Pathway to Success:  
Mom Fights Asthma

Gabriel is 14 years old and enjoys playing in his school’s marching band. He is also one of the 7 million children in the U.S. who have asthma. His symptoms of wheezing, coughing, and shortness of breath result in multiple emergency room visits and countless missed school days each year.

Healthy Homes is partnering with Betzie, Gabriel’s mom, to find and eliminate asthma triggers the homes so Gabriel can stop visiting the emergency room, continue learning in school, and enjoy doing the things he loves. At Healthy Homes’ first visit to the home, a conversation with Betzie gave us knowledge about the family’s habits, concerns, and her son’s triggers, and a visual assessment revealed potential asthma triggers.

Betzie was doing many things right; she vacuumed to reduce dust, used air conditioning to keep pollen out, and she did not smoke. Gabriel used his medicine and visited his doctor regularly. However, triggers discovered at the visual assessment included dust, air fresheners, mice, and moisture.

Jenn and Kelsey from Healthy Homes worked with Betzie to eliminate those harmful conditions. Betzie removed track mats on the carpets that were holding dust, stopped using air fresheners and cleaning products with strong chemicals, filled holes where mice were entering the house, and limited Gabriel’s time spent in rooms with high moisture, such as the basement.

After taking on the triggers home, Betzie said, “I didn’t know that these things were causing a lot of his asthma symptoms. School for my son is way better than it was before.”

Asthma is the most common chronic health problem in children in the nation, and most symptoms are caused by controllable factors. Asthma is a leading cause of both emergency room visits and missing school days.

Gabriel is not the only child challenged by asthma, but with Betzie’s new-found knowledge and a few simple tools, his mom is providing him with the support he needs to beat the odds.

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Thank you!

Nearly 200 people came out to the annual Building Healthy Futures Luncheon on October 1 to support the Healthy Homes Coalition.

See more event details inside this newsletter.
On October 1, the Healthy Homes Coalition raised more than $32,000 in cash and pledges in support of its work to make children’s homes safer and healthier.

That support provides the Healthy Homes Coalition important unrestricted support. Not only does unrestricted support allow the Healthy Homes Coalition to pay for expenses that are not covered by grants and contracts, but these gifts demonstrate to funders the community’s commitment to making children’s housing safe and healthy.

The Healthy Homes Coalition would like to thank the nearly 200 people who joined us at the Calvin College Prince Conference Center. A special thanks goes out to Dr. Wendy Falb, chair of the Grand Rapids Public Schools Board of Education, who made the connection between healthier housing and kids’ success in school.

If you would like to join in supporting the work of Healthy Homes, consider a special year-end gift to the Healthy Homes Coalition by filing out the form in this newsletter.

Impact in the 49507 Zip Code

Thanks to the generosity of the Fair Housing Center of Western Michigan, the Healthy Homes Coalition has made the following impact in the area of the 49507 zip code bounded by Hall, Eastern, Division, and Burton.

- Families enrolled in the Healthy Homes for Healthy Kids program: 61
- Families receiving intensive asthma intervention services: 33
- Factoid: of the 61 families enrolled in the program, 35 had a child with asthma in the home. That’s 57%!

* December 1, 2013 - November 30, 2014
Leading Training for West Michigan Professionals

The Healthy Homes Coalition is training hundreds of more west Michigan professionals to ensure healthier housing for kids.

Since August, Healthy Homes has provided support to the Kent County Health Department with providing five trainings on strategies to eliminate lead poisoning. The trainings have educated more than 125 early childhood and public health providers in Kent, Muskegon, Ottawa and Newaygo Counties. Generous support from the Michigan Department of Community Health has made this training possible.

The Healthy Homes Coalition is a lead partner for the National Center for Healthy Housing’s Michigan Training Center. In that role, Healthy Homes has offered three trainings this fall. Healthy Homes partnered with Children’s Mercy Hospital of Kansas City, MO to host the two-day Healthy Homes Assessment: Principles and Practice course this past September. Also in September, Healthy Homes partnered with EcoWorks to offer a Healthy Homes for Community health Workers training in Detroit. In November, thanks to the generous support of the US-EPA, Healthy Homes hosted the Essentials for Healthy Homes Practitioners class. In all 31 professionals we trained.

More training will happen in the coming months. Already scheduled this spring are more trainings on childhood lead poisoning prevention (Ludington, Gaylord and Traverse City) A Community Health Worker training in Saginaw in partnership with Saginaw Pathways to Better Health, and training for code at the Michigan Association of Code Enforcement Officials (MACEO). If your group would like to schedule training as part of your professional development, contact the Healthy Homes Coalition at (616) 241-3300.

Meet Katie!

Healthy Homes welcomes Katie Carroll to the team as our Fire Safety Intern. Katie is studying Social Work at Calvin College and will be graduating in the Spring.

Katie can help make your home safe for winter by installing FREE carbon monoxide detectors and smoke alarms. Be sure to tell your friends and family!

To have Katie come install free smoke alarms and a carbon monoxide detector, call (616) 241-3300 or email us.

Other ways you can prepare your home for the winter season:

Change furnace filters - Changing your furnace filters regularly helps you improve your home’s air quality, save money, and improve the functioning of your furnace.

Furnace check up - A seasonal tune-up on your furnace can help prevent unexpected breakdowns further into the winter. Call a local heating/cooling company to set up an appointment.

U of M Report: Childhood lead exposure costs Michigan residents $330 million annually
What Matters Most When It Comes to Housing and Kids?

Homelessness? Transiency? Affordability?

I often wonder where housing quality falls in the mix of priorities for addressing kids’ needs when it comes to housing. A recent issue brief published by the MacArthur Foundation helped answer this question for me.

The brief, entitled *Poor Quality Housing Is Tied to Children’s Emotional and Behavioral Problems*, states that, “poor housing quality is the most consistent and strongest predictor of emotional and behavioral problems in low-income children and youth among the five housing characteristics studied (quality, stability, affordability, ownership, and receiving a housing subsidy).”

Did you catch that? “Housing quality is the most consistent and strongest predictor.”

According to the brief, housing conditions are critical for children not just because of things like lead poisoning and asthma triggers, but because “much of the association…operates through parental stress and parenting behaviors.” Toxic stress for the parents that poisons the children.

Whether the poisoning is coming from lead or toxic stress, this is why the Healthy Homes Coalition exists: to improve children’s health and wellbeing by eliminating harmful housing conditions. Won’t you join us?

Did You Know... There is a direct link between housing conditions and children’s health.

Thanks for Your Support! Thanks to all who donated at our 2014 Building Healthy Futures Luncheon. We appreciate your contributions!

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Thanks for Your Support!

Thanks to all who donated at our 2014 Building Healthy Futures Luncheon. We appreciate your contributions!

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Keep Your Home Safe This Holiday Season

- Inspect holiday lights for frayed wires, bare spots, broken or cracked sockets and kinks.
- Don’t overload electrical sockets.
- Don’t leave lights unattended.
- Use battery operated candles.
- Don’t leave cooking food unattended.
- Have a “kid-free” zone at least 3-feet around stove and hot food areas.
- Keep a lid nearby to smother small grease fires.
- Keep bedding, clothes, curtains and flammable items at least 3-feet away from space heaters.