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**Public health's frontline nurses**  
***Recognizing the compassionate care during National Nurses Week***

Nurses with the Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department (BLDHD) are among the most caring professionals who provide services in clinics, community settings, and homes throughout the county. At the heart of their work is a desire to support residents of all ages to improve health and wellbeing, whether through clinical services such as vaccination, assisting with connections to resources, providing information, or offering a listening ear.

“Nursing is an honorable profession in which you get the privilege of caring for and walking along side of others in some of their most joyous, stressful, saddest, and happiest life stories,” said Betsy Hardy, Personal Health Supervisor.

To acknowledge their contributions and impact, BLDHD asks staff and clients from throughout the district to say thank you during National Nurses Week, May 6-12, 2022. May is also National Nurses Month.

“Public Health Nurses are the frontline for the health department and provide the majority of the direct care to clients,” said Michelle Klein, Director of Personal Health. “The individualized support and resources they provide is a crucial part in health promotion and protecting the health of the whole community. They meet residents where they are and provide individualized support and resources.”

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department has 13 nurses on staff including three school-based nurses. Through their various training and specialties, the nurses help support healthy people – families, young adults, and adults – in Northern Michigan.

**School-based nursing**

As a health resource nurse, Carolyn Seabury puts her nursing degree to work at Suttons Bay Public Schools and Northport Public Schools. She works within the schools to provide education and promote health; identify potential health risks; and connect with staff, students, and their families for the home-school-healthcare relationship.

“This has been a hard year for families and schools,” Seabury said. “I love being able to help relieve some of this stress, so that schools can stay open and kids can continue to learn.”

**In-home nursing**

Nikki Cleland is one health department nurse who supports family health through the Maternal Infant Health Program (MIHP), a home-visiting program for pregnant women and infants with Medicaid. As the visiting nurse, Cleland is part of a team of nurses, dietitians, and counselors who come alongside families to promote healthy pregnancies and infants.

“Our MIHP nurse has become such an asset to our family. Especially when both my children had trouble gaining weight, knowing I had someone who had a medical background made me much more confident as a mother,” said one MIHP client.

Cleland previously worked as a full-time nurse at a pediatrician's office.

“I chose the profession of nursing because I wanted to make a difference in the world and in the lives of those who needed love and compassion the most,” said Cleland. “My favorite part of my job is the connections and relations I have

made with such a vulnerable population. Being able to help with life transitions, in times of uncertainty, has been my career's greatest joy!"

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department nurses have thousands of stories about connecting, caring, and helping their neighbors maintain and regain health through nutrition, medical care, and education. They are part of the nation's estimated [2.4 million nurses](#) who work on the frontlines every day, according to the U.S. Census.

"Many of the services would not be achievable without the work of public health nurses and we are lucky to have some of the most caring, compassionate, and devoted nursing professionals who go above and beyond for their clients," added Klein.

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