



Mom Works with Healthy Homes to Clear the Air

Jessica Devitt and her two young children were thoroughly excited to move into their new apartment—a new beginning and a new adventure. However, only a month after moving into their new home, Jessica and her children became very sick whenever they were inside the home. Jessica says her daughter's symptoms were the worst, claiming that every night "she was coughing so hard to the point where she would vomit."

Soon after moving in, Jessica and the children took a long, weekend trip out of town. While away, everyone's symptoms

subsided. It was then that Jessica suspected something was wrong inside the home. She hoped maybe it was just a nasty virus and that they would all recover in due time. However, the first night they returned home, everyone became sick again. Jessica's eyes became itchy and runny and the children's respiratory problems returned. Jessica feared that a leaking pipe and possibly mold behind a bedroom wall could be contributing to their health conditions. She resorted to having the children sleep in the living room to try and separate them from any potential causes for illness. A week after sleeping in the living room, Jessica decided it would be better to leave the home and stay with family. This quickly grew into an uncomfortable living situation for everyone involved, a situation that prompted Jessica to contact Healthy Homes.



Thank You PNC!

The Healthy Homes Coalition wishes to thank the **PNC Foundation** for their generous support of this year's CLEARCorps team as they work to protect children from environmental harm in the home. Learn more about those serving on this year's time on page 2.

At the time, Healthy Homes did not have a specific program designed to help families with mold or moisture problems. When Jessica called, Healthy Homes decided it was time to respond to the community's need, rather than turn away a family when they have nowhere to go.

"Jessica was incredibly worried about her children's health and was seeking any help that someone could offer. As a mother of a young child, I understood her concerns and couldn't turn a frantic mom away," said Healthy Homes Project Manager Courtney Myers-Keaton. After speaking with Jessica, Courtney immediately visited the apartment to look for potential environmental hazards that could be causing the sickness. They inspected the home together and discussed Jessica's concerns regarding mold. They did not find the bedroom's leaky pipe to be a likely source. Healthy Homes and Jessica were both at a loss. If it's not a virus or mold in the bedroom, then what could it possibly be?

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Fall 2010 Events

Healthy Homes Nights

December 20, 6:30-8:00pm

January 18, 6:30-8:00pm

February 21, 6:30-8:00pm

March 22, 6:30-8:00pm

Healthy Homes Coaliton
742 Franklin St SE

Healthy Homes Nights focus on lead poisoning prevention. Come learn simple, low-cost ways to keep your home lead-safe. Free food and prizes! Questions? Call Kelly at (616) 241-3300.

Building Healthy Homes Tours

November 29, Noon

December 14, Noon

January 27, Noon

Febraury 18, Noon

Healthy Homes Coaliton
742 Franklin St SE

Come learn more about what the Healthy Homes Coalition does and how you can get involved. Light lunch provided. Questions? Call Paul at (616) 241-3300.

Healthy Homes for Child Care Providers

January 29, 3:00pm

Crowne Plaza Hotel
5700 28th Street SE

Training seminar at the Kent Regional 4-C 37th Early Childhood Conference. Call (616) 451-8281 to register for the conference.

More Events on page 5

Clearing the Air *(continued from page 1)*

Then it dawned on Courtney, “What about the basement?” Jessica confirmed that she never used it and did not go down there because, “it’s a typical Michigan basement – dark and musty.” When Courtney went into the basement, she could smell the mold immediately. She then shined a flashlight up above and found mold growing on the ceiling. Once the problems were finally found and verified, Jessica contacted her landlord and informed her of how the home’s mold and moisture problems were contributing to the children’s health issues.

Following the call, Jessica’s landlord took responsibility for fixing the moisture problems and removed the mold. Within two weeks of Healthy Homes arriving at the scene, Jessica and her children were able to move back to a clean and mold-free house. Without the guidance of Healthy Homes, Jessica and her children would still be struggling with mold-induced illness from simply being at home.

No parents want to watch their child go through an illness, especially one that can easily be prevented. Healthy Homes is committed to creating a healthy environment where kids can be kids – happy and healthy in a home free of environmental hazards. For more information about how to combat mold in your home, call Healthy Homes at **(616) 241-3300**.



