

## A Safe Place to Sleep

***“I am happy that she can now stay in her bed all night...”***

Imagine the place where you are most comforted. Now imagine that the same place is making you sick.

Little five-year-old Genesis and her family live in Kentwood. Like many young children, Genesis loves her stuffed toys. She feels comforted beside them at night, cuddles with them when she feels sick, and plays with them after school.

Unfortunately, one of Genesis’ allergies includes dust mites, which commonly live in stuffed toys, blankets, pillows, mattresses, and carpet. When Healthy Homes first visited Genesis and her family, she was consistently waking up at night with asthma symptoms like coughing and wheezing.

The Healthy Homes Coalition promotes safe sleep environments for children who have asthma. Genesis’ mom, Sonia, was doing her best to manage her daughter’s asthma by vacuuming and cleaning the bedding regularly, yet it wasn’t enough. Staff from Healthy Homes worked with her to identify other measures to prevent asthma attacks.

Sonia said, “We told Genesis that the extra blankets and stuffed toys weren’t good for her asthma and that they needed to stay on the floor at night.” Now little Genesis is doing really well with the tough task of keeping her stuffed toys and extra blankets off her bed, and Sonia is making sure to wash the bedding and stuffed toys weekly to kill dust mites.

Sonia has already noticed a difference, saying, “She doesn’t wake up at night anymore. She sleeps more, I sleep more, and she doesn’t wake up her brother and sister with her coughing. I am happy that she can now stay in her bed all night.”



### **Partners Help Healthy Homes Fight Asthma!**

The Healthy Homes Coalition is partnering with Spectrum Health, United Way, and others to fight asthma in the Grand Rapids area.

See more details inside.



## Our Current Programs

### Healthy Homes Assessments

Trained staff assess the home for a wide variety of children's environmental health concerns, including lead, asthma triggers, radon, Carbon monoxide, unintentional injury, and more. Assessments are followed-up by the development of an action plan, education, and connection to resources.

### Smoke and CO Alarms

Free smoke and Carbon monoxide alarms installed in the home for families with children living in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and Wyoming.

### Radon Testing

Free radon testing kits will be available during the month of January. Do-it-yourself kits available for \$5 at other times (free for families participating in Healthy Homes Assessments).

### Pest Management

Help eradicating cockroaches, mice, and rats using child and environmentally friendly tactics.

### Classes and Education

Healthy Homes offers a wide variety of classes for parents and professionals.

### Eligibility

Most of Healthy Homes' programs are restricted to low-moderate income families with young children living in Grand Rapids, Kentwood, and Wyoming. Call (616) 241-3300 for details.

## Spectrum and United Way to Help Kids Fight Asthma

Funding committed by Spectrum Health and the United Way will allow the Healthy Homes Coalition to partner with 25 families to eliminate asthma triggers in their homes over the next 12 months. The project goal is to prevent future emergency room visits and hospitalizations. The effort targets children with one or more hospitalizations, or two or more emergency room visits, where the primary diagnosis is asthma in the past year.

“By eliminating asthma triggers in the home, we can keep children from going to the hospital. Not only is this better for the child, but it will save money,” said Paul Haan, Healthy Homes' Executive Director. “By demonstrating cost savings, this project will promote interventions that serve more children, save payers and providers money, and advance our mission of safe housing for children.”

Spectrum Health Healthier Communities is making a 12-month investment of \$57,281 to serve 25 children in Kent County. Spectrum support will cover home assessments and consumable intervention supplies. Those dollars are being matched by an additional \$35,000 contribution from the United Way to target home repairs to eliminate asthma triggers.

Health Net of West Michigan, a health care “hub” that connects community members to health care and social services, will identify families to be served. The Asthma Network will be assisting with intensive asthma education so that families can better understand how to manage the disease. The Healthy Homes Coalition will conduct environmental investigations and make the needed repairs to eliminate triggers in the home.

Repairs to be made include safe sleep environments (allergen-free bedding, carpet removal, air conditioning), reducing moisture in the home, eliminating pests, improving air quality, providing cleaning supplies like HEPA vacuums, and more.

