HEALTH DEPARTMENT of Northwest Michigan

ANTRIM | CHARLEVOIX | EMMET | OTSEGO

OUR MISSION

THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF NORTHWEST MICHIGAN is mandated by the Public Health Code to promote wellness, prevent disease, provide quality health care, address health problems of vulnerable populations, and protect the environment for the residents and visitors of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego Counties.
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http://jenhalsey95.wix.com/graphicdesign

ON THE COVER
Northern Michigan teens cool off in summer at the public beach swimming platform in Harbor Springs.

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2013 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY
On behalf of the Board of Health and our many dedicated staff members across Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego Counties, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is pleased to submit this Report to the Community to you - our residents, community partners, fellow agencies, state and local leaders, charitable contributors, grantors and volunteers. You are all stakeholders in our mission, and we hope this Report reflects the tremendous community benefit we are able provide, thanks to your support.

Joshua Meyerson, MD, MPH
Medical Director

Linda Yaroch, RN, MPH
Health Officer

CROSS-JURISDICTIONAL SHARING

Northern Michigan’s economic climate, geography and widely-dispersed population present unique challenges for Health Department programs and services. Chronic disease is on the rise, while program funding continues to decline.

To overcome these challenges, we are looking beyond jurisdictional boundaries to share regional resources, and taking advantage of new opportunities presented by advances in technology and health care. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has awarded the Health Department of Northwest Michigan a two-year, $125,000 grant to explore cross-jurisdictional sharing arrangements among six Northern Michigan health departments, which include the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, Grand Traverse County Health Department, and District Health Department Nos. 2, 4 and 10. Together, our six local health departments are evaluating possible alliances to share services, programs and capacities. Our objective is to increase efficiency and to build public health capacity across Northern Michigan.

The Northern Michigan Cross-Jurisdictional Sharing Team consists of Health Officers and Board of Health members from each of these health districts, as well as our community partners, including the Michigan Department of Community Health, Munson, McLaren Northern Michigan and the University of Michigan School of Public Health. This team is part of the 17 communities across the country that comprise the Shared Services Learning Community, which provides access to national experts in financial and legal analysis, operations, management, quality improvement, community engagement, communications and evaluation.
Cross-jurisdictional sharing arrangements range from informal agreements around sharing individual services, to full regionalization, including formal consolidation of multiple local health departments. Maternal health, child health and information technology are the top priorities of our Cross-Jurisdictional Sharing Team. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation will use lessons we learn to provide guidance to public health agencies considering cross-jurisdictional sharing.

Major grant activities include thorough assessment of the cross-jurisdictional sharing arrangements in place, development a cross-jurisdictional strategic plan, assessments of each local health department’s capacity to implement the 10 Essential Public Health Services, and the possibility of a voluntary, multi-jurisdictional application to the national Public Health Accreditation Board.

AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

The Affordable Care Act, and the rollout of the Health Insurance Marketplace, placed great responsibility on the shoulders of local public health departments and health centers throughout the state. Amid widespread public controversy over the ACA and the troubled HealthCare.gov rollout, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan assumed a leadership role in helping residents from all eight tip-of-the-mitt counties get enrolled in the Marketplace.

With a trained Lead Navigator and several Certified Application Counselors among our Health Department staff, we joined forces with District Health Department No. 4 and other regional partners to provide public education and enrollment assistance. Together, we offered group workshops, small business forums and one-on-one assistance that reached thousands of Northern Michigan residents. We will be prepared to offer Marketplace assistance again when enrollment reopens each fall.

As 2013 drew to a close, we looked ahead to April 2014, and the rollout of the Healthy Michigan Plan. The Plan is now in effect, covering services for many who don’t qualify for health insurance under the Marketplace, and it includes dental benefits that are a significant asset to our Dental Clinics North patients who are 19 to 64 years of age.

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

For more than 30 years, Christie Vogelheim has provided administrative leadership and support to the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. Christie announced her retirement from her position as Director of Administrative Services at the end of 2013. She has earned the lasting respect of her many colleagues and friends among the staff at the Health Department, and also among the community and business partners with whom she worked closely. Christie’s forward-thinking, steady guidance has enabled the Health Department to stay in step with growing needs for its services, while always being a faithful to its mission. She is deeply missed, but she travels with our best wishes for a long, happy and healthy retirement.

