

CLEARCorps Team Connects with Community Advocate

This past February, the Healthy Homes Coalition's CLEARCorps team was blessed with the opportunity to work with Alda Conley. While in this case Alda was looking for a little support, it is also clear that Alda has been a constant source of help and strength for her family and community.

Alda is a bedrock in her neighborhood. She always shares with her neighbors and helps to ensure the safety of her block. The staff at the Southeast Community Association attest to her willingness to support neighborhood senior citizens, work in the SECA garden, and do so much more. Of Alda, they say she "takes care of her grandchildren as if they were her own."

Alda heads a multi-generational household in the house she owns on Prospect Avenue where she bears the titles of mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother. Currently, two of Alda's grandchildren live with her and she helps raise two of her great grandchildren.



What We Do

The Healthy Homes Coalition does work in three principle areas:

- Education and Awareness
- Direct Service to Families in Need
- Advocacy and Policy Change

Our direct service programs address these issues:

Lead poisoning

Asthma triggers

- Integrated Pest Management (mice, rats and cockroaches)
- Mold and moisture

Carbon monoxide hazards

Fire safety

Accidental injury

Radon

Upon completing a home assessment with Alda, the CLEARCorps team found that the level of lead dust on a window sill in her grandchildren's bedroom was much higher than is safe for young children. Following her work with the CLEARCorps team, Alda's concern for the health and well-being of her young grandchildren led her to work with Kelly Malinowski, the Outreach Worker at Healthy Homes. Kelly quickly helped Alda enroll in the City of Grand Rapids' *Get the Lead Out!* program so that the family homestead could be free from lead hazards.

The CLEARCorps team was then able to return the favor that Alda gives to her community by helping prepare her home for lead abatement. With a dumpster generously donated by *Elite Disposal*, the team pitched in and helped clear the way for trained lead abatement workers.

While community involvement is woven into day-to-day life at the Healthy Homes Coalition, having the opportunity to work with someone like Alda Conley is truly special.



Spring 2011 Events

Healthy Homes Nights

April 18, 6:30-8:00pm

May 16, 6:30-8:00pm

June 20, 6:30-8:00pm

Healthy Homes Coalition
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.

Lead Safe Painting and Home Repair

April, 4, 6:00-7:00pm

May 12, 9:00-10:00am

June 6, 6:00-7:30pm

Home Repairs Services
1100 South Division

Training in lead safe work for do-it-yourself homeowners. Free class, free DVD, free Supplies. RSVP to Kelly at (616) 241-3300.

Building Healthy Homes Tours

April 19, Noon

May 12, Noon

May 24, 4:00pm

June 17, Noon

Healthy Homes Coalition
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.

More Events on page 5

Dust Busters!

Thanks to the *Get the Lead Out!* campaign, the word is out in Grand Rapids that invisible levels of lead dust in the home often poison children. The problem is figuring out how to make parents aware of the imperceptible hazards lurking in their home.

Thanks to a generous grant from the **CareSource Foundation**, one-hundred families will have the tools they need to detect lead hazards. The CareSource Foundation has underwritten a full years' supplies and lab costs so that families can collect dust wipe samples in their own homes for free!

Healthy Homes' CLEARCorps members will provide dust wipe kits to eligible parents and will train them how to effectively collect samples in their own homes. Then, once the parent collects the dust wipes, Healthy Homes will send them to a local lab for processing.

"Dust wipes are a critical tool for helping parents know if there are hazards in the home. Without this information, parents can't prioritize their efforts and many fail to act effectively," said NEHA-certified Healthy Homes Specialist Courtney Myers-Keaton.

Special thanks goes out to the CareSource Foundation for watching out for the environmental health of our community's children!



Training the Front Lines

More than two-dozen local service providers were trained in the latest strategies to prevent lead poisoning and asthma attacks on March 4 at the Prince Center at Calvin College.

The Healthy Homes Coalition was joined by the Asthma Network of West Michigan in providing a full-day training entitled *Children's Environmental Health Issues: Lead and Asthma in Children*. Generous underwriting from the **Health Plan of Michigan** helped make this a first-rate training.