CLEARCorps Crew 2011

Welcome to the new Healthy Homes CLEARCorps crew for 2011! Laura, Danielle, Benjamin and Melinda started with Healthy Homes on November 1 and have been hard at work ever since. Melinda was born and raised in Grand Rapids, the rest are from further afield. Danielle hails from Berkeley (Michigan), Laura is from Indianapolis, and Benjamin comes all the way from Denver.

Good Deeds Do Get Noticed

Many days we are so busy at Healthy Homes that we rarely think about the impact of our work beyond the individual families with whom we partner. That all changed earlier this month when we were contacted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) seeking stories about our work.



Outreach Worker Kelly Malinowski jotted off a quick e-mail about one of the families we had worked with this summer. The HUD Communications Department picked up on the story and prepared it for HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan to share as a model at a recent town hall meeting in Chicago. Here's the story Kelly shared.

The Healthy Homes Coalition began working with Christina, a homeowner on Mason Street NE, back in November 2009. Along with running a day-care out of her home, Christina is raising her own three children, of which the youngest is nine months old.

Her main goal was to make sure that her home was safe for not only her own children, but also for the children attending her day care. Christina set out on a mission to provide a healthy environment within which the children could learn and grow.



Christina participated in Healthy Homes' CLEARCorps program—attending a lead safe cleaning practices class, learning how to take lead dust-wipe samples, getting her hard-wired smoke alarms checked, and receiving a new carbon monoxide alarm. She also participated in the City of Grand Rapids' *Get the Lead Out!* program, receiving all new windows and new siding on her garage to match her house.

As a group of children jumped on the trampoline in the backyard and played games in the summer sun, Christina explained how thankful she is for the *Get the Lead Out!* program. She is happy to have the peace of mind that she will not have to worry about keeping her 9 month old away from the windows when he starts walking, and that the garage next to the backyard play area is now safe and lead-free.

An advertisement for the "Get the Lead Out!" program. The top left corner features the URL "www.GetTheLeadOutGR.org". The main headline reads "Picture Your Home With All New Windows!". Below this, it says "Loans and grants available. Low payments. You can afford this. Start by calling 616-456-3030 today!". At the bottom left are logos for "City of Grand Rapids", "Healthy Homes", and "Get the Lead Out!". On the right side, there is a black and white photograph of a young girl looking out a window. Below the photo, text reads "A City of Grand Rapids home repair program to make your home lead-safe." The entire advertisement is framed with a green border.

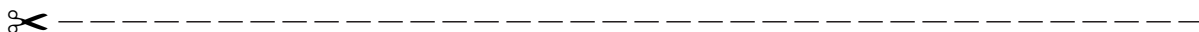
Healthy Homes Celebrates Another Year of Success!

On October 1st, more than 120 people came out to the Prince Center at Calvin College to help Healthy Homes celebrate another year of success at its second *Building Healthy Futures* event. The event started with a welcome and introduction to the organization by Gail Heffner, Vice President of the Board. After attendees had an opportunity to enjoy a chef-prepared lunch, Executive Director Paul Haan gave an update on the work of the organization. Paul focused upon the critical role Healthy Homes plays in protecting children amidst housing market struggles and in a time when one out of every four children in Michigan are growing up in poverty.

The most inspiring moment of the event came when Antonia Galaviz, the mother of four young children, shared her story about the partnership her family has formed with Healthy Homes. Antonia spoke of learning about lead hazards and how to keep her family safe. She spoke about how she and her husband Santiago worked diligently over the weeks and months to create a better environment for her children. And she was proud to show off the new look of her home as it was transformed through the *Get the Lead Out!* home repair program. Her testimonial was truly uplifting and helped attendees understand how important it is for the community to support an organization like Healthy Homes as they partner with parents—for the long haul—to make sure children reach their fullest potential.

The luncheon was made possible with generous underwriting from **Fifth Third Bank, Emergency Care Specialist Group**, and an anonymous donation. With the support of these organizations and with **Calvin College** underwriting facility costs, donors who pledged at the event could be guaranteed that their contributions would not pay for lunch, but would indeed help Healthy Homes serve more families like the Galaviz family.

If you missed the event but would like to see the video we showed that day, please visit www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org/support.



