



**KENT COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC WORKS**

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Kent DPW enhances educational programs with new hire and professional development

Katelyn Nettler joins DPW as resource recovery specialist; Lauren Westerman earns environmental educator certification

Grand Rapids, Mich. – The **Kent County Department of Public Works (DPW)** announced today major enhancements to department educational programs with the hire of **Katelyn Nettler** as a new resource recovery specialist. **Lauren Westerman**, also a resource recovery specialist, recently earned her environmental educator certification from the Michigan Alliance for Environmental and Outdoor Education (MAEOE).

“We are always looking for ways to enhance our educational programs, and our resource recovery specialists play a vital role in our commitment to community outreach and education,” said **Dar Baas**, director of the Kent County Department of Public Works. “Both Lauren and Katelyn bring fresh perspectives to our program and will help us develop new strategies for educating our community about the importance of protecting our environment through reducing, reusing, recycling and reimagining how we manage discards.”

Nettler comes to the DPW from the Blandford Nature Center where she was a volunteer and outreach manager. She will support Westerman with outreach and education through developing audio and visual content for the DPW’s website, social media and other platforms. Nettler’s role will be essential in giving the community a look at the county’s trash and recycling process and teaching people how to safely dispose of chemicals and other hazardous materials.

“I am looking forward to working with community partners to ensure access and awareness of programs that help reduce waste destined for the landfill,” Nettler said. “There are many opportunities to reduce landfill waste in our community and I’m excited to hit the ground running in this new role.”

Westerman completed her environmental certification in November. MAEOE offers an Environmental Educator Certification that is recognized by the North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE), a leading professional organization in environmental education. According to MAEOE, environmental literacy can be defined as understanding how to make decisions that minimize environmental impact. Westerman will use her certification to grow Kent County DPW’s recycling and waste management education programs.

“I pursued this certification to expand my communication skills and gain experience as an environmental educator that I can apply to the Kent County DPW’s programs,” Westerman said. “This program challenged me to define objectives and goals for each program and to incorporate evaluation tools throughout the process. I am excited to continue using these new skills as I teach more recycling and waste programs in the coming years.”

Westerman has been with the Kent DPW for 3 years. In her role, she leads tours through the Recycling Center and Landfill, visits schools for various education programs, and interacts with the public throughout the year. She earned her Master of Environmental Science from Taylor University in Indiana.

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