"Especially exciting were the number of community health workers and early childhood providers in the room," said Healthy Homes Executive Director Paul Haan. "Along with the medical community, these folks are the front line of the battle against lead poisoning and preventable asthma attacks. We are thrilled that they are joining us in the effort to protect children from environmental hazards!"

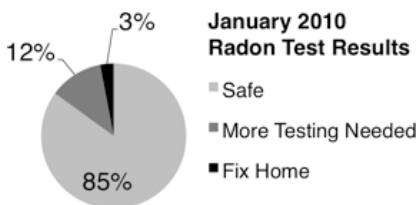
At the event, special presentations were given by Forest Hills Pediatrics and the Michigan Department of Community Health. These presentations, along with underwriting from the Health Plan of Michigan, made this a rock-solid day of practical, in-depth training.

Go-Getter Gary Spreads the Radon Message

This past January, Healthy Homes set a goal of testing one-hundred homes for National Radon Action Month. While staff was instrumental in meeting this target, it was with the help of a new volunteer, Gary Ranfeld, that Healthy Homes exceeded the goal—testing 169 homes!

CLEARCorps members were hosting an outreach booth at an event at Celebration Cinema when they met Gary for the first time. They told Gary about the hazards of radon, a naturally occurring, radioactive gas that contributes to an estimated 21,000 deaths per year and is the leading cause of lung cancer deaths among nonsmokers.

Gary became interested in testing his home, so he stopped in at Healthy Homes the next day and picked up three test kits, two to share with friends. The next day he came back and asked for ten more. Through his travels, Gary met other people interested in testing their homes.



He offered to drop off tests for friends, neighbors, and many others. Since he started volunteering with us in January, Gary has tested more than 130 homes! Special thanks to Gary for his interest, passion, and determination.

So, did you get your house tested this past January? If not, visit [Healthy Homes](#) at [742 Franklin Street SE](#) to pick-up a radon test kit today. For five dollars you can protect your family from the second leading cause of lung cancer.

Demetrius, Destroyer of Pests



Demetrius Taylor serves families in the community as a volunteer in Healthy Homes' Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program. Since starting with Healthy Homes in November, he has brought hope to numerous families and despair to innumerable pests. Demetrius grew up in Memphis where he had personal experiences with the discomfort and anxiety pests can bring. Not only do they drive people crazy, but they can also trigger asthma attacks.

Using safe IPM methods that eliminate the need for spraying and other dangerous chemicals, Demetrius works alongside families to make their homes less inviting for pests. Frequent home visits include a combination of Healthy Homes' education, encouragement, and advice with a focus on eliminating pests by removing access, food, water and safe places to hide and reproduce.

Demetrius enjoys the home visits, which he sees as an opportunity to help families that he would not otherwise meet. Recently, he worked alongside a family to do a deep clean of the kitchen, and placed mousetraps throughout the house. As you can imagine, the family was taken back by Demetrius' willingness to serve and the thoroughness of his approach.

On another occasion, during one of his inspections, he noticed that one family's clothes dryer was not vented, a dangerous situation that puts deadly carbon monoxide into the home. Demetrius snapped to action and went to the hardware store to purchase a ventilation pipe for a dryer, which he then installed.

Healthy Homes is looking for more community volunteers who, like Demetrius, would enjoy serving families with pest issues. If interested please contact Healthy Homes at [\(616\) 241-3300](#) for more information.



Healthy Homes is the Work of Good People

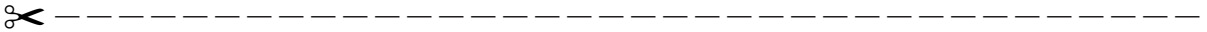
In preparing this newsletter for publication, I couldn't help but notice and be grateful for all the cool people who make this work possible. Learning from our early days as the *Get the Lead Out!* Collaborative, we've always known that there's power in numbers. Long-standing partners like the Home Repair Services, Michigan Family Resources, the Kent County Health Department, and the City of Grand Rapids, just to name a few, are critical to growing the number of healthy homes in Grand Rapids.

