Mayor Bliss Commits to Keeping Kids Lead Safe

During her February 15 State of the City address, Mayor Rosalynn Bliss made it clear that fixing lead poisoning is a major priority for Grand Rapids.

“The recent increase in lead poisoning is a call to action,” said Mayor Bliss. Her remarks come after a pattern of increasing urgency to address the problem of children being exposed to lead hazards in Michigan.

In January, Kent County’s Lead Task Force developed and submitted their specific recommendations to the county board. At the state level, in March 2017 Gov. Rick Snyder appointed the Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission comprised of government employees, medical specialists, and community leaders. Healthy Homes staff serves on both panels.

Mayor Bliss’ commitment adds to the positive progress happening in Grand Rapids. The momentum is critical; the number of lead poisoned children in the city continues to climb, up 30% from 2015.

“It’s time for the city to work more closely with our partners to aggressively test for lead, examine our housing codes, increase screening for lead hazards before occupancy, and accelerate remediation,” said Mayor Bliss.

According to an article on Mlive, Bliss said she would be tasking a small group of partners to come up with steps the city can take to address the problem after a report comes to the commission from Kent County. Mayor Bliss’ commitment to healthy housing is another positive step forward to helping kids stop hurting.

“Children should not only feel safe in our city. They must be safe. Especially in their own homes.”

-Mayor Bliss
Our Services

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.

Get the Lead Out!
A partnership with the City of Grand Rapids to make your home lead-safe. Both homeowners and landlords are eligible.

Radon Testing
Do-it-yourself kits available for $5 (free for families participating in Healthy Homes assessments).

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

Woman of Hope 2018 Award Winner: Tabitha Williams

“We want our children safe and we want them to live to their full potential. When I think about this, I think about hope. I have hope for change and I think it starts with us.”

Tabitha Williams was recognized with the 2018 Woman of Hope Award from WMEAC’s Women and the Environment Symposium on February 27. The Woman of Hope Award honors an up-and-coming female voice in environmental activism.

Tabitha’s leadership as an advocate to end child lead poisoning in Grand Rapids was the driving force behind receiving the award. She is a founding member and leader for the Parents for Healthy Homes advocacy group. She strives to connect with parents in the community, and bring them together to bring about positive policy change surrounding lead issues.

“All the parents that felt like they couldn’t do anything with this lead. They didn’t know what to do; they weren’t educated. I feel like when we as a community get together, we are strong, we are powerful, we want our kids safe, we want our children lead free, we want to make an impact throughout the community and to every parent, we are the first leaders.”

-Tabitha Williams, WMEAC Award Speech
Congratulations to COFI Parent Leaders!

Nine parent leaders celebrated their graduation from the COFI leadership program on March 23 at SECOM, surrounded by family, friends, and Healthy Homes staff.

Leadership training is offered in three phases through COFI, (Community Organizing and Family Issues) a nonprofit organization based out of Chicago which connects parents to one another, helping turn their voices in actionable change. COFI trains our staff and parents to train future leaders within Parents for Healthy Homes.

Parents for Healthy Homes has adopted COFI’s’ successful model into their organization and have held weekly meetings to complete the workshops and to outline their individual and group goals.

COFI training is crucial as Parents for Healthy Homes continues to work in keeping kids safe. These parents are working to become leaders of themselves, their families, their neighborhoods, and their communities. Parents have the needed perspective and power to make lasting change, and they are on their way.

Congratulations to the graduates!

Food for Thought Lunches
Monthly free lunches and discussion about what’s happening with lead and housing hazards in the community.

*Thursday, May 24
*Friday, June 29
*Tuesday, July 31

All events 12pm-1pm at 1545 Buchanan SW

MIALSH Lead Education Day
Parents for Healthy Homes took a bus to Lansing to discuss childhood lead poisoning directly with 55 State of Michigan representatives.

Healthy Homes Luncheon
Save the date for the annual donor luncheon, Wednesday Oct 10 at Calvin College’s Prince Conference Center.
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

Donate Online
www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org/donate

Local Artist Calls for Action on Lead

The beige walls at Healthy Homes now feature a colorful reminder of the cause of keeping kids safe courtesy of Grand Rapids based artist, Keyon Lovett.