We’re pleased to welcome Bradley Rider as the Health Department’s new Director of Administrative Services. A native of Southeast Michigan, Bradley and his family have now lived in Northern Michigan for more than 15 years. He holds a degree in Finance from Michigan State University, a Master’s degree in Business Administration from Wayne State University, and has extensive management experience in the banking and health care fields. He served most recently as CEO of Bay Street Orthopaedics for the past eight years. Brad oversees our finance, human resources, information technology, facilities and communications functions within the agency.
Nguyen Duyen was just 16 when she left her home in Vietnam to spend a year in the United States, as part of a sponsored exchange program. She found herself in Northern Michigan, living with a host family in Mancelona, where she was also to attend school.

Just a few weeks after her arrival in the States, Nguyen needed a physical exam to meet school requirements. She went to the Ironmen Health Center, a school-linked child and adolescent health center in Antrim County, operated by the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. Though it was a routine exam, her clinician, Tammy Hickman, detected something out of the ordinary.

“It was a heart murmur, one that had never been discovered until that day,” Tammy recalls. “Nguyen’s English language comprehension was fair, but her speaking skills were poor. Her parents in Vietnam spoke no English. But we had to communicate with them about this potentially life-threatening health issue.” The Ironmen Health Center worked with Nguyen’s Mancelona host family and screening centers, to provide interpreters during her screening and evaluations.

Nguyen was referred to McLaren Northern Michigan, in Petoskey, for a student heart screening that is offered to students in grades 9 through 12. After electrocardiogram and echocardiogram testing, and a consultation with a cardiologist, Nguyen was diagnosed with an Atrial-Septal Defect (ASD) - a hole in the wall between the top two chambers of the heart – which can lead to complications and, eventually, heart failure if not treated when the patient is young.

Unfortunately, following the discovery of Nguyen’s heart defect, the company that sponsored her U.S. exchange withdrew its coverage, and stated that she needed to return to Vietnam.
That’s when McLaren referred Nguyen to C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital in Ann Arbor, where her ASD was declared to be “significant” but correctable. Her doctors felt that she needed charitable care and, thanks to the hospital and the International Children’s Fund, her heart surgery was fully covered. She was able to return to Northern Michigan for cardiac rehabilitation in Petoskey at no charge.

Nguyen’s mother had flown in from Vietnam to be with her daughter during and after the surgery. They later returned to visit clinician Tammy Hickman at the Ironmen Health Center, along with Nguyen’s host family, and all were elated by the successful repair of the life-threatening heart defect Tammy had detected.

“Effective coordination between our child and adolescent health center, the host family, and the two medical centers made this positive outcome possible,” Tammy says. “Nguyen can now look forward to a full and healthy life. This is why we do what we do.”
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MATERNAL INFANT HEALTH PROGRAM AND NEWBORN HOME VISITS

8,759 HOME AND OFFICE VISITS  6,336 NEWSLETTERS SENT TO FAMILIES WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

The Health Department’s Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP) assists families with pregnant women or infants by providing information on pregnancy, preparing for the baby, infant care, infant feeding and parenting through a team that includes nurses, social workers and registered dieticians. Families that participate in MIHP are less likely to have low birth-weight infants. During Newborn Home Visits, Health Department nurses check the baby’s weight, provide breastfeeding support, answer questions and provide important information on caring for a new baby.

WOMEN, INFANTS AND CHILDREN (WIC)

NUTRITION PROGRAM

3,170 WIC PARTICIPANTS

The WIC Program protects the health of low-income pregnant women, as well as their infants and children up to age 5, who would otherwise be at nutritional risk. The program provides nutritious foods, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health services within the community. WIC food packages are valued at more than $60 per month, and include infant formula, cereal, milk, eggs, cheese, juice, fresh fruits and vegetables, and peanut butter. Breastfeeding peer support is also available.

• Every dollar spent on WIC saves more than $3.50 in subsequent health care costs.
• Pregnant women served by WIC enter prenatal care earlier.
• Women enrolled in WIC deliver fewer low birth-weight infants.
• Children served by WIC are less likely to be anemic, and are more likely to receive proper health care & immunizations.

