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Health Department of Northwest Michigan News Release

Health Department celebrates Public Health Week, April 4-10

Each year the first week of April is designated as National Public Health Week. Public health workers at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan and in health departments across the state and nation have been in the spotlight over the last two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the public health workforce does so much more – from ensuring residents have access to clean water, safe foods, and smoke-free air, to providing disease prevention education, and the skills and resources to ensure a healthy start in life – truly an essential workforce.

In addition to these basic needs, public health workers strive to identify the causes of poor health and disease within our communities, while taking into account the needs and barriers that prevent individuals from achieving optimal health. Each day of National Public Health Week, April 4-10, spotlights a different topic or focus area that faces the people who live, learn, and work in our country. This year's daily themes focus on some of the important issues facing our nation.

Health officials encourage you to use these themes to start conversations in your organizations, churches, and community, and reach out to find ways to work together and improve the health of residents in our service area of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties.

Monday - Inequities: A Public Health Crisis. Inequities in health care, income, housing, and education have widened during the COVID-19 pandemic, harming health and well-being. We must address this public health crisis to improve health. Through our mission “to serve our entire community and to achieve health equity by promoting well-being, preventing disease, and protecting the environment through partnerships, innovation, and excellence in public health practice,” we address inequities to ensure all residents within our jurisdiction have access to what they need to achieve optimal health and well-being.

Tuesday - Public Health Workforce: Essential to our Future. The public health workforce is essential to our future. Let's support these professionals and strengthen the public health authority for better health outcomes in all our communities, now and in the future. Recent studies have demonstrated that over half of public health workers have reported mental health symptoms such as depression and anxiety after the first year of the pandemic. Thank a public health worker for their dedication this week!

Wednesday - Community: Collaboration and Resilience. We must work together to improve housing, education, food, transportation, and the environment to support equity, resilience, and the health of our communities and the people who live, work, play and learn there. Staff members at the health department within our Regional Planning division support community members directly through the Community Connections program. Community Connections is a free program offering connections to community resources for adults, children, and families. Services are provided through phone calls, home

The Health Department of Northwest Michigan is mandated by the Michigan Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality healthcare, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet, and Otsego counties. For more information, visit nwhealth.org.

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visits, or office visits with a Community Health Worker. Staff help clients get access to medical care, transportation, food, utilities, education, and more! Take a look at all the ways Community Connections staff can help our residents by visiting www.nwhealth.org/cc.html.

Thursday - World Health Day: Health is a Human Right. Celebrate World Health Day this National Public Health Week by supporting U.S. global health efforts. We are all connected, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown. Let's work together to make the world a safer place for everyone. COVID-19 prevention through education, vaccines and testing is just one way we promote a safe community. Learn more by visiting www.nwhealth.org/covid19.main.

Friday - Accessibility: Closing the Health Equity Gap. We can close the health equity gap by reducing health disparities in health insurance, increasing physical accessibility to care, improving availability of appropriate care, and building more inclusive public health programs and communities. Within the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, the Regional Planning Division embodies Public Health 3.0, an enhanced scope of public health practice that builds on historic success at health improvement. It goes beyond traditional public health functions and programs, adding a focus on social and environmental determinants of health, like access to health care, affordable housing, healthy food, and transportation options. Regional planning staff support the MiThrive project, which brings together over 100 cross-sector community partners to unite around a shared vision for Northwest Michigan where everyone has equitable opportunities to live healthy and thriving lives. It takes all of us working together across sectors to improve community conditions that impact health across Northwest Michigan. For more information about MiThrive, visit www.nwcommunitydevelopment.org/mi-thrive-framework.

Saturday - Taking Action for Equity. Environmental issues hurt everyone. Health departments are at the forefront, calling for equity and investment in local solutions that meet community needs. In 2020, Pellston High School students, along with Environmental Health Staff and state officials, tested and identified PFAS in water samples from residential homes. Since then, additional partners have joined forces with local public health staff to clean up the water and help to identify long-term solutions for safe drinking water. For information about PFAS, visit <http://nwhealth.org/pfas.html>.

Sunday - Mental Wellness: Redefining the Meaning of Health. Each year, one in five Americans will experience mental illness. Mental health is public health. Prevention, early detection, and treatment of mental health conditions can lead to improved physical and community health. The health department maintains partnerships across its four-county jurisdiction of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties to offer school-based mental health and physical health services to students. Licensed clinicians offering support for area students include social workers and licensed professional counselors.

To view a list of programs and services we offer residents visit www.nwhealth.org. For more information on National Public Health Week visit www.NPHW.org.