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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**January is Social Determinants of Health Month:
Highlighting the Impact of Community Connections**

The Benzie-Leelanau District Health Department is proud to join the Northern Michigan Public Health Alliance (NMPHA) in observing Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) Month this January. This month-long initiative emphasizes how social and economic factors, such as housing, transportation, and education, affect individual and community health outcomes. As part of our efforts, we are spotlighting our Community Connections Program, which has demonstrated remarkable success in addressing SDOH across Northern Lower Michigan including Benzie and Leelanau County.

The Community Connections Program was launched in 2016 to bridge gaps in resources and empower residents to achieve better health by addressing underlying social needs. In 2024, this free program received over 7,000 referrals for Northern Lower Michigan Residents, individuals and families from physician offices, hospitals, and community-based organizations. The dedicated Community Health Workers (CHW's) in the Community Connections program work to connect these individuals to critical services such as housing support, transportation assistance, food resources, and access to healthcare.

In the past year, Community Connections has:

- Supported over 400 individuals with food access and health insurance applications through MI Bridges.
- Connected more than 100 residents to a medical home for regular healthcare needs.
- Assisted nearly 200 individuals in scheduling essential dental care services.

"Addressing social determinants of health is foundational to our mission of creating healthier communities," said Debbie Aldridge, Community Connections- NMCHIR Hub Director. "Our Community Connections Program demonstrates how personalized support can empower individuals and families to overcome barriers and thrive."

If you or someone you know needs support, please contact our Community Connections team at 1-833-674-2159. For more information about Social Determinants of Health Month or the Community Connections Program, visit our [Community Connection website](#).

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