EARLY CHILDHOOD BEHAVIORAL HEALTH INITIATIVE

16 FAMILIES SERVED  186 PARTICIPANTS IN PARENT NETWORKING NIGHTS

The Early Childhood Behavioral Health Initiative seeks to establish and sustain a supportive family network to promote social and emotional development, and to enhance behavioral health services for young children age 0-5 in Charlevoix, Emmet and northern Antrim Counties. Six successful Parent Networking Nights were held during 2013; these provided parents of young children with a free evening of dinner and child care while meeting other parents and learning about helpful parenting and child development resources. Ages & Stages developmental screening was added to the Health Department’s Web site at www.nwhealth.org/agesandstages. The Initiative offers support to all parents, regardless of income or insurance status.

FLUORIDE VARNISH APPLICATIONS

2,394 APPLICATIONS

Fluoride varnish is a protective coating that fights tooth decay, one of the most common and preventable diseases in children. The coating is painted on teeth to help prevent new cavities, and to stop cavities that have already begun to form. The coating attaches easily to the teeth, and makes tooth enamel harder. Fluoride varnish applications are available to children participating in WIC, which included 1,261 children in 2013.
BLOOD LEAD SCREENING 935 CHILDREN SCREENED

The Health Department screens children for exposure to lead, which can damage the nervous system, kidneys and blood, and is particularly harmful to the developing nervous systems in fetuses and children under six years of age. Common sources of lead exposure in children are house dust contaminated by lead-based paint, and soil contaminated by leaded paint or decades of industrial and motor vehicle emissions.

HEARING AND VISION SCREENING

9,576 SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN SCREENED
1,784 PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN SCREENED
736 CHILD REFERRALS FOR TREATMENT

The Health Department provides childhood hearing and vision screening to help prevent delays in the development of speech, language and social skills, which can impact academic performance. Hearing and vision screening identifies problems that would otherwise go undetected, and connects children with essential health care resources before further hearing or vision loss can occur.

CHILDREN’S SPECIAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

516 PARTICIPANTS

The Children’s Special Health Care Services program covers specialty medical care and equipment costs for families with a child who has a chronic health condition. Nurses and program representatives also connect families with community services, medical equipment, a parent hotline, and travel and lodging assistance for medical appointments.

“Everyone was very helpful, and they had wonderful resources.”
“I got in fast, and things were explained well.”
“Friendly staff, helpful information.”
“Everyone is willing to do whatever they can to help.”

PATIENTS RATE THEIR CLINIC EXPERIENCE

91% 94% 96% 99%

WRITTEN MATERIALS HELPFUL
STAFF HELPFULNESS “EXCELLENT”
STAFF ATTITUDE “EXCELLENT”
APPOINTMENT TIME CONVENIENT
Mary Everett of Central Lake had already survived breast cancer once. She knew the importance of regular mammograms, and continued getting them. “I didn’t believe I’d get it again,” she recalled.

But in February 2013, Mary, 62, received the terrifying news that another small tumor had been found. She did not feel the lump. She had no health insurance, and was referred to the Health Department of Northwest Michigan’s Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (BCCCP) for assistance.

The Health Department partners with Antrim County High Tea – a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping eligible Antrim County women get the preventive services they need - to provide screening and follow-up, at no charge. Antrim County High Tea also covers transportation costs by providing gasoline cards through the Health Department.

**BREAST AND CERVICAL CANCER CONTROL PROGRAM**

1,328 WOMEN SCREENED, INCLUDING 829 FROM FOUR-COUNTY HEALTH DISTRICT

The Health Department provides low-income, uninsured women with free breast and cervical cancer screening, including mammograms. This provides an opportunity to identify cancer at the earliest possible stage, when it is most treatable. If a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer, enrollment in the Medicaid Treatment Act covers costs related to treatment.

**WISEWOMAN PROGRAM**

570 PARTICIPANTS

Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation, or WISEWOMAN, screens low-income, uninsured or under-insured women age 40-64 for heart disease and stroke risk factors, such as nutrition, physical activity, stress and tobacco use. The Health Department’s Public Health Nurses provide counseling and referrals to help clients meet health improvement goals.

**COLORECTAL HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAM**

183 CLIENTS SCREENED

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. It is also a cancer that is fully preventable with screening. That’s why the Health Department provides uninsured or under-insured women and men, age 50-64, with an at-home screening test that is then analyzed at the Health Department’s Northern Michigan Regional Laboratory, and with free colonoscopies if program criteria are met.