# Advocating for Healthier Housing

The work of the Healthy Homes Coalition does not stop at going into children's homes to get things fixed. The Healthy Homes Coalition also reaches out to community leaders to help them understand how they can help. Here are some of the ways the Healthy Homes Coalition is currently advocating.

**Federal Funding.** The Healthy Homes Coalition has joined the National Safe and Healthy Housing Coalition with encouraging Congress and the Senate to lift spending caps to restore funding in various areas, including HUD's Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, HUD's HOME program, and the CDC Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program.

**State Funding and Policy.** Healthy Homes continues to work with the Michigan Alliance for Lead-Safe Housing to protect Michigan's \$1.75 Million investment in making homes lead-safe. Healthy Homes has also been opposing efforts to weaken Michigan's requirement for larger cities to conduct routine rental property inspections and is promoting efforts to increase lead testing for children.

**Locally.** The Healthy Homes Coalition will be weighing in on the City of Grand Rapids' Great Housing Strategies plan to ensure that the City and its partners include safe, affordable housing for families as a strategy for building a great city. While important, focusing on the needs of young adults and increasing density is not enough to sustain a thriving city. Our housing must also support families and healthy child development and incentives should be established to that end.



Healthy Homes staff (and children) meet with Mayor Elect Rosalynn Bliss.

## Fire Safety in West MI

Thanks to renewed support from FEMA, the Healthy Homes Coalition will serve another 400 child-occupied households in the Grand Rapids area with fire safety education and smoke and Carbon monoxide (CO) alarm installations.

Last year, FEMA support enabled Healthy Homes to impact the lives of 429 families by installing 1,446 smoke alarms and 425 CO alarms. A special thank you to Katie Carroll for working with these families to make their homes safe and healthy places to live.

The Healthy Homes Coalition is looking for a partner to help prevent fires and save lives through this program. FEMA now requires a 5% local match to keep funding in west Michigan. For a \$3,000 contribution, the Healthy Homes Coalition would be happy to promote your organization as a co-sponsor and explore ways to collaborate in serving families—such as your business's customers, members, or employees. If you or anyone you know may be interested, please contact Healthy Homes at (616) 241-3300.

# Thank you to everyone who donated at the *Building Healthy Futures* luncheon!

On October 7, the Healthy Homes Coalition held our annual *Building Healthy Futures* luncheon at the Prince Conference Center at Calvin College. Our thanks goes out to the 150 people who joined us and those listed on our page who donated more than \$20,000 in support to Healthy Homes.

Ciarra Adkins  
Bonita and Demetrius Agee  
Hilary Alcalá  
Carl Apple  
Gary Babcock  
Sharon and Steve Barton  
Lorraine Bennett  
Micki Benz  
Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss  
Dan Borst and  
    Amy Roeda-Borst  
Nina and Jerry Bowser  
Amy Brower and Eric Doyle  
Katherine and Robert Brower  
Becky Buick  
Bill and Nancy Butts  
Calvin College  
Julio Cano-San Martin  
C.G. Clarke and Lew Klatt  
Michael Colvin  
Comerica Foundation  
Randy Currey  
Jane DeGroot  
Megan DeMaagd Rodriguez  
David and Michele deVelder  
Pam Doty-Nation  
Kelsey Drivinski  
Joan Dyer-Zyskowski and  
    Alex Zyskowski  
Matt and Beth Dykstra  
Kenneth Fawcett  
Lauren Figueroa  
Emily Green Schmeller  
Shannon Harris  
Brian Hartl  
Gail and Ken Heffner  
Carol Hendershot  
Dawn Hendriksen  
Mary Hockwalt  
Katy Hoffman

Dave and Lois Jacobs  
Mary Johnson  
Shirley Johnson  
Mary and John Judnich  
Molly and Paul Klimas  
Cassie Kobler  
Tracy Kryzanowski  
Virginia Kuilema  
Jason Kuiper  
Tara Kuperus  
Therese Labenz  
David LaGrand  
Lisa LaPlante  
Lori Lemieux-Woodcock and  
    Patrick Woodcock  
Jackie Lewakowski  
Nygil Likely  
Emily Loeks  
Middalia Lozada  
Mark and Andrea Lubberts  
Beverly Mapes  
Bruce Mason and Ann Willey  
Elizabeth McCarthy  
Laura McDowell  
BriAnne McKee-Havens  
Mary McLoughlin  
Janice and Tom McWhertor  
Barb Meconis  
Jeremy Moore  
Steve Mulder  
Erin Murphy  
Lee Nelson Weber  
Maureen Noe  
Old National  
Cara Oosterhouse  
Sharlene Organ  
Barbara Patten  
Karyn Pelon  
Kelsey Perdue  
Maria Andrea Peterson

