

# PORTAGE COUNTY COMBINED GENERAL HEALTH DISTRICT



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## Health department celebrates BCMH program for National Public Health Week

Public health means doing more than assuring clean water and safe food. It also means that medically needy children have access to the health care and support services they need to maintain a quality of life. To celebrate National Public Health Week, April 5 -11, the Portage County Health Department highlights its program aimed at serving medically handicapped children and their families.

Portage County Health Department offers the Bureau for Children with Medical Handicaps (BCMh) program. In this program, a public health nurse helps families find and coordinate services for children who are born with or develop medical handicaps. Currently, there are over 330 children receiving services from the Portage County Health Department BCMh program.

A Public Health Nurse from Portage County Health Department can help a child with medical handicaps in the school setting as well as with getting the appropriate medical equipment and treatment. In the same way that the BCMh nurse helps the family improve health services for the child, the BCMh nurse works with the school to provide an improved education experience for medically handicapped children.

Catie Gellatly, RN is a Portage County Resident who has received BCMh services in the past for her daughter Emily. Emily was born with spina bifida, which is the incomplete development of the spinal chord and/or its protective coverings. Catie is also a BCMh public health nurse at the Portage County Health Department. "We help parents make sense of it all", Catie said. "When you have a child with a disability or medical condition you are bombarded by so much information that you feel overwhelmed. The BCMh nurse is a friendly face in your community who helps parents navigate the maze of doctor visits and paperwork. Also the BCMh nurse helps families find assistance to cover medical costs. We can advocate at their child's school, assisting with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). We try to help families by making their day a little easier. Sometimes it means that they have to make one less phone call, and they have one more question answered."

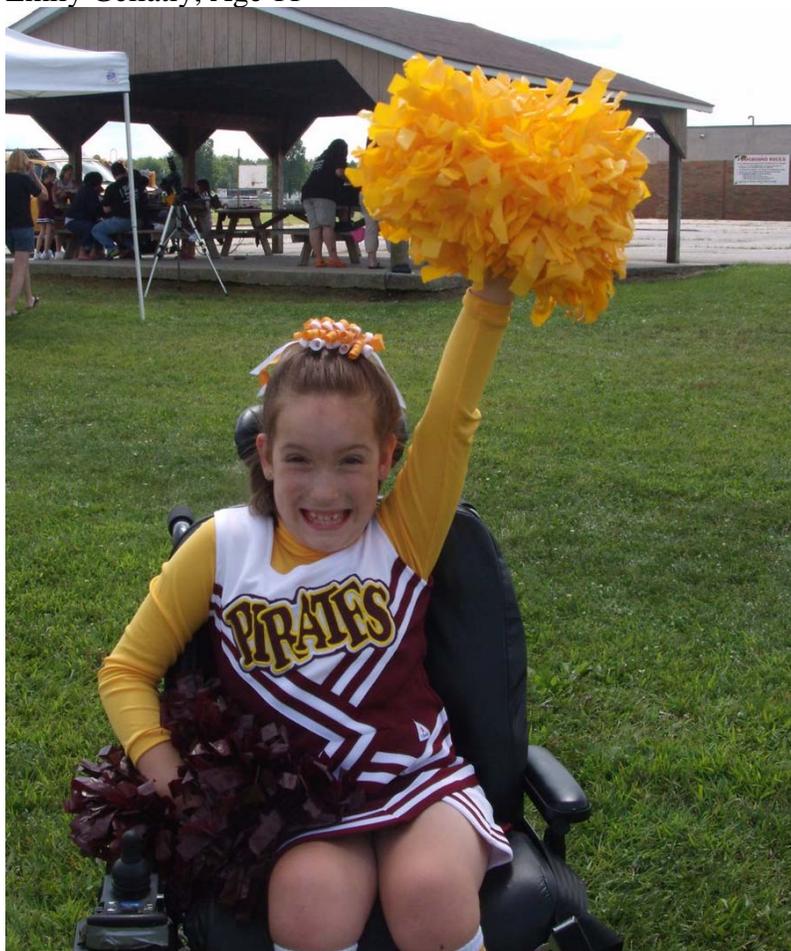
Over the past century, public health efforts have added 25 years to our lifespan. By providing the BCMh program, the Portage County Health Department can work towards increasing years of healthy life for Portage County children with medical handicaps. Learn if your child is eligible by calling the Portage County Health Department BCMh line at 330-296-5900.

Pictured on the following page is Emily Gellatly, age 11.

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Emily Gellatly, Age 11



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