

## Family Fixes Home to Protect Children From Lead



Grand Rapids homeowner Anju Jefferson was referred to the Healthy Homes Coalition by the Kent County Health Department because the level of lead in her 2 year-old child's blood nearly doubled in just seven months.

Anju decided to take action, knowing the potential lifelong threats her child may face. She invited the Healthy Homes CLEARCorps team into her home to work with her to check for lead hazards and help reduce them.

The CLEARCorps team discovered an immense amount of lead dust in the two areas where Anju's children spend the most time—the front porch and their bedroom. In the bedroom, the lead dust was more than ten times what the US-EPA declares as safe for children.

Partnering with the Jefferson family, the CLEARCorps team educated them on lead hazards and provided them with

the necessary tools to keep the dust levels down. The team referred the Jeffersons to the Grand Rapids Lead Hazard Control program (see inside this newsletter for more information). At the three-month check up, the CLEARCorps team discovered that the family had taken advantage of the referral and received brand new windows. With the installation of new windows, the children will be exposed to less lead because the friction from opening and closing windows will no longer release lead dust into the air.

Anju is acquainted with children's health issues because one of her children has dealt with severe asthma. She is concerned about protecting her children from lead poisoning, which has hazardous effects on almost every organ in the body and causes permanent brain damage.

Anju is thankful for her new windows because she knows that they are a huge step in protecting her children from lead poisoning. Like Anju, there are many other parents of children with lead poisoning in Grand Rapids. If you know any families that would like to take a step towards a healthier future for their children, contact the Healthy Homes Coalition today at **(616) 241-3300**.

**Healthy Homes**  
Coalition of West Michigan

### Spring 2009 Events

#### Lead-Safe Work Practices Classes

April 6 & 13, 6-10pm

Home Repair Services  
1100 South Division  
Grand Rapids

Must attend two sessions in sequence to get certificate.  
\$30 materials fee.

Call (616) 241-2601 to register.

*More Spring Events on page 2*

## More Spring 2009 Events

*continued from Page 1*

### Home and Garden Show

March 5-8

DeVos Place

Come see Healthy Homes and pick up a radon test kit.

### Bill Millett Lecture on Early Childhood

March 11, 7:30am

The Eberhard Center

Come hear Bill Millett as he recognizes the importance of an investment in early childhood. RSVP by March 4 to (616) 632-1011.

### Community IPM Training

March 18, 9am-4:30pm

Learn how to control bugs and other pests in the community. Sponsored by the Greater Grand Rapids Children's Environmental Health Initiative. RSVP to (616) 632-6912.

### Free Radon Testing

Available through April 30.

Healthy Homes Coalition offers FREE Radon Testing for families with children. Call (616) 241-3300 today!

### Get the Lead Out!

### Collaborative Meeting

May 6, 3:30pm

Baxter Community Center  
835 Baxter SE

## Introducing the 2009 CLEARCorps Team

Healthy Homes welcomes a new team of CLEARCorps members to our staff for 2009. CLEARCorps members work side-by-side with families to help them identify hazards, such as lead, radon and carbon monoxide, within their homes. In addition, they form Family-Centered Action Plans with families to address and help mitigate these issues.

We are excited to introduce you to the following members:



L to R: Jenn Petersen, Jason Kuiper, Mitch Robertson & Cicely Wiers-Windemuller

**Jenn Petersen** graduated from GVSU this past December with a degree in photography and Spanish. She spent a summer abroad in Chile and hopes to explore the field of cultural photography and journalism.

**Jason Kuiper** is our resident philosopher and theologian. He is in the process of pursuing a degree in philosophy at GVSU. He and his wife Kate, along with their daughter, Abby, are currently awaiting the birth of their son come early April.

**Mitch Robertson** currently attends Cornerstone for a degree in Ministry Leadership and Business. He is a deacon at Friendship Ministry Baptist and founded M.A.N., Molding A Nation, a mentoring program for at-risk young men in the Grand Rapids LOOP program.

**Cicely Wiers-Windemuller** graduated from Calvin College with a BA in Recreation Science. She is currently pursuing an MSW at Western Michigan and hopes to someday do international social work.

If you have children in the home under 6 and live in a house built before 1978, contact the CLEARCorps team at (616) 241-3300 for an in-home assessment of hazards and help with checking your home for lead.

# Healthy Homes Coalition Needs Your Support

Lead, carbon monoxide and radon poisoning are ongoing threats to children's health in Grand Rapids. The Healthy Homes Coalition is building a strong, solid foundation to eliminate these threats with a comprehensive approach to ensure that children's homes in Grand Rapids are healthy and free from environmental harm. We would not be able to provide services to combat these threats to the families who seek our help without the continued support of our members and community. Support the Healthy Homes Coalition today by returning the form below, or join on our website at [www.healthyhomescoalition.org/support](http://www.healthyhomescoalition.org/support).

## Thanks to our New Members:

- Gary Mikula
- Maria Fajardo
- Drew & Tina Van Dyk
- Gail Heffner
- Mary McLoughlin & Martin Quinnan
- Barbara Smith
- Glen & Margaret Brown
- David & Lois Jacobs
- Catherine Phelps
- Mark Muyskens
- Kyle & Win Irwin
- David & Teri Warners
- Amy Tompkins
- Lynn Heemstra & William VanVugt
- Jeffrey & Julia Bouman
- Connie & Roman Bohatch
- John & Julia LaPorte
- Allison Jahm
- Steve VenHuizen & Ruth Hofman
- Peggy & Peter Vander Meulen
- Joan Dyer-Zykowski & Alex Zykowski
- Steve & Nora Faber
- Michelle Davis-Poeder & Brandon Poeder
- Bethany & Donald Gordon
- Roy & Donna Schmidt
- Carol Townsend
- Paul Haan & Julie Nietling
- Eva Melles & Cory Roy
- Connie Bellows & Darlene Zwart
- Cathy & Terrence Blake
- Brandon Dillon
- Maria & James VandenBosch
- Daniel & Donna Caldon
- Melissa & Henry Kuiper
- Bryan Judge
- Jim Dischinger-Smedes



