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HEALTH
DEPARTMENT
of Northwest Michigan

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Charlevoix board agrees to install “Tobacco-Free” signage at beaches

CHARLEVOIX – After months of deliberation and debate, the Charlevoix County Board of Commissioners took a step toward tobacco-free beaches. Commissioner Shirley Roloff has been pursuing this project, and at Tuesday’s meeting suggested the installation of “Tobacco-Free” signs at local beaches. The commission agreed to install signage at the public beach areas of Whiting Park and Thumb Lake Park.

This cause is important to Roloff because she sees the long-term effects of smoking every day; her husband suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). “We really should do more to protect people,” said Roloff, who is also a member of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan’s Board of Health. Children are especially vulnerable, she said, because they may play with or burn themselves on cigarette butts. “It’s important for the environment and for the health of the public.”

Roloff and the Charlevoix County Parks Committee said that they “appreciate all the help the Health Department has given” to their cause. The Health Department, which has been recommending tobacco-free zones in Charlevoix’s public areas since November 2013, will provide the signs free of charge. “Tobacco-Free” signage is intended to discourage the use of all forms of tobacco.

Susan Pulaski, Community Health Coordinator at the Health Department, said this decision is a positive move for Charlevoix County. “This is such great news,” she said. “The board deserves a big thank-you from the public for taking action.” Pulaski also added that, because it’s an investment toward a healthier community, the Health Department is pleased to provide the signage for these beaches. She encourages other jurisdictions to take actions against tobacco use, especially in public spaces like beaches and parks.

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. To learn more about the Health Department’s role in promoting health communities, visit www.nwhealth.org or call (800) 432-4121.