

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Community Groups to Hold Town Hall Meeting on Lead Poisoning in Grand Rapids

GRAND RAPIDS – The Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan and partners will be hosting a Town Hall Meeting on Lead Poisoning in Grand Rapids today, Thursday, March 10 at 6:30pm at the LINC Gallery, 341 Hall St SE in Grand Rapids. Numerous elected officials will be attending as the public shares stories, concerns and proposed solutions.

The event is co-sponsored by the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, LINC, the Grand Rapids Chapter of the NAACP, the Grand Rapids Urban League, and Mount Moriah Baptist Church.

“With all the attention on lead poisoning as a result of the situation in Flint, people in Grand Rapids are asking similar questions. Parents are right to be concerned because, while our water is safe, we still have a lot of older houses in Grand Rapids that need to have lead hazards addressed,” said Paul Haan, Executive Director of the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan.

“In fact, preliminary numbers for 2015 are showing an increase in the number of children poisoned in Grand Rapids for the first time this century,” said Haan. Provisional 2015 data from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services will be shared at the event.

The meeting will take place in three parts. The first portion will include experts speaking on childhood lead poisoning and presenting information on the specific situation in Grand Rapids. Toxicologist Dr. Bryan Judge from Spectrum Health, Attorney John Smith from Legal Aid of Western Michigan, and representatives from the Kent County Health Department and the City of Grand Rapids will speak.

The second portion will be a moderated town hall forum, where parents and residents are invited to share their stories and struggles, as well as their ideas for solutions to the problem of childhood lead poisoning. Elected officials and their representatives from all levels of government will be on hand to hear their concerns.

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The third portion of the meeting will be a moderated question and answer period. At that time, experts in the field will answer audience members' questions, and elected officials will be presented the opportunity to reflect upon the information shared.

Event organizers are expecting more than 60 people to attend. The meeting is open to the public.

“It’s time for leaders across Michigan to double-down on lead,” said Haan. “While this is a big problem, it’s not insurmountable. We know the scope of the problem. We know how to fix it. Now we need to set the right policies and dedicate adequate resources to put a final end to children being poisoned by their homes. It’s time to implement an end game on lead poisoning in Michigan.”

The Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan is an independent, non-profit organization based in Grand Rapids that is improving children’s health and wellbeing by eliminating harmful housing conditions. For more information about the Healthy Homes Coalition, visit www.healthyhomescoalition.org.

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