Gail Philbin  
Kevin Polakovich  
Wesley and Carol Priem  
Martin Quinnan  
Nancy and Glenn Remelts  
Lisa Ricketts  
Kim Ridings  
Susan Rios  
James Robinson  
Mary Robinson  
Joanna Rodriguez  
Steve Ruis  
Stephanie Sackett  
Terri Sanchez  
Sebastian Foundation  
Shelly Sinas  
Maureen Slade  
Dianne Slager  
John Smith  
Ryan Smith  
Stefanie Snyder  
Jennifer Spiller  
Rachel Sportel  
Ruth Stegeman  
Ruth Stein  
Julie Stinton  
Noele Stith  
Ryan Struck Vander Haak  
Eugene Sueing  
Steve Ten Elshof  
Arend Vander Pols  
Adelyn VanTol  
Kelsy Vining  
Rev. Karsten Voskuil and  
    Gretchen Rumohr-Voskuil  
Elizabeth Welch  
Joel Westra  
Christine Wheeler  
Stephen Woodeu  
Betty Zylstra and Rev. David Baak



**Yes!** I'd like to help children grow up strong, smart, and healthy by protecting them from environmental hazards in their homes by becoming a supporter of the Healthy Homes Coalition!

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Sponsorship Amount

\$25    \$50    \$100    \$200   Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Join our Giving Circle** by pledging a special gift over the next five years.

Healthy Futures Conservator \$1,000 per year for five years.

Healthy Futures Builder \$500 per year for five years.

Healthy Futures Friend \$250 per year for five years.

Checks should be made payable to:

Healthy Homes Coalition

1545 Buchanan Ave SW Ste 2

Grand Rapids MI 49507

Or donate online at [www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org](http://www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org)



## You Can Make Kids' Homes Safer

When it comes to promoting safe housing for children, there's more than enough work to go around. And much of that work involves more than hammers and nails. People with a wide variety of skills can help keep children safe. Here are a few ways we could use your help—or the help of someone you know.

- Know Spanish? Help us translate our website and other documents.
- Got mad photography skills? We always come up short when it comes to having enough pictures taken.
- Like to throw a party? We need event planners.
- Clerical skills? We need those too – from the skilled to the every day.
- Good with tools or a paintbrush? Of course we need you too. Help install smoke alarms or make our office shine.

The Healthy Homes Coalition welcomes volunteers of all kinds. However, we get especially excited about “experienced” adults who are looking for meaning things to do later in life. Older adults bring unique skills to the table. If you know someone with a specific skill they can share, let us know!

[www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org/volunteer](http://www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org/volunteer)

*Indoor environmental factors can trigger asthma attacks:  
dust mites, molds, cockroaches, pet dander, & secondhand smoke*



# Healthy Homes

Coalition of West Michigan

[www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org](http://www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org)

1545 Buchanan Ave SW, Suite 2

Grand Rapids MI 49507-1650

(616) 241-3300

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Grand Rapids, MI  
Permit No. 1



Sustainably printed, with our kids' future in mind!

## *Seasonal Tips for a Healthy Home*

As the weather gets colder, keep your house a healthy place with these tips!

- Colder weather means less indoor air flow. Check your home's ventilation system and humidity level.
- Know common indoor allergens: pet dander, humidity, mice, and fragrances.
- Get your furnace inspected and make sure your Carbon monoxide alarm has working batteries.
- Check your home for radon. Do-it-yourself kits are free in January!

Find more resources about indoor air quality at  
[www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org/indoor-air-quality](http://www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org/indoor-air-quality)



[www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org](http://www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org)

(616) 241-3300