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Public health director to retire; community reception planned

Public Health Director Georgeen Polyak, PhD., has announced her retirement from the Village of Oak Park, effective May 31. A community reception in her honor is scheduled for 3:30 – 5 p.m., Thurs., May 17 in room 101 of Village Hall, 123 Madison St.

Dr. Polyak, who has been Oak Park's Director of Public Health since 1998, is not leaving the public health field. She will become a full time teacher in Benedictine University's Master of Public Health (MPH) program. Benedictine University is in Lisle and its public health program is the second largest in Illinois.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to work for the citizens of Oak Park where the public's health is clearly valued," Dr. Polyak said of her time as Public Health Director. "I look forward to working with public health graduate students at Benedictine. My experience in Oak Park will certainly inform the knowledge I offer them."

Prior to coming to Oak Park, Dr. Polyak held several administrative positions in the public and private health sectors. She earned a Doctor of Philosophy degree in public health sciences from the University of Illinois at Chicago; a Master of Science degree in health services administration from the University of Saint Francis, Illinois; and a Master of Science degree in community mental health from Northern Illinois University.

Among her accomplishments at the helm of the Oak Park Department of Public Health, Dr. Polyak said she was most proud of the talented and dedicated public health staff members who have worked for her.

"I also am grateful to have played a part in the environmental remediation of Barrie Park, the communitywide health assessments and plans, and the partnerships we have forged among the various community agencies. The passage of the Clean Indoor Air Ordinance that banned smoking in public places was especially gratifying."

Village Manager Tom Barwin said Dr. Polyak's experience and leadership qualities will be missed, but he understood her desire to use them now to help those who are training to play key roles in public health in the future.

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Polyak retiring
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“Georgeen’s knowledge and skills were important to creating the effective public health programs that have become such an integral component of the services the Village provides the citizens of Oak Park,” Barwin said. “She will be missed.”

Barwin said the Village already has begun an extensive search for her replacement. In the meantime, Margaret Provost-Fyfe, RN, MPH, who has been with the Oak Park Department of Public Health since 1986, will be acting director until a replacement for Dr. Polyak is found.

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