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Medicare Diabetes Screening Project Recognizes WellMed Charitable Foundation Initiative Among 20 In Nation To Receive Cash Award

San Antonio, TX – The WellMed Charitable Foundation is among 20 groups in the nation recognized by a coalition led by the American Diabetes Association for efforts to create awareness and utilization of free Medicare diabetes screening benefits.

The Foundation will receive \$2,500 from the Medicare Diabetes Screening Project (MDSP), a coalition of patient, provider, business, government and private sector organizations, co-chaired by the American Diabetes Association, Healthcare Leadership Council and Novo Nordisk Inc. WellMed Charitable Foundation was among more than 120 organizations in 33 states and Puerto Rico to apply for the MDSP 2010 Community Award.

Of the 35 million seniors in Medicare ages 65 or older, as many as 17 million have undiagnosed diabetes or pre-diabetes. Medicare now covers free annual screening for beneficiaries at-risk for diabetes. However, initial data from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) suggests these benefits are under-utilized. Only 12 percent of beneficiaries were screened in 2007.

Screening and early detection are essential first steps for improved care and prevention of complications for people with diabetes and for prevention of the onset of the disease for those with pre-diabetes. A National Institutes of Health clinical trial (Diabetes Prevention Program, 2001) showed that people ages 60 and older with pre-diabetes could lower their risk of developing diabetes by 71 percent with modest changes in diet and physical activity.

The Foundation is the philanthropic arm of WellMed Medical Management, a diversified healthcare company and largest primary care provider for seniors in South Texas. WellMed provides free health screenings, health education and dental screenings at San Antonio's largest senior centers and 79 nutrition sites through a contract with the City of San Antonio. The Foundation is working to add education about the free diabetes screening Medicare benefit, which could reach 7,000 primarily low-income, Hispanic Medicare beneficiaries served at the senior nutrition sites alone.

The WellMed Charitable Foundation operates the Elvira Cisneros Senior Center with more than 3,500 members. It will soon open the District 6 Senior Center, projected to serve approximately the same number of members.

The Foundation also funds two Leeza's Place resource centers in San Antonio through a partnership with the Leeza Gibbons Memory Foundation. Leeza's Places offer caregiver support services through education, empowerment, and energy programming to another 400 caregivers. Education regarding the free preventative diabetes screening benefits in Medicare will fit seamlessly into all of these programs.

The Foundation is the managing entity for the Hispanic Elders Health Disparities Project to combat diabetes, in partnership with the City of San Antonio Metropolitan Health District, the University of Texas Health Science Center, and Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of San Antonio.

For more information about MDSP, visit www.screenfordiabetes.org.

The WellMed Charitable Foundation (www.wellmedgives.org) is a non-profit 501(C)3 organization that supports seniors and their caregivers in our community with special emphasis on wellness, prevention and living with chronic illness. Established in 2006 by Dr. George M. Rapier III, a noted geriatrician and the Chairman of the Board, the Foundation has contributed more than \$3 million to the San Antonio community.