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



Checks should be made payable to:
Healthy Homes Coalition
742 Franklin SE
Grand Rapids MI 49507
or made online at
www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org

Names(s): _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Sponsorship Amount

- \$25.00 Basic Member
- \$50.00 Regular Member
- \$100.00 Supporting Member
- \$200.00 Sustaining Member

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.

Neighborhood Pest Patrol

On November 3, the Healthy Homes Coalition launched a new campaign with a half dozen community volunteers who will help neighbors seek out and eliminate pests in housing. With a full day of education, these six are trained to help eradicate pests, with a focus upon the three most prevalent pests in Grand Rapids--cockroaches, mice and rats.

The target of this project is to rid sixty Grand Rapids homes of all unwanted visitors. Those served will be families with young children, focusing on those with allergies. Volunteers will be responsible for helping each family with an assessment of both the inside and the outside of the home. Afterwards, the volunteers will coach the family on simple steps they can take to eliminate food, water and harborage sites for pests. They will also set traps, place bait for cockroaches, and use other strategies that avoid toxic spraying and focus on using the least toxic methods possible.

The volunteers will maintain contact with the families for six months to monitor progress and to make sure that their homes come out pest-free in the end. In exchange, the Healthy Homes Coalition is providing the volunteers with supplies and a small cash stipend for their partnership. This project is made possible with support from the Kent County Health Department and the US-EPA. Interested in becoming a volunteer on the neighborhood pest patrol and helping your friends and neighbors? Contact Courtney at **(616) 241-3300**. As we are approaching the



Radon Awareness

Fall and winter are the best times to test for radon. Radon is all around and radon kills. This naturally occurring, radioactive gas is the second leading cause of lung cancer, killing an estimated 21,000 people per year.

Radon is created from the breakdown of uranium in soil, rocks and water. Radon can seep in through cracks in the foundation and crawl space, building up in the basement of a home. In Kent County, one in seven homes tested were found to contain high levels of radon. Radon is also very "site specific," meaning that concentration levels vary from house to house. As a result, in-home testing is the only way to know if this deadly gas is present.

It's easy and inexpensive to protect homes and families from radon. The first step is a simple, five-dollar test. This test takes three to seven days and provides parents with the information they need to keep their family safe. Then, if the test reveals levels to be high, the home can be treated to keep the radon out.

Consider this - for five dollars, you can protect your family from the second leading cause of lung cancer. **Visit Healthy Homes at 742 Franklin Street SE to pick-up a radon test kit today**, or get one from the Kent County Health Department at 700 Fuller Avenue, NE.

www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org

More Fall 2010 Events

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Health Professionals Asthma & Lead Training

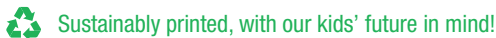
March 4, 8:00am-4:00pm
Prince Conference Center
Calvin College
1800 East Beltline Ave SE

Come learn current best practices from experts in the field. Hands-on learning!

For more information, call
(616) 241-3300

Renoate Right Training

Training in lead safe work practices for reonvators, remodelers, painters and landlords. For dates and locations, see: www.healthyhomescoalition.org/news/108/86.



Got a Mouse in the House?

At Healthy Homes, we are often asked of how to rid homes of mice. With the colder weather setting in, people need to take proactive measures in addressing mice infestations within the home. With these four simple steps, invasive rodents can be avoided before they become a problem.

Step 1. Eliminate food and water sources. Store food, birdseed, pet food, garbage, compost, and recyclables in a durable, tightly sealed container. Wash the dishes before going to bed each night. Make sure the trash heads to the curb weekly, storing it in a garbage can with a tight fitting lid until it goes out. If possible, store trash in a secure location outside of the home. Fix plumbing leaks and remove other sources of water in the home.

Step 2. Get rid of places where mice build nests (and repopulate!). Look for cardboard boxes and other cluttered places where the mice may hide. Reduce clutter and store belongings in containers with tight fitting lids or large plastic bins.

Step 3. Evict the mice. Snap traps are recommended over baits so that the dead mouse can be found and disposed. Mice travel along walls, so set traps along their pathway, not in the middle of the room.

Step 4. Keep them out. Seal all points of entry from ground level up to at least five feet high. Prune branches away from the house, preventing mice from climbing into the home. A simple fix is to plug the hole with copper metal mesh and fill with expanding spray foam.

Still having problems? Call Healthy Homes at **(616) 241-3300** to get more help!

