Single Mom Takes Action to Protect Family From Lead

When Amanda Poling walked into the Healthy Homes Coalition’s offices this past spring, she already knew exactly how dangerous childhood lead poisoning can be. Her nine year-old daughter Maëlla suffered from exposure to lead and mercury as a baby in Haiti. Amanda now wanted to protect her two year-old daughter Bella and one year-old son Grady from lead. She invited the Healthy Homes CLEARCorps team to help her check for lead hazards and to develop a strategy for protecting her children.

Amanda’s Sherman Street home was built in 1920, when lead-based paint was common. After taking several lead dust wipe samples with the help of the CLEARCorps team, Amanda discovered lead dust levels in Bella’s bedroom windows were 50 times higher than what the Environmental Protection Agency declares safe for children.

To keep Bella and Grady safe, the CLEARCorps team offered to “superclean” Amanda’s windows and floors throughout the house. By using simple, lead-specific cleaning methods, the team was able to reduce the high lead levels by more than 90 percent. They showed Amanda the techniques they used, and provided her with cleaning tools to keep the lead dust levels low.

The CLEARCorps team also referred Amanda to the City of Grand Rapids’ Lead Hazard Control Program (see advertisement in insert of this newsletter). Once the City’s work is completed, Amanda will have a new roof, new windows, and the peace of mind that comes with knowing her children are safe from lead hazards in their home.

Maëlla will begin fourth grade this fall. She’s fluent in Spanish and enjoys rollerskating. She’s happy to live with Amanda, Bella and Grady in a healthy home. “I want to take care of my brother and sister,” she says.
More Summer 2009 Events

Keeping a Lead-Safe Home

Citizens Action Team
Every other Thursday, 6:30pm
St. Philip’s Church
550 Henry SE
Citizens Action Team meets to discuss what citizens can do to protect children and families from environmental harm. Call (616) 241-3300 for more information.

Healthy Homes Annual Meeting
Tuesday, September 15, 4pm
More details to be announced.

Building Healthy Futures Event
Tuesday, September 22, Noon
Prince Conference Center, Calvin College
Call (616) 241-3300 to attend.

Lead Training for Health Professionals
October 20
Prince Conference Center, Calvin College
Full-day training for nurses and other health professionals. Continuing education credits offered. Modest materials fee. Call (616) 241-3300 for more information.

GR Press Praises Healthy Homes!
A recent Grand Rapids Press editorial called for a quick end to childhood lead poisoning and praised the Healthy Homes Coalition for our efforts. Here are some excerpts:

The number of Michigan kids with lead poisoning dropped more than 35 percent between 2003 and 2007, despite a rise in testing, according to a January report from Michigan State University and the Department of Community Health (DCH). In 2007, 2,031 children suffered from lead poisoning, down from 2,309 in 2006. The declines can be attributed to the state’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP). A public awareness campaign and outreach to healthcare providers have been among helpful tools. The initiatives of county health departments and local groups such as the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan have also had an impact.

Grand Rapids is among 14 cities accounting for 79 percent of all cases of poisoning in 2007. Three percent of the city kids tested under age 6 -- or 149 children -- had elevated levels of lead in their blood, down from 208 in 2006...

...The Healthy Homes Coalition held a meeting Tuesday with Grand Rapids City Commissioners, neighborhood association leaders, landlords and other community stakeholders about additional efforts to alleviate the problem. That’s the kind of dialogue that should be occurring statewide.

To read the entire editorial, visit our website at www.healthyhomescoalition.org/news/52/86/

Dyer-Ives Supports Healthy Homes
Special thanks goes out to the Dyer-Ives Foundation for their consistent support of Healthy Homes. The Dyer-Ives Foundation recently awarded a $7,500 grant to Healthy Homes to underwrite a grant writer as we seek to be awarded a federal Healthy Homes Demonstration grant. Last year Dyer-Ives provided similar funding to Healthy Homes and the Get the Lead Out! initiative, which resulted in the City of Grand Rapids securing an additional $4.6 million in federal lead hazard control funding. Dyer-Ives is keeping Grand Rapids kids safe!
East Hills Neighborhood has Most Lead Poisoned Children in 2007

2007 surveillance data from the Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH) reveals that things are changing in Grand Rapids when it comes to childhood lead poisoning. When the Get the Lead Out! campaign began in 2001, the Baxter neighborhood had the highest incidence of childhood lead poisoning among children tested. Now, East Hills tops the list and Baxter is eighth.

When looking at this data, the Healthy Homes Coalition is concerned that the high levels in East Hills may be the result of untrained workers and owners remodeling older homes with lead-based paint. Before disturbing lead-based paint, owners and workers should get some basic training in lead-safe work practices to ensure children are kept safe.

