



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
July 21, 2015
CONTACT:
Dan Reynolds
(231) 547-7629
d.reynolds@nwhealth.org



HEALTH
DEPARTMENT
of Northwest Michigan

www.nwhealth.org

Health Department emphasizes Tobacco-Free spaces during Park & Recreation Month

CHARLEVOIX – Residents in Northern Michigan know their parks and recreation facilities provide places to get active, explore nature, or connect with fellow community members. But what they may not know is that their parks and recreation areas also contribute to improved health outcomes, higher property values, and environmental sustainability.

Parks and recreation have the power to strengthen communities, transform lives, and protect the future. That’s why the Health Department of Northwest Michigan is joining organizations across the country in celebrating the 30th anniversary of Park and Recreation Month—an annual event created by the National Recreation and Park Association, and celebrated each July since 1985.

“Park and Recreation Month goes hand-in-hand with our vision of tobacco-free parks,” said Susan Pulaski, Community Health Coordinator with the Health Department. “People visit parks and recreation areas to breathe clean air, explore natural beauty, and engage in healthy activities. Going tobacco-free is the next step toward improving this experience.”

Many parks and beaches across Northwest Michigan have already gone tobacco-free, sending a positive message to residents. Benefits of banning tobacco in public spaces include eliminating secondhand smoke exposure, reducing fire risks, eliminating cigarette butts and litter, and decreasing maintenance costs. Pulaski has been reaching out to local communities to create more tobacco-free outdoor spaces.

The latest to join the movement include Hayes Township in Charlevoix County, and Bear Creek and Readmond Townships in Emmet County. “This is great news, from both a health standpoint and an environmental one,” said Pulaski. She is grateful to these townships for standing against tobacco use, and is hopeful that others will follow suit. For areas that ban tobacco, the Health Department provides complimentary “Tobacco-Free” signs.

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 50,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. To learn about Park and Recreation Month, visit www.nrpa.org/July.

For more information about the Health Department, visit www.nwhealth.org or call (800) 432-4121. 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.