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NEWS RELEASE

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Sheldon Strives to Be Named One of Ten Iowa Blue Zone Communities

- Citizens', Local Leaders', and Business' Support Needed -

Sheldon, Iowa – In early August, Governor Terry Branstad announced the plan to make Iowa the healthiest state in the nation within five years as measured by the Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index[®]. In 2010, Iowa ranked 19th compared to all other states. Today, two-thirds of Iowans are overweight or obese.

“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.

The Healthiest State Initiative is a privately led, public effort that will engage Iowans and their communities throughout the state. It will involve individuals, families, businesses, faith-based organizations, not-for-profits and the public sector in a broad-based community-focused effort. For more information, visit www.iowahealthieststate.com.

A centerpiece of the Healthiest State Initiative will be the Blue Zones Project, through which people will transform their community and live measurably longer. This unique approach uses a community-by-community and business-by-business movement to improve the emotional, physical, and social health of Iowans based on findings from Blue Zones and Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index research. The expected result is lower health care costs trends, higher productivity, and improved economic and social vitality.

Blue Zones are geographically defined places around the world where people live measurably longer, happier lives with lower rates of chronic disease and a higher quality of life. Isolated attempts to educate about the need to live a healthy lifestyle are no longer enough. “A community-based approach to transforming our health and wellness is what will really make the difference,” said local initiative coordinator Greta Giese. 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 the committee selecting the Blue Zones Communities will be looking to harness an inner will to be healthier in each of the community's citizens, local leaders, and businesses. Key members of Sheldon's local leadership have shown a great interest in Sheldon's pursuit to become a Blue Zones Community. Scott Wynja, Sheldon City Manager, said "our citizens need to be engaged and involved for this pursuit to be successful." One of the requirements in becoming a Blue Zones Community is significant citizen support. Sheldon citizens can show their support by signing up online at www.bluezonesproject.com and clicking on the "I'm a Citizen" box, or by texting "BZP" to 772937.

"It is rare to get to work on a project where the only goal is happiness and health. I think Sheldon is ready for this opportunity, and I am sure our wonderful community is behind us in this pursuit," Giese said.

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