Another concern is the low percentage of children in East Hills receiving their blood lead test at one and two years of age. All one and two year olds living in the City of Grand Rapids are considered to be at risk and should be tested. See the charts on this page to see how other neighborhoods compare.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lowest Testing Rates of 1 &amp; 2 year old children</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ottawa Hills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alger Heights</td>
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<tr>
<td>South East End</td>
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<td>Eastown</td>
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<td>East Hills</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Hill</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Average</td>
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Highest incidence of lead poisoning among children 0-5 years

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neighborhood</th>
<th>% Tested</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Hills</td>
<td>9.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oakdale</td>
<td>6.7 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midtown</td>
<td>6.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ball Park</td>
<td>5.6 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heritage Hill</td>
<td>5.6 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Madison Area</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City Average</td>
<td>3.0 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

 $$$ 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
Join a Building Healthy Homes Tour

This past March, the Healthy Homes Coalition initiated a series of one-hour events called “Building Healthy Homes Tours.” The tours explain our children’s environmental health mission through a series of stories about the families we serve. Each one-hour tour offers guests an opportunity to learn about Healthy Homes, see the office space and meet the staff, and hear how we work with families to keep children safe.

The tours last only one hour—never longer—so it’s easy for people to quickly learn about our work. If you join us for a noon hour tour, we’ll provide a light lunch too! And don’t worry, we do not solicit any contributions at these tours. We simply want to get the word out.

We’d like to have you join us at an upcoming tour! Tours are scheduled for noon on June 25, July 7, July 24 and August 20 and at 4:00pm on August 4. To confirm a date, RSVP to (616) 241-3300 or info@healthyhomescoalition.org.

Special tours can also be arranged for your private club or group—bringing our message, staff and presentation to your office or organization. Call us today if you’d like to schedule a private tour.

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.

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
Fixing Homes with Kids in Mind
by Paul Haan, Executive Director

As our community makes headway in reducing the number of children lead-poisoned by blighted, deteriorated housing, a new, frustrating trend is emerging. Too often, well-intending parents are creating lead hazards as they remodel older homes for their families.

Just removing old, lead-based paint is not enough. When remodeling, lead-safe work practices must be used to ensure that the repair work does not grind the existing lead-based paint into even more hazardous lead dust. This lead dust is more readily ingestible by young children and can be very challenging to remove from the home. Conventional house cleaning leaves lead dust behind and your typical vacuum or shop vac is ineffective and only helps to further distribute the hazardous dust throughout the home.

Summer is prime time for remodeling. If you or someone you know will be re-painting or remodeling an older home, consider either hiring a certified lead abatement professional or taking a Lead-Safe Work Practices class. For more help thinking about how to do your repair job safely, give us a call at (616) 241-3300.

Volunteer for Healthy Homes

One effective way to support the Healthy Homes Coalition’s work is through volunteering. Whether you can give just one afternoon or a few hours regularly each week, we have opportunities for volunteers to help! Here are just a few…

★ Prepare newsletters and other mailings: We can always use help folding, addressing and stamping mailings as we send them out. Folks with graphic design experience are welcome to pitch in with layout and design.

★ Help host a “Building Healthy Homes Tour”: We are doing a series of one-hour luncheon events to spread the word about Healthy Homes. You can help out with a scheduled event at our offices, or, better yet, host one at your home for friends or at your workplace for colleagues.

★ Install carbon monoxide alarms and smoke detectors: Here is a very tangible way for you to help families protect their kids and help us out! Volunteer an afternoon of your time to visit homes to install CO alarms and smoke detectors.

★ Help keep us equipped: As our organization grows, we need new or gently used office furniture, tools, and software. Are you good at seeking donations? Staff knows what is needed, but could use the help tracking it down.

If you can help out, call us at (616) 241-3300 today!

www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org
Radon and Carbon Monoxide Programs Successful!

This spring, the Healthy Homes Coalition wrapped up two grants aimed at improving indoor air quality. The first grant was provided by the US-EPA to test homes for radon. Our target was to test 200 households. That goal was greatly exceeded as 568 homes were tested. While additional funding is needed to promote radon testing and to conduct targeted drives, Healthy homes has integrated radon testing into its CLEARCorps program and will continue to offer the kits for sale for $5.00 for those who would like to do the testing on their own.

We also partnered with the Kent County Health Department to place carbon monoxide detectors in homes as part of a FEMA-funded program. Our target was to serve 180 homes with this service. In nine short months, we met this goal and used up all the alarms available! Again, we have integrated CO and smoke detectors into our CLEARCorps program as a result of this project; however, we could currently use funding for more CO detectors. They are a popular request!

Special thanks to those who partnered with us on these projects, most notably the Asthma Network, the Kent County Health Department, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality.