

April 7, 2025

For Immediate Release

Contact: Myra Stoney, Health Director, 308-345-4223

Public Health is for You

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) is celebrating National Public Health Week from April 7th to 10th. This week is a time to recognize what public health means to people and reflect on why this work is important. “Public health is for you. We do it for our families, our neighbors, and all the people in Southwest Nebraska,” explained Myra Stoney, Health Director at SWNPHD. “The value of public health is often overlooked. For every \$1 spent, anywhere from \$3 to \$60 is returned to the community. Public health is an excellent investment in our community. The current raid on public health funding by the federal government and State of Nebraska does not make sense.”

Public health workers promote healthy lifestyles, prevent the spread of disease, and protect the health of the entire population. At SWNPHD these activities are done by a team of dedicated staff that cover nine counties. When they were asked about why they work in public health, here is what some of them had to say.

“I enjoy working in public health because I appreciate how it focuses not just on individual health, but on the well-being of entire communities. I find it rewarding to work on initiatives that promote health education, prevent disease, and tackle health inequalities.” Hunter York, Senior Program Manager.

“Working in public health, I have been amazed to learn about all of the different programs available and the hard work that goes into each of them. I really feel there is something for everyone, from mental health resources and radon tests for homes to helping kids prevent cavities. I found out it is not just about shots.” April Wilson, Ogallala Office Manager.

"I enjoy working in public health because it gives me the opportunity to help people live healthier and happier lives. It's all about making a real difference in our communities, especially for those that are most vulnerable and often underserved." Diana Garcia, Program Manager.

“Southwest Nebraska is our home, and we want it to be a great place to live where it’s easy to be healthy. Public health gives us the tools to make that a reality.” Joy Trail, Senior Program Manager.

“I enjoy working in Public Health because it’s about creating meaningful, lasting change. It’s not just about treating illness—it’s about preventing disease, promoting health, and ensuring that entire communities have the opportunity to thrive.” Kay Schmidt, Emergency Response Coordinator.

“As a public health nurse, I am driven by the impact I can make on our communities and our district. I love to provide care and educate those in need, knowing that my efforts contribute to healthier communities. I am honored to be part of the journey toward better health for our area.” Melissa Propp RN, Clinic Manager.

“Working in public health means I get to help a wide range of people of all ages. Not only do I help make their lives healthier, I have the resources to teach them how to make a safer and healthier life for themselves.” Sarah Minnick, Program Manager.

“I like working in public health because I get to learn about what types of things impact the health of me and my family. I like getting to work with health data and sharing what I learn with others.” Chloe Martin, Program Manager.

“I like working in public health because it gives me the opportunity to meet and help so many people. I love our towns and the people who live here.” Elaine Polly, McCook Office Manager.

“I love working in public health, being able to make a difference in the lives of the people in my community and the communities in our area is rewarding. We have so many great things to offer in our communities, so being able to help get the word out has been one of the best experiences of my career.” Jennifer Kugler, Marketing Coordinator.

“I enjoy helping, educating, and meeting new people. That’s why I love public health and working for public health!” Mary Castillo, Community Health Worker.

For more information on the services and programs available through public health, call SWNPHD at 308-345-4223. Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health.

###