to declines, rate ups, renewal rates, health incentive programs, etc. in an effort to have some control over future costs. Most recently, Governor Branstad took the challenge to make Iowa the Healthiest State. This initiative will not only make us and our children and grandchildren better, but it will also appeal to industry as they consider Iowa. I would like to ask that you go to [www.iowahealthieststate.com](http://www.iowahealthieststate.com) and [www.bluezonesproject.com](http://www.bluezonesproject.com) for more information. I am so impressed with his initiative that I am asking that you read his announcement below.

## Branstad Announces Effort to Make Iowa the "Healthiest State"

Des Moines – Governor Terry Branstad announced August 10, 2011 a plan to make Iowa the Healthiest State within five years as measured by the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index®. The Healthiest State Initiative is a community and business-led, government-endorsed statewide effort that will engage citizens throughout the state to improve their overall health and well-being. Iowa's 2010 overall Well-Being Index rank is 19th compared to all other states. The goal is to become number one in five years. While Iowa scores well in many areas, there is a significant opportunity for improvement in healthy behavior and work environment. "This Healthiest State Initiative will assist Iowans in learning about and applying proven methods to live longer, happier, and healthier lives," Branstad said. "We control more than 70 percent of the factors that influence our health. It is within our power to make a positive difference in our lives."

Branstad also noted that addressing comprehensive lifestyle changes could allow the State to redirect as much as \$16 billion over the next five years to grow the state economy [versus being consumed by health care (\$11 billion) and lost productivity (\$5 billion)]. The success of this initiative is critical to the economic viability of the State and translates to a healthier Iowa and better quality of life for all its residents. Iowans will be engaged at a grassroots level and encouraged to embrace the goal of making Iowa the Healthiest State. This multi-year journey will be designed to align existing and new initiatives that permanently change policies and the environment. This will motivate individuals and communities to move naturally more often, engage in life with a purpose, take time to decompress, eat wisely (less and better food) and create stronger communities and relationships. As a first step on the road to becoming the Healthiest State, all Iowans are encouraged to take part in a Start Somewhere Walk on Friday, October 7. At noon that day, communities, neighborhoods, schools, businesses, churches and other groups across the state will gather to walk one kilometer (0.62 miles, or about 7-8 blocks) as a way to demonstrate their support for the Healthiest State goal.

Individuals can find Start Somewhere walks near them, or learn how to organize walks in their communities, by visiting the Healthiest State website at [www.IowaHealthiestState.com](http://www.IowaHealthiestState.com). The website also contains a wealth of information about the Healthiest State Initiative and resources to help Iowans improve their own health and well-being.

A centerpiece of the Healthiest State Initiative will be the Blue Zones Project™, through which people will transform their community and live measurably longer. To ignite this change, Wellmark Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® will financially support the transformation of 10 Iowa communities into Blue Zones Communities™ over the next five years. Ultimately, all communities can become Blue Zones Communities™ by leveraging innovative tools accessible to all Iowans, attending the Blue Zones Institute to obtain knowledge, and participating in professional forums to share best practices from across the state.

"Our goal is to get Iowa to the number one spot by 2016," Branstad said. "It's an ambitious goal to jump 18 positions in five years, but if anyone can do it, Iowans can. I'd like to thank John Forsyth from Wellmark, Ric Jurgens from Hy-Vee, and Doug Reichardt from The Iowa Sports Foundation for their leadership in this effort."

**November 15 through December 31 is Medicare Open Enrollment. Please do not hesitate to call me for more information. \***

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