**FAMILY PLANNING PROGRAM**

1,140 PARTICIPANTS

The Health Department’s Family Planning services help men and women make well-informed reproductive health choices, so they can plan for a healthy pregnancy or prevent an unwanted pregnancy. Services include a health history, physical exam, counseling on birth control methods, dispensing of contraceptives such as pills, depo shots and nuva rings, and medical follow-up when abnormalities are discovered in the reproductive system.
Mary underwent a lumpectomy, lymph node removal and four months of chemotherapy during 2013, and has completed her radiation treatment. She said the early detection of her tumor offered her an excellent chance at recovery, and is grateful for the Health Department’s help in getting insurance to cover her treatment. “Without it, I would not be able to afford to get treated,” she said, adding that she had to make frequent trips between Central Lake and Petoskey for treatment. “The gas cards are a great help.”

Mary has some advice for those who may be hesitant about getting a mammogram. “Don’t put it off!” she said. “The earlier you catch it, the easier it is to treat it… So many people I know have experienced it. My sister Nancy had it and survived. I was her support, and now, she’s mine.”

To learn more about the Health Department’s Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program and its partnership with Antrim County High Tea, or to learn how you can support both organizations, visit www.nwhealth.org or www.antrimcountyhightea.org.

Mary receives a gasoline credit card from Joy Klooster, RN, BSN, MBA (left), the BCCCP Coordinator, to help with the cost of her travel to and from her follow-up appointments.

**MICCHILD, HEALTHY KIDS AND PLAN FIRST! 667 CLIENTS ASSISTED**

MICchild and Healthy Kids provide pregnant women and children up to age 19 with health insurance coverage through the State of Michigan. MICchild provides a Blue Cross/Blue Shield policy for just $10 per family per month, while Healthy Kids provides free health insurance for those who qualify. Plan First! enrollment provides coverage for reproductive health exams and supplies for women ages 19-44. The Health Department works with clients to guide them through the enrollment processes of these complex but highly beneficial resources.

Through the Northern Health Plan, a community partnership of hospitals and health departments, 3,000 uninsured adults were provided a plan to help them access care.

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE INVESTIGATION**

198 COMMUNICABLE DISEASE INVESTIGATIONS, 199 SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASE INVESTIGATIONS

The Health Department investigates all reportable communicable diseases in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego Counties. These include such diseases as hepatitis, giardiasis, meningitis, salmonellosis and sexually-transmitted diseases. Interviews are conducted with infected individuals, and also with family, friends, coworkers and others who may have been in contact and are at risk. Health education and treatment is provided, if needed, to prevent the disease from spreading.

**IMMUNIZATIONS**

12,791 DOSES ADMINISTERED, 17,265 DOSES DISTRIBUTED

Immunizations prevent diseases that can be dangerous - even deadly - by helping the body safely develop immunity to disease. The Health Department administers and distributes vaccines to prevent the spread of polio, measles, mumps, rubella, influenza, tetanus, diphtheria, chicken pox, meningitis, whooping cough and other communicable diseases. Immunizations are provided in the WIC Program and at the Hornet Health Center, Ironmen Health Center, Health Department office clinics, or in other community locations, such as schools.
The Health Department of Northwest Michigan works closely with schools in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego Counties to develop policies and plans that support a healthy learning environment. By the end of 2013, one hundred percent of all school districts in the Health Department’s four-county region had enacted 24/7 tobacco-free policies.

In addition to working with school districts, the Health Department focused its efforts on enacting smoke-free and tobacco-free policies at public parks and beaches. The number of tobacco-free parks and beaches in the region jumped from one (1) to six (6) during 2013 alone. They include parks owned by the Village of Pellston, and the Petoskey Youth Soccer Association soccer complex, an outdoor space with 14 soccer fields for youth and their families.

Farmers' markets are a popular Northern Michigan destination in the spring, summer and fall. They’re a great source of healthy, locally-grown produce. But with the help of the Health Department, local farmers’ market managers, and the USDA’s Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), several local farmers’ markets can now also accept a cash alternative from low-income individuals and families in the region who purchase food using SNAP Bridge Cards. The SNAP Bridge Card is an electronic balance transfer (EBT) card that can be used by those in the SNAP program to shop for certain kinds of healthy food at a participating location. These include breads and cereals, fruits and vegetables, meats, fish, poultry, and dairy products – items that are healthy for the entire household.

