‘It’s hilarious to me that a knock on the door changed my life.’

That’s what Deanna Wilson said when reflecting on her experience with the Healthy Homes Coalition. She hardly expected her County Commissioner to come knocking on her front door. As Healthy Homes canvassed the neighborhood to reach out to families, Commissioner Candace Chivis, who works with the Healthy Homes Coalition, spoke with Deanna about our Healthy Homes for Healthy Kids program. Deanna enrolled shortly thereafter, seeking some help to manage her son Dario’s asthma.

Deanna is highly involved in her community, volunteering her time at Gerald R. Ford, U-Prep, and LINC. While she loves her neighborhood, she faces challenges in controlling the home environment that impacts Dario’s asthma. Because she rents her home, Deanna doesn’t have the option to tear up the carpet throughout her house to get rid of allergens and dust mites. With a competitive real estate market, moving is also not a viable option. Besides, Deanna doesn’t want to have to move out of the neighborhood she loves. Yet she’s passionate about providing safe housing for Dario.

Thanks to the generous support of Wells Fargo and the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan, Healthy Homes was able to provide Deanna with the tools needed to create a safe environment for her son. A vacuum with a HEPA filter removes allergens from the carpet. Mattress covers reduce dust mites so that Dario is able to get a full night’s rest free from coughing and wheezing. A window air conditioning unit in the bedroom means that Dario has a safe place to sleep during high allergy seasons. Since working with Healthy Homes, Deanna has switched to all green cleaning, reducing the airborne irritants that exacerbate asthma symptoms.

Deanna is invested in her community. Through the partnership with Healthy Homes, she is able to worry less about Dario’s asthma. This allows them more opportunities to stay engaged. Partnerships with people like Deanna help create stability. Deanna will be sharing her story at our Building Healthy Futures Luncheon on October 1.

49507 Impact

Learn about the impact the Healthy Homes Coalition is making in a part of the 49507 zip code on the southeast side of Grand Rapids.

See page 3 for the details.
Reports and Updates

Michigan Approves $1.75 Million in Funding for Lead

The Healthy Homes Coalition, along with its partners in the Michigan Alliance for Lead Safe Housing, have spent many hours educating state legislators about the value of investing in childhood lead poisoning prevention. That investment in education has come to bear fruit as the State legislature recently approved $1.75 million to protect children by fixing lead hazards in their homes. The $500,000 bump in 2014 will be put to good use and will pay dividends in many ways.

Lead Costs the People of Michigan $330 Million Every Year

A new report released by the University of Michigan Risk Science Center estimates that childhood lead exposure costs Michigan residents $330 million annually. A statewide housing remediation program would pay for itself in three years.

The substantial economic returns coupled with the improved health outcomes suggests that lead abatement is a critical economic and public health investment.

Stress from Living in Poor Quality Housing Impacts Children’s Wellbeing

According to recent issue brief published by the MacArthur Foundation, parents’ stress from living in poor quality and unstable homes takes a toll on children’s wellbeing. The brief, entitled “Poor Quality Housing Is Tied to Children’s Emotional and Behavioral Problems”, examines how housing characteristics impact the wellbeing of children and families.

The brief affirms what the Healthy Homes Coalition has been saying all along, that when we eliminate harmful housing conditions, we improve children’s health, wellbeing, and prospects in life.

For more details on each of the reports above visit healthyhomescoalition.org/news

Lead Poisoning Continues to Challenge Grand Rapids’ Southeast Neighborhoods

Comments from Executive Director Paul Haan

The Michigan Department of Community Health recently released childhood lead poisoning data for 2013. I was shocked to see that the 49507 zip code in Grand Rapids topped the list for the number of children lead-poisoned in any one zip code in the state of Michigan. In this zip code, 157 children 0-5 years reported a blood lead level ≥0.5 ug/dL, the Center for Disease Control’s current reference level.

Healthy Homes staff quickly reviewed historical data, wondering if this was an anomaly. We found comparable data going back to 2005, but in that year 504 children had high blood lead levels. By 2013, that number had dropped to 157. That’s a decrease of nearly 70% lead-poisoned kids in eight years.

Put another way, 347 fewer kids were lead poisoned in 2013 in the 49507 zip code, and fewer children were poisoned in each of the years in between. The conclusion? Nearly 350 fewer children lead poisoned each year is a huge impact, and one that is fully worth the money and time invested. Our efforts and those of the Get the Lead Out! project are making a significant and positive impact.

The fact that we prevented an estimated 350 childhood lead poisoning cases in the 49507 zip code last year alone stokes our confidence. That confidence, combined with the recent notoriety, drives us to double-down on our efforts to protect all of the kids living in the 49507 neighborhoods.

Lead Poisoning @ ARTPRIZE®

Internationally acclaimed artist Mel Chin is bringing his socially active art installation, known as Operation Paydirt, to ArtPrize and the Healthy Homes Coalition is serving as the local expert on the subject.

Operation Paydirt invites the people of Grand Rapids to participate as artistic collaborators in expressing and actualizing a future free of childhood lead poisoning. Through a single act of creative expression, we can invest in the solution to lead poisoning.

Come create your own “fundred” and vote for us (Vote Code: 56217) on the first floor of the Kendall College of Art and Design Fed Gallery, 17 Pearl St NW (the former Federal Building).
Healthy Homes Continues to Make an Impact in the 49507 Neighborhood

Thanks to the generous support from Wells Fargo and the Fair Housing Center of West Michigan, the Healthy Homes Coalition has been working hard to reach families in a specific area of the 49507 zip code to provide intensive health interventions for families that have children with asthma or live in homes with lead hazards.

Of the 30 households partnering with the Healthy Homes Coalition:

- 15 households have either completed the program or are currently enrolled to receive intensive asthma interventions including supplies such as HEPA vacuums, carpet removal, window air conditioning units, storage containers, green cleaning kits and more.
- 21 households have either completed the program or are currently enrolled to address lead poisoning hazards. These families will receive support in taking dust wipe samples to check for lead dust and will receive interventions such as lead safe cleaning, track mats, and a HEPA vacuum to reduce lead dust levels in the home.
- 3 households have been referred to the Get the Lead Out! program.
- 4 households have been referred to either the City’s Housing Rehab program or Home Repair Service’s weatherization program.

The Healthy Homes Coalition is grateful to the neighborhood volunteers who have helped canvas the neighborhood and who continue to enroll families in the program. Healthy Homes is excited about partnering with even more families as the project continues into the fall.

Meet Kelsey

We are excited to welcome our new Community Healthy Educator, Kelsey Dracht. Kelsey moved to Grand Rapids in 2010, where she attended Calvin College and received her Bachelor’s of Social Work. Before graduation, she spent her spring semester in Washington, D.C. interning at Thrive DC, a social services agency that provides support to individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Kelsey quickly discovered her passion for supporting individuals in housing and health systems and is excited to expand her knowledge of both as a part of the Healthy Homes Coalition. Kelsey enjoys traveling and being with people constantly. She also considers herself a master of putting together puzzles.

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Did You Know... There is a direct link between housing conditions and children’s health.
Mark Your Calendars for the Building Healthy Futures Luncheon!

Please join us for our 2014 Building Healthy Futures Luncheon. It’s the one day of the year when we reach out and ask for your support to help us continue doing what we do best—making kid’s homes healthier!

Lunch is our treat.
The rest is up to you!

Wednesday, October 1, 2014
Noon to 1:00pm
Prince Conference Center, Calvin College

RSVP by September 22
info@healthyhomescoalition.org
(616) 241-3300