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### **World No Tobacco Day highlights health risks of tobacco use**

CHARLEVOIX – Each year on May 31, the World Health Organization (WHO) and its partners mark World No Tobacco Day, highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. In the spirit of World No Tobacco Day, the Health Department of Northwest Michigan would like to recognize the City of Petoskey’s recent policy changes to reduce secondhand smoke at area parks. All local residents and local communities are encouraged to take this message to heart.

“The state has made great strides over the past 50 years in terms of reducing tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure,” said Susan Pulaski, Community Health Coordinator at the Health Department. “More recently, it’s especially promising to see Petoskey, Charlevoix, East Jordan, and other local communities taking action to eliminate tobacco waste and secondhand smoke from public areas.” Policies like these actively support public health and make up the core of World No Tobacco Day.

However, the burden of tobacco use on Michigan residents is still unacceptable, according to Pulaski. Tobacco use remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the state—killing more than 16,200 Michigan residents each year. Heart disease, stroke, cancer, and respiratory disease may also result from tobacco use. Roughly 10,300 Michigan youth become new regular smokers every year, and more than one-third of these children will die prematurely as a result.

The Health Department urges all users to quit. No matter how long an individual has smoked or used tobacco, quitting will dramatically improve his or her outlook for a healthier future. Immediately after quitting, heart rate and blood pressure improve. Long-term effects of quitting include improved circulation, improved lung function, and decreased risk of heart disease and cancer.

Planning ahead, working with a health care provider, and seeking support from friends and family can all increase the likelihood of quitting successfully. Additionally, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services operates 1-800-QUIT-NOW, a free telephone service to help tobacco users quit. Callers can receive information and referrals; some may be qualified for a free coaching program and nicotine replacement medications.

For more information about the Health Department’s substance abuse prevention programs, call **(800) 432-4121** or visit [www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org). 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.