The Health Department has partnered with farmer’s markets in Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego Counties to promote acceptance of the SNAP Bridge Card. What’s more, when cardholders make purchases through certain participating markets, the amount of money they spend is matched with “Double-Up Food Bucks”, enabling them to buy even more Michigan-grown fruits and vegetables.

During 2012, only three Northwest Michigan farmer’s markets had the ability to accept Bridge Cards, and their total sales through the program were about $600. But in 2013, thanks to grants from the WISEWOMAN Program, the Michigan Cancer Consortium, the Michigan Nutrition Network, and the Michigan Department of Community Health, the Health Department was able to offer technical assistance to market managers and...
**SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION**

More than 100 students and adults involved in coalition work.

The Health Department’s substance abuse prevention programs are research-based, and are considered best practices for preventing the abuse of drugs, alcohol, tobacco and other substances. Preventing abuse among adolescents means preventing a lifetime of health and social problems. Substance abuse leads to suicide, early and unsafe sexual activity, and motor vehicle accidents. The Health Department educates students within the classroom and adults throughout the community on the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, prescription drugs, and other drugs.

**SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL**

The Health Department worked with the Boyne City, East Jordan, and Pellston schools on the Safe Routes to School Program to assess the built environment, as well as attitudes and behaviors, that can enable students to actively commute to school. City leaders, school administrators, parents, and students participated in planning meetings to create action plans and special events for students to walk or bike safely to school rather than riding in a bus or car. The action plans will be used by city officials, school administrators, and the Health Department to write federal grant applications to support infrastructure changes to create safe, walkable, bikable communities for students.

750 students and 1,800 adults reached
18 of 18 local school districts now 100% tobacco free!!

**KIDS IN THE KITCHEN**

A 7-session nutrition education program with cooking instruction was completed with two groups of middle school students in the summer. The children really enjoyed the program, learning how to cook and trying new foods; they often commented they were excited to make the dish at home with their families!

**STAY CONNECTED**

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**2013 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY**
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The Health Department invests carefully in services that benefit every part of your community.

**REVENUES**

**STATE & FEDERAL FUNDS**
$7,303,284

**FEES & COLLECTIONS**
$12,376,189

**LOCAL APPROPRIATIONS**
$558,680

**COMMUNITY GRANTS**
$248,459

**TOTAL:**
$20,886,612

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THE HEALTH DEPARTMENT OF NORTHWEST MICHIGAN is grateful for the support we received from community organizations and our community partners during 2013. Your generosity makes it possible for us to sustain and expand the kinds of programs that make Northwest Michigan a healthy place to live, work and visit.

Health Department of Northwest Michigan Headquarters—Charlevoix County
Antrim County High Tea for Breast Cancer Prevention
Bellaire Lioness Club
Char-Em United Way
Charlevoix Area Hospital
Charlevoix County Community Foundation
Charlevoix Women’s Circle
Christ Child Society
Delta Dental of Michigan
East Jordan Lions Club
Elk Rapids Lions Club
Ellsworth Lioness Club
Frey Foundation

Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians
McLaren Northern Michigan
Michigan Department of Community Health
Michigan Department of Education
Michigan Fitness Council
Northern Health Foundation
Northern Health Plan
Otsego Memorial Hospital - Gaylord
Petoskey - Harbor Springs Area Community Foundation
Rally for the Cure
Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Zonta International

Health Department of Northwest Michigan—Antrim County

Jane Dinser, Office Coordinator, HDNW Antrim County

Health Department of Northwest Michigan—Charlevoix County

Connie Birdsall, Office Coordinator, HDNW Charlevoix County

Health Department of Northwest Michigan & Dental Clinics North—Harbor Springs, Emmet County

Megan Robinson, Office Coordinator, HDNW Emmet County

Health Department of Northwest Michigan & Dental Clinics North—Gaylord, Otsego County

Nicole Spires, Office Coordinator, HDNW Otsego County

Antrim County High Tea 2013 ABC Challenge Walk

ANTRIM COUNTY HIGH TEA FOR BREAST CANCER PREVENTION partners with the Health Department to ensure every woman in Antrim County has full access to mammography services and follow-up treatment.

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More than 21,000 Americans are killed each year by radon-induced lung cancer. Radon is a radioactive gas that comes from decaying radium and uranium occurring naturally in the earth, and it is detected often in homes throughout Northern Michigan. It is the second leading cause of lung cancer overall, and is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers. Radon is odorless and invisible, so the only way to know if your home has a problem is to test for it. Levels of the gas can vary greatly from one home to the next, but they are generally highest in homes that are closed up tightly, with little ventilation - such as during a long Northern Michigan winter.

Bill Dietrich has been a real estate professional in Northwest Michigan for more than 40 years, working with home buyers, sellers and inspectors every day. He finally decided to test his own home in Charlevoix for the presence of radon. He picked up one of the Health Department’s complete do-it-yourself test kits, and to his surprise, he discovered radon levels in his home exceeding the EPA’s recommended action level.

“My wife and I were very concerned about the results, and wanted to know what we could do to resolve the problem,” Dietrich said. “The...
Charlevoix-area real estate agent Bill Dietrich was surprised to discover high levels of radon in his own home. With help from the Health Department and a licensed contractor, Bill and his wife can now rest assured that their home is free of harmful radon levels.

Health Department was helpful in providing information and guidance as to what this meant, and what to do next.” After some further testing, Dietrich contacted a certified radon contractor, who was able to correct the high radon level his home with radon mitigation equipment. “The equipment was installed in one day, and has been effectively eliminating radon from our home for the past seven-plus years,” he said, adding that follow-up tests have shown his home to have radon levels at or below those found in normal fresh air.

Dietrich says a large number of home buyers and sellers are not aware of the risks posed by radon. “I would recommend to buyers that they make radon testing part of their home inspection, or do it independently with the Health Department,” he said. “Everyone should be informed and aware that elevated levels of radon in a home can be fixed – not only for sale purposes, but for the health and wellbeing of the homeowner and family living in the home.”

Radon test kits are available for just $15.00 through the Health Department of Northwest Michigan’s offices in Bellaire, Charlevoix, Gaylord and Petoskey/Harbor Springs.
The Health department’s Bathing Beach Safety Monitoring Program monitored the water quality at 50 beaches throughout Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego Counties during 2013.

For more than a decade, water quality monitoring has covered 31 Lake Michigan beaches in the region. This important work was made possible through grant funding from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Those who live on or near the lake, and seasonal tourists who visit and enjoy Northern Michigan’s unspoiled beaches, have come to trust that the water quality is being monitored for their safety. The monitoring program has been successful in protecting public health, and has also supported the economic benefit of having clean, safe swimming areas.

Unfortunately, due to severe EPA funding cuts, the Health Department will not be able to continue comprehensive sampling of these Great Lakes beaches without financial assistance. The agency is reaching out to individual beach operators, offering a fee structure to continue beach water quality sample collection and analysis, posting of beach water quality information on the state’s publicly-accessible water quality website, and complete handling of any necessary advisories, closures and follow-up sampling. Water quality samples continue to be tested through the Health Department’s Northern Michigan Regional Laboratory, a laboratory with the ability to analyze samples at a very low cost and provide results quickly.
The Northern Michigan Regional Laboratory serves a 19-county region from its location at the Health department facility in Gaylord. In partnership with the Michigan Departments of Community Health and Environmental Quality, the lab provides timely, accurate water analyses to serve public health, clinical and epidemiological needs.

Water samples for testing can be dropped off at the Health Department’s facilities in Bellaire, Charlevoix, Gaylord and Harbor Springs.

The Health Department values its positive working relationships with local residents, business owners & contractors.
When Dean Johnston was admitted to the hospital in the fall of 2013, he didn’t expect to make it out alive. The 68-year-old engineer and Vietnam veteran suffered from advanced lymphoma and pulmonary fibrosis, leaving him with debilitating shortness of breath and activity intolerance. He was referred for hospice care through Hospice of Northwest Michigan.

While hospice provides end-of-life care for the terminally ill, hospice care nurses explore every opportunity to improve the quality of life for their patients. In Dean’s case, nurse Patty Frederick worked with Dean and his physician to establish a regimen that offered him a chance to stabilize his health and living conditions. In fact, he worked so hard to follow Patty’s guidance that he was able to “graduate” from active terminal status to a functional lifestyle.

“I was fortunate when I met Patty,” says Dean, who has been out of the hospital for 32 weeks at the time of this writing. “She inspired confidence when I first met her, and I chose my hospice right then and there. She’s a sweetheart, and a professional, and she always had the right answers.”

Between 11 and 15 percent of hospice patients improve to the point that they can be discharged, or can “graduate” from hospice care. This success rate can be attributed to effective communication and collaboration among those...
“You have quality nursing care, and I’ll tell anybody.”

Dean Johnston, Hospice Patient

involved in each patient’s care – physicians, hospice personnel, family and other caregivers, as well as the patients themselves. Stabilizing patients’ medical condition and environment can, in some cases, return them to the point that they no longer qualify for or need hospice care.

Hospice of Northwest Michigan provides seamless transitions between home care and hospice. When a patient’s condition changes, and he or she needs to return to hospice care after being discharged, the same trusted providers can be there to provide appropriate care.

Always the consummate engineer, Dean likes to research equipment and new ideas that can help him devise ways of managing his own quality of life – as inspired by the recommendations of his nurse, Patty. These days, Dean only needs to see Patty once a month, for routine care. “You have quality nursing care, and I’ll tell anybody,” he says of Hospice of Northwest Michigan.

It takes extensive training and tremendous personal dedication to provide the kind of care needed by home care and hospice patients. In addition to being registered nurses, the Health Department’s home health nurses must have several years’ experience in acute care. Their clinical expertise must be accompanied by strong interpersonal and social skills – all of which are constantly put to the test, as they are called into patients’ homes during times of great discomfort and uncertainty for both the patient and family.

“Patients get specialized care from many different sources,” says Donna Carlson-Alkire, Home Care and Hospice Supervisor. “We’re there to look at the whole patient, the resources they have available, their environment, and the different kinds of health problems they’re facing. We interact with their providers; we call pharmaceutical manufacturers; we help the patient get answers when they don’t know who to call.”

In addition to registered nurses and home health aides, the Health Department’s home care staff has access to medical-social workers, pharmacists, therapists and other resources to meet the needs of the patient and family. All staff are cross-trained to provide both home care and hospice services, assuring a smooth transition for home care patients if and when hospice services are needed.

“Our staff is always available to our patients and their families,” says Tina Lamont, Director of Adult Health Services. “They are our priority.”
It could happen to anyone. But for Ron, the thought of having to lose all of his teeth—with no way to pay for the urgent dental procedures he needed—was too much to bear.

At 67 years of age, Ron had already experienced heart problems and had endured multiple joint replacements. The Cheboygan resident had run his own business for years, but when it closed, he also lost his home, and was left with only seasonal work to help him pay the bills.

After completing the initial chartings and oral exam, Tyler Allerding, DDS determined that Ron would need full dentures due to the severe wear and extreme deterioration of his teeth.

Removal of his teeth was also necessary to avoid complications from a dental infection.

Rico Breznau, dental hygienist and office administrator for the Cheboygan clinic, recalls Ron’s devastation when he heard the news. “After the dentist left the room, he quietly broke down in tears,” Rico said. “He was devastated to be losing his teeth, but what actually brought him to tears was the fact that he had no way to pay for the procedures he needed. He was working as a greeter, and was mortified at the thought of having no teeth while talking to customers.” Ron knew it was the only way he could remain healthy enough to work, but he had no idea how he would cover the expense.

The staff at Dental Clinics North quickly made the decision to seek financial support on Ron’s behalf through the Dental Assistance Fund. During 2013, the Fund covered $1,059,830 in essential dental services to 3,712 clients, including 38 from Cheboygan County alone.
Dental Clinics North, a partnership of local health departments, is administered by the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, with clinical services provided by Michigan Community Dental Clinics. We provide care to patients with Medicaid, Healthy Michigan Plan, Delta Healthy Kids, MIChild, Northern Dental Plan, and uninsured.

**TOTAL CLIENTS SERVED**

23,490, including 8,911 from Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego Counties.

**CLIENTS SERVED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALPENA</td>
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<td>CHEBOYGAN</td>
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<td>WIC FLUORIDE VARNISH (HDNW)</td>
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</table>

“**We were able to get the funding approved for Ron, along with a contribution from his church to help offset the costs,”** Rico recalls. “**Without the entire staff working together, this would never have come together for him**.” The rollout of the Healthy Michigan Plan in April 2014 makes dental services a covered benefit for eligible patients between the ages of 19 and 64. For those age 65 and over, the Dental Assistance Fund will continue to provide access to needed dental care.

Ron expressed his gratitude in a letter to Dr. Allerding and the staff at Dental Clinics North in Cheboygan. “**I cannot say enough or thank you enough for the help I have received,**” he wrote.