Lovett created a series of paintings for a January #heretoo event put on by the NIA Centre, which connect the issues of the ongoing Flint water crisis, and the struggles lead affected families are dealing with in Grand Rapids.

He describes the problem of lead simply: “This is a group of people trying to live, work, survive, trying to thrive, and their homes are killing them.”

The pieces are on display to the public in the Healthy Homes Coalition offices at 1545 Buchanan Suite #2 during business hours, Monday–Friday 9am–5pm.
Thank you to everyone who donated in recent months

Peter Armstrong
Dianna Baker
Craig Benjamin
Rosalynn Bliss
Jeanne Borst
Jonathan & Grace Bradford
Gail Brink
Robert Brechting
Joan Budden
Jackie Carmean
Donna Chivis
Craig Clark
Greg Cline
Sue Cobb
Candace Cowling
C. Robert Crow
Mary Abbott Cumming
Karyl DeBruyn
Erin DeLong
Kevin Den Dulk
Sue & Rick DeVries
Fenna Diephuis
Shannon Dils
Mary & Larry Dengerink
Ed Dracht
Joan Dyer
Beth Dykstra
Lois Elenbaas
Kenneth Fawcett
John & Kristine Fox
Laurie Gardner
Grand Rapids
Community Foundation
Emily Green-Schmoller
Robert Haan
Kevin Halliburton
Lee Hardy
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Carol Hendershot
Dawn Hendriksen
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Christine Helms-Maletic
John Hibbard
Mary Hockwalt
Heidi Hofman
Jolanda Howe
John Hunting
Kyle Irwin
Dave Jacobs
Diana Jackson-Whitefield
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John & Rita Kirkwood
Liz Keegan
Ruth Kelly
Jonathan Klooster
Anna Kruse
Virginia Kuilema
John LaPorte
Jan Lundquist
Douglas & Cathy MacLeod
Rod MacLeod
Jameela Maun
Raechel Macqueen
Joyce Markaity
Barb Meconis
David Medema
Lisa Mitchell
Courtney Myers-Keaton
Khan & Liza Ned
Chelsea Nellist
Mike Nelson
Tom Neftner
Cara Oosterhouse
Penny Pestle
Cynthia Price
Nancy Remelts
Robbins Lock Shop, Inc.
Mary Robinson
Joanna Rodriguez
Peter Spring
Greg & Audrey Sundstrom
Glenn Swier
Jim & Pat Talen
Joy Taylor-Morgan
Steve Ten Elshof
Amy Triick
Scott Setlock
Shelly Sinas
Ryan Smith
Ryan Struck-Vanderhaak
Barbara Stanford
Bethany Swartz
James & Maria
VandenBosch
Gayle VanGessel
Robert VanGessel
Kathy Van Houten
Rich & Susan Van Houten
Phyllis VanVugt-Bratt
Profile Films
Ryan VerWyts
Karsten Voskuil
David & Teri Warners
Mary Alice Williams
William G. Currie
Foundation
Joel Westra
Yesterdog
Sarah Zachow
Uko Zylstra
Emergency Care
Specialists, P.C.
The Oberlin Group of
Raymond James

Thank you to our volunteers!

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Kelly Price
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Schiavetta Williams
Tabitha Williams
Jerae Wise
Sylvia Venema

Did You Know... water leaks and high humidity are good for mold, but bad for you?
Keep Your Spring Cleaning Lead Safe

As the weather heats up and spring cleaning becomes a priority, take special care in dealing with lead dust in your home. Here’s a few cleaning tips from our direct services staff:

1. Practice wet dusting methods. Using a wet cloth instead of a dry one helps pick up all dust particles and removes them safely. Use disposable paper towel when possible.

2. Use a vacuum with a HEPA filter when possible for cleaning to remove more dust and allergens.

3. When opening windows to let air in, be sure to thoroughly wet dust the interior of window frames, and watch for any loose paint coming off.

4. Was your home built before 1978?
   If so, practice lead safe painting as defined by the Environmental Protection Agency.