**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!

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

*Make Checks payable to:*  
Healthy Homes Coalition  
742 Frankin St SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507-1307



## Community Organizing Program Builds Parent Voice

In January, the Healthy Homes Coalition launched a new, unique effort to work with parents. While all of our programming seeks to use a “family-centered approach” as we serve our community, we also know that many parents also want to be active in helping other families. We believe it is important to rid houses of health hazards, but we also understand that long-term solutions involve changing the big picture. With that in mind, we have begun a community organizing program that seeks to add parent voices to our community’s efforts to address children’s environmental health issues.

In partnership with the Greater Grand Rapids Children’s Environmental Health Initiative, Healthy Homes has hired two part-time community organizers to begin identifying parent leaders in the community. Jameela Maun (formerly of our CLEARCorps team) and William Buck network with parents and other community organizations to identify moms, dads and other adults who are interested in joining an activist group. This group will seek to change systems and policies in West Michigan in ways that protect kids.



GREATER GRAND RAPIDS  
CHILDREN'S  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
HEALTH INITIATIVE

In March, these leaders will come together to set an initial citizen’s agenda for addressing children’s environmental health in Grand Rapids. While many non-profits, the government and other institutions work hard to address children’s health issues, we believe there is a unique power inherent in the organized voice of parents.

This leadership team will set its own agenda, develop campaigns to protect kids, and will be supported by the two Healthy Homes community organizers as they work to form a unique parent vision.

This work is supported by a CARE grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency. Additional local partners include the West Michigan Environmental Action Council, Sustainable Research Group, and the Asthma Network of West Michigan.

If you would like to get involved with this effort, contact Jameela or William at (616) 241-3300.



## \$\$\$ for HOME REPAIRS AVAILABLE!

**Repair your home, protect your investment and protect a child from lead poisoning!**

**Homeowners:** To be eligible, you must live in the city of Grand Rapids, have a child five years old or younger, and income qualify.

**Landlords:** To be eligible, your rental property must be in the city of Grand Rapids, be home to a child five years old or younger (or vacant), and the tenant must income qualify.

**To find out how,  
call 456-3030**

**“¡Se habla Español!”**



# Healthy Homes' First Carbon Monoxide Program a Success!

*The Healthy Homes Coalition believes that every home should have at least one working carbon monoxide detector. Nationally, carbon monoxide kills more people than any other poison. Consider these facts:*

- ★ Carbon monoxide is an invisible, odorless and tasteless gas.
- ★ Heating systems are the number one cause of carbon monoxide poisoning.
- ★ Carbon monoxide causes approximately 450 deaths and 15,200 emergency department visits yearly.

In August 2008, the Healthy Homes Coalition joined forces with the Kent County Health Department to place carbon monoxide detectors in children's homes in Grand Rapids. Our local effort was part of a countywide campaign organized by the Health Department using FEMA funding.

In November, Healthy Homes partnered with the SWAN neighborhood association and students from Grand Valley State University to canvass the west side of Grand Rapids. Healthy Homes staff went into one home where there was only one smoke alarm. We installed two more smoke alarms and a CO detector. On the way out, our staff checked the existing smoke alarm and found that it did not work. This family had been living without any working smoke detectors in their home!

By early February, Healthy Homes had installed CO detectors in 122 homes. We also installed smoke detectors where they were needed. With many homes needing more than one smoke detector, a total of 224 smoke detectors were installed.

The downside of all this success is that the FEMA money is nearly spent and all the carbon monoxide detectors are gone. Healthy Homes is looking for more money to continue this wildly successful program. If you can help, contact us at **(616) 241-3300**.



## Now is the Time for Radon Testing!


by Paul Haan, Executive Director

With a few chilly months left before spring truly arrives, now is the time to test your home for radon. Radon builds up in effected homes during the colder months when windows are closed and doors stay shut, so winter is the best time to test the peak radon levels in your home.

If you have young children in your home, Healthy Homes will test your home for free. Otherwise, do-it-yourself radon kits are available at Healthy Homes or the Kent County Health Department for \$5. For a few dollars more, you can order a kit online at [mi.radon.com](http://mi.radon.com).

Despite the low cost of radon test kits, less than 1% of the homes in the City of Grand Rapids have been tested. Radon is the second leading cause of cancer after tobacco smoke, and children are the most susceptible to its harmful effects. If you and your family do not smoke, radon is the number one risk for lung cancer in your home.

My wife Julie and I tested our home in the winter of 2007. We were glad to find that our levels were far below the EPA threshold of concern. Healthy Homes encourages you to test your home so that you can either have piece of mind or you can take action to protect your family from cancer. Get your test kit today!

 Sustainably printed, with our kids' future in mind!

## What do Cows Have to do with Lead Poisoning?

Not much, although their friends at the **United Dairy Industry of Michigan** are helping combat lead poisoning. UDIM kindly provided underwriting for Healthy Homes' February *Get the Lead Out!* training. Their generous support enabled us to host a successful training for 30 health and human service professionals!



The thoughtful support of organizations like UDIM enables us to do our work. Many individuals also contribute. Look inside this newsletter to learn more about those who support Healthy Homes and how you might join the effort!

## Time is Running Out for Radon Testing!

Winter is the only effective time to test your home for radon. Healthy Homes can help you get your home tested for free or for very little cost to you. Take action before April 30. Call us at **(616) 241-3300** for more information.