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**Health Department of Northwest Michigan News Release**

**New mobile lab aids Health Department's outreach efforts**

A new mobile laboratory is aiding the Health Department of Northwest Michigan with outreach efforts across its four-county jurisdiction of Antrim, Charlevoix, Emmet and Otsego counties.

The mobile unit, a Ford E450, is equipped with a room with an exam table and cabinetry, as well as a separate area for staff to greet patients and perform blood draws and other laboratory tests. A sink, bathroom, refrigerator to store lab samples, storage, entry steps, as well as a wheelchair lift round out the fully equipped van.

"We are thrilled to be able to enhance our outreach efforts with this mobile unit," said Lisa Peacock, Health Officer with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan. "It will enable us to reach areas that are relatively far from one of our district offices and may be difficult for clients to seek services," she added.

The unit, which was purchased through a grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services as part of the Northern Michigan Regional Lab expansion, is currently being used to perform COVID-19 PCR tests in the community. The unit has been serving the Emmet County region but will soon go on the road to other communities. The unit is staffed with a logistics staff member/driver, a registered nurse, and a public health technician to perform the duties.

"We have everything here we need to go anywhere and serve our communities in a number of ways," said Melissa Hahn, Family Health Supervisor with the Health Department. "Our long-range plans are to provide WIC (Women, Infant, Children) services, flu vaccinations and other immunizations for families, sexual health services such as STD testing, physical exams, Pap Smears, pregnancy testing and much more," Hahn said.

The mobile unit compliments the health department's recently expanded laboratory in Gaylord. Over the past two years, the 500 square foot lab was expanded into a 2,300 square foot facility. The state funded the project expansion and equipment – and the new mobile unit – which now allows staff to adapt to existing and future testing and clinic needs including diagnostic testing for COVID-19, sexually transmitted diseases, influenza, whooping cough, streptococcal, and more. The mobile unit will also play a critical role in expanding vaccination efforts throughout region.

**Cutline:**

Health Department of Northwest Michigan Family Health Supervisor Melissa Hahn (left) and Medical Director Dr. Josh Meyerson stand in front of the new mobile health laboratory.

*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](http://nwhealth.org).*

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Greer LaCroix, 17, was one of the first clients to receive a COVID-19 test at the Health Department of Northwest Michigan's new mobile laboratory, currently operating out of the Emmet County Fairgrounds in Petoskey.