But lately, I've come to recognize that it's not just about how many organizations we can list as our partners. It's about the creative, thoughtful, dedicated people that help us make those connections. In this newsletter, you read about super-volunteers Gary Ranfeld and Demetrius Taylor. These two give an invaluable gift to Healthy Homes and their neighbors—the gift of their time.

Behind the partnerships with two of our medicaid health plans are two active, caring women—Melissa Kuiper and Monica Smart. These two don't just make the connection with Healthy Homes because it's their job, but they do it because they sincerely care about the health and well-being of the children growing up in our neighborhoods.

Then there's Joe Kuilema, who connects us with student interns from Calvin and is working with us to explore a partnership with Camp Tall Turf. There's Mary Judnich, who drops off donated supplies for our pest management program. There's Betty Zylstra who thinks of Healthy Homes when the Dyer-Ives Foundation makes annual gifts in the name of their board members. And there's recent college graduate Lisa VanDyk who generously shares part of her income tax refund—even though she's living way out in Delaware now.

The idea behind the Healthy Homes Coalition is that parents are not alone in their efforts to provide safe homes for their children. The idea is that we, as a community, embrace our children by providing support in practical and tangible ways at a very personal level. Think about it. How can you to join us in this highly personal work?



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

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
742 Franklin SE
Grand Rapids MI 49507

Or made online at
www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org



www.GetTheLeadOutGR.org

Picture Your Home With All New Windows!

Loans and grants available. Low payments. You can afford this.
Start by calling 616-456-3030 today!



Healthy Homes
Coalition of West Michigan



Get the Lead Out!



A City of Grand Rapids home repair program to make your home lead-safe.

Healthy Homes Calls for Single Family Rental Inspections in GR

The Healthy Homes Coalition joined the Coalition to End Homelessness, Foreclosure Response, and more than two dozen other groups to request that the City of Grand Rapids extend the existing rental certification program to include single-family rental properties. While current law requires that multi-family rental properties be inspected every few years, the law currently exempts the houses where children are most likely to reside—single-family homes.

Grand Rapids is the only local community that gives this special exemption for single-family rental properties. As a result, the City is providing a safe-haven for investors who do not want to be held accountable to local housing quality standards through routine inspections.

Healthy Homes' volunteers and staff have seen firsthand the impact of unregulated single-family properties upon housing conditions and children's health. They have seen homes with blatant lead hazards, rampant pest infestations, unchecked moisture and mold problems, and more. The result is children with lead poisoning, asthma attacks that result in emergency room visits, accidental injuries, and other negative health consequences for kids.

A recent audit of Healthy Homes' smoke detector installation program revealed that 51% of the rental units requesting services did not have adequate smoke detectors, as required by City code. A simple, routine inspection program can help raise those numbers dramatically.

In December 2010, the Healthy Homes Coalition and its partners presented a plan for action to the Grand Rapids City Commission. That plan provides a scenario for how single-family rental housing can be inspected at no additional cost to the City of Grand Rapids. Healthy Homes is calling for the City Commission to act favorably on this proposal by June 30, 2011.

Healthy Homes encourages you to also contact your Mayor and City Commissioners to tell them that our community needs to protect our children's health by eliminating the special exemption for owners of single-family rental housing. To review the report, go to www.healthyhomescoalition.org/uploads/PDFs/Dec2011.pdf.

www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org

More Spring 2011 Events

(continued from page 2)

Healthy Homes Coalition Annual Meeting


June 2, 4:30-6:00pm

Healthy Homes Coalition
742 Franklin St SE

Come learn about the successes of the past 12 months! Open House, board elections and Annual Awards.

Renovate Right Training

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

 Sustainably printed, with our kids' future in mind!



Springtime Thanks!

The Healthy Homes Coalition has lots to be thankful for this spring. Here are just some of the blessings that have been bestowed upon us:

- Thanks to **Elite Disposal** for helping Ms. Conley! (see story on page 1).
- Thanks to **Health Plan of Michigan** for underwriting the Lead & Asthma Training for providers held March 4, and to **CareSource** for underwriting a full year's worth of dust wipe sampling! (see stories on page 2).
- Thanks to volunteers like **Gary Ranfeld** and **Demtrius Taylor** who are keeping children's homes free of pests and radon! (see stories on page 3).