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Health Department of Northwest Michigan News Release

It's Official

Thorell hired as health officer for Health Department of Northwest Michigan

After overseeing operations of the Health Department of Northwest Michigan (HDNW) since April 30, interim health officer Daniel R. Thorell has been hired as the organization's health officer by the four-county board of health. The final vote took place during the Dec. 6 public meeting.

"I am excited to add Dan Thorell as our new health officer and department administrator for the HDNW," said Scott Hankins, Board of Health Chair. "Dan is a calm, responsible, 'common sense' director, and we look forward to a long relationship with him as our director. Dan is being promoted from within the HDNW and is well known by the employees. This should make for a smooth transition for everyone, and I believe Dan is the right person for this position."

Prior to becoming interim health officer, Thorell served as the agency's deputy health officer. He succeeded Lisa Peacock, whose resignation took effect the day Thorell moved into the top spot. The temporary appointment allowed the board time to work with Thorell and consider their approach to permanently filling the position.

Over the months, the board members initiated discussions with Thorell on whether there was shared interest in making his leadership more permanent. Since September, the board has performed a background check, interviewed Thorell, and negotiated a contract.

"Over the past seven months, our staff has moved forward as a team and gone through the same kind of adjustments as other area agencies, businesses, and families as we all return to public interaction," Thorell said. "We are focusing on the many other public health programs we offer our communities, which number about 60, to residents living in our four counties, as well as necessary dental services for people throughout the northern Michigan region."

Thorell has an extensive background in Environmental Health Services as well as public health leadership. Through a contract HDNW has with the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department, Thorell will serve as health officer for that district as well. Dr. Joshua Meyerson continues to serve as the medical director for both health departments, as well as District Health Department #4.

"Transitioning from interim to permanent health officer doesn't change my day-to-day responsibilities, but it does provide assurance for staff and the community about what to expect as we all look to the New Year and how we can further build on the sense of community and care that's so prevalent in northwest Michigan," Thorell said.

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.

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Thorell, in addition to serving as deputy health officer, served as the director of environmental health with HDNW, a position he held since March 2021. A registered sanitarian in the State of Michigan, Thorell received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Health from the University of Michigan in 1996 and his Master of Science Degree in Environmental Health from the University of Michigan, School of Public Health, in 1999.

Thorell's 26-year career in environmental health began at the Genesee County Health Department where he worked as an Environmental Sanitarian. He accepted a job with Grand Traverse County in 2001 as a field sanitarian primarily working in the groundwater supply and land development programs, then became the Environmental Health Coordinator in 2016 and the Environmental Health Director in 2017.

Thorell currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Michigan Association of Local Public Health and previously served on the Board of Directors for the Michigan Association for Local Environmental Health Administrators. The Northern Michigan Environmental Action Council awarded him the 2008-09 Environmentalist of the Year Award in Public Service.

PHOTO:

Dan Thorell

Health Department of Northwest Michigan Health Officer

