A Grandmother’s Story

“Before Healthy Homes came, we didn’t know what triggers caused his symptoms...”

Gloria lives with her family on the southeast side of Grand Rapids. Her two year-old grandson EliJah and ten year-old granddaughter Rakeya both have asthma. Healthy Homes knocked on Gloria’s door last fall while canvassing her neighborhood as part of the Fair Housing Center’s 49507 project.

Concerned for her two grandchildren, Gloria welcomed the chance to help them in any way she could. During our first visit with the family EliJah scored below a 19 on his Asthma Control Test (ACT). This is considered poorly controlled.

Healthy Housing Specialist Kelsey Dracht shared strategies with Gloria to help reduce asthma triggers. Gloria’s husband even took out the carpet on the stairs to reduce dust mites in their home. EliJah now has been scoring above 19 on his last few ACTs.

Healthy Homes was able to provide Gloria resources to help reduce asthma triggers in the home including a HEPA vacuum, green cleaning products, a hygrometer, pillow covers and mattress covers. By partnering with Home Repair Services, Gloria was able to have her home weatherized, which further reduced asthma triggers by improving the indoor air quality.

Gloria has also been approved and is waiting on construction for the Get the Lead Out! program so that lead can also be taken off the list of concerns for her grandchildren’s health. Gloria notes, “EliJah has come a long way, he’s doing really good! Before Healthy Homes came, we didn’t know what triggers caused his symptoms, like with cleaning products and the dust mites in the carpet. It has been helpful to understand there’s more that I can do than just give him his inhaler.”

Thank you!

Thank you to all of the people that helped make the office move possible.

See more details inside this newsletter.
Pay for Success

Every time a child goes to the hospital for an asthma attack, not only does the child suffer, but someone has to pay. Grand Rapids is one of five communities nationally working on a solution to this problem.

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative, a grantee of the Social Innovation Fund’s Pay for Success program, and its collaboration partner Calvert Foundation, selected Grand Rapids for technical assistance in developing Pay for Success models that will fund home-based asthma interventions, including remediation of asthma triggers and resident education.

Healthy Homes, along with Health Net and the Asthma Network of West Michigan were selected as service providers for the local project, and will partner with Spectrum Health and Priority Health.

“This is a tremendous opportunity to make sure substandard housing does not result in children going to the hospital in West Michigan,” said Healthy Homes Executive Director Paul Haan. “This project will make kids’ houses healthier, and the financing strategy will make this work truly sustainable.”

Healthy Homes for Educational Success

The Healthy Homes Coalition is at it again—convening dozens of partners to change the way we do business in Grand Rapids. This time, Healthy Homes has set its sights on stronger collaboration with the community’s many preschool readiness programs.

One thing all preschool programs have in common is a requirement for home visits. These visits provide an excellent opportunity to identify children who are living in substandard housing. And preschool teachers know that poor housing leads to lead poisoning, asthma attacks, injuries, and other problems that keep kids from attending and succeeding in school.

Healthy Homes for Educational Success is the name of a new initiative that is building a coordinated response to assist teachers and parents with supporting our community’s children as they get ready for school by getting housing and environmental interventions to the children who most need them. Generous support from the Dyer-Ives Foundation is program design this summer so that we increased support can be offered to children in the 2016-2017 school year.
Healthy Homes Has Moved!

We are excited to be writing this newsletter from our new offices on the second floor of the SECOM building at 1545 Buchanan SW.

The new office is exciting for so many reasons including collaboration with partners in the SECOM building, allowing room for staff growth, providing training space, improving productivity, and saving money on rent, mileage, and overhead.

And the SECOM building is right in the heart of the neighborhood we serve, bringing us closer to families.

We are grateful for those listed below who have helped make this move possible.

Amyway
Peter Armstrong
Pamela and
Craig Benjamin
Nina and Jerry
Bowser
Gail Brink
Katherine and
Robert Brower
Nancy Butts
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Kentwood
Office Furniture
Joseph Kuilema and
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Ginny Kuilema
Commissioner Elias
Lumpkins
Rev. Douglas and
Cathy MacLeod
Commissioner
Harold Mast
Barb and Bill Meconis
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Electric Company
Bill Ryder

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Telecom Solutions
LLC
Jeanne Thomas
VanderWeide
Family Foundation
William VanVugt and
Lynn Heemstra
Lori Lemieux-Woodcock and Patrick
Woodcock
Betty Zylstra and
Rev. David Baak
Uko and Jane
Zykstra

Come see the new office at our Open House!
Tuesday, June 30th
4:30pm-6:00pm
Drinks & light refreshments provided

Lead Safety for Spring

Here are some tips to be sure that you’re working lead safe when taking on home repairs this spring.

Assume - Paint in homes built before 1978 contains lead.

Avoid - Creating lead dust and spreading dust. Mist surfaces with water before sanding or scraping and cover work area with durable protective sheeting.

Protect - Occupants, particularly children. Keep them away from the work area and clean up the site before they return. Wear proper respiratory protection for lead dust.

Clean up - After all work. Take dust wipe samples to make sure the area is safe for children to return.

Maintain - A dry building with painted and clean surfaces.

Check - Federal, State and Local Regulations.

For more information on working lead safe find the “Lead Paint Safety” Guide under Resources at healthyhomescoalition.org/lead

According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, 11.1% of Michigan children have asthma
Change Your Behavior

If we are dead serious about protecting kids from lead poisoning, asthma, accidental injury and more, we need to change our behaviors. While we need to talk to parents about parents needing to mop their floors better, stop smoking inside, or changing the batteries in their smoke alarms - those actions alone will fall short if we don’t look at how we work together as a community.

There are collective things we must do. When the State approves another round of investment to abate lead hazards in children’s homes ($1.75 million this year!), we are seeing the kind of behavior change that needs to happen.

When twenty early childhood providers and housing advocates met at Healthy Homes on May 29 to strategize about getting resources to preschoolers, we saw behavior change. When local partners get together to design a Pay for Success model, we are seeing behavior change.

As we support parents with behavior changes that help their children, let’s also be sure we take responsibility for the creative and collective behavior changes we all need to make as a community.
Thank you to everyone who donated in recent months!

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Darlene Zwart
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Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss
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Anna Kruse and Thomas Zook
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Commissioner Elias Lumpkins
David Luna
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Rev. Douglas and
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Jennifer and Stephen
MccMahon
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Glenn and Ruth Swier
James VandenBosch
Phyllis VanVugt-Bratt
Sandy Walls
Williams Distributing
Michael and Mary Alice Williams
Sarah Zachow
Uko and Jane Zylstra

Save the Date!
For this year’s Building Healthy Futures Luncheon
Wednesday, October 7th from noon-1pm
Prince Conference Center at Calvin College

Did You Know...the 49507 zip code has some of the highest rates of lead poisoning in Michigan
Cleaning for a Healthy Home

You can reduce chemical exposure while cleaning with a few easy steps!

- Mix a few drops of essential oil with a cup of baking soda. Sprinkle onto your mattress, couches and carpets. Let sit for one hour and vacuum. The baking soda absorbs dirt and odor!

- Combine Borax, vinegar, hot water and essential oil in a spray bottle for an all purpose cleaner.

- Clean floors with a solution of vinegar and warm water.

- To clean your microwave pour vinegar and water into a bowl. Heat it in the microwave for a few minutes. The steam will loosen grime for an easy clean up.

Find more resources for Green Cleaning at healthyhomescoalition.org/indoor-air-quality