

CLEARCorps Member Inspired by Friendship with Family

CLEARCorps member Cicely Wiers-Windemuller met Valerie during the middle of the summer when Valerie called the Healthy Homes Coalition to have her home checked for lead hazards. At the time, Cicely did not know how much Valerie would inspire, challenge and encourage her during the next few months.

Cicely's first impression of Valerie was that she was a strong, vibrant woman who had already overcome many challenges in her life. Their first conversation was not so much about lead or other environmental hazards, but it was about the challenges with her health, her recent hospitalizations and about how her three adult children and three grandchildren rely on her to be the primary caretaker.

As the conversation continued, Cicely was struck by Valerie's openness to learn and listen about times in her own life where she needed other people to help her. They talked about why asking for help is a sign of courage, resiliency and strength.



About a month later, Cicely received a letter from the Service-Learning Center at Calvin College asking Healthy Homes to participate in their "StreetFest" volunteer program. As a previous coordinator for "StreetFest", Cicely knew exactly where this extra help was needed.

She called Valerie and told her that a group of ten to fifteen students were ready to help her address some of the environmental hazards existing in her house. Valerie was not only interested but was ecstatic. Together, Valerie and Cicely developed an action plan for the students that would make Valerie's home healthier for her family, especially for her grandchildren that have asthma.

The project grew and Healthy Homes was able to help Valerie and her family clean for three consecutive days. A dumpster, carpet cleaner and cleaning supplies were donated by local businesses.

As Cicely looks back on her year of service, she says, "I am especially proud of that first week of September. I watched people from all backgrounds join together to help one family get back on their feet. I saw Calvin students who were new to Grand Rapids consider serious life questions and I saw teenagers challenge their individual perceptions and beliefs about people who have less money and resources. Each person worked on different small tasks within the house and by the end of three days those small tasks made a huge impact!"

Cicely said, "I learned valuable life lessons from Valerie. She is someone who is generous with her time and resources. She is spirited and speaks her mind. When I think back on my time with Valerie, I still do not have easy answers when it comes to poverty, social justice or racial equality. But one thing I have learned is to celebrate the small things in life. As Valerie told me, "soon all the small things turn out to be one big thing." I couldn't agree more. "

Healthy Homes
Coalition of West Michigan

Fall 2009 Events

Building Healthy Homes Tours

November 17, noon

December 8, noon

December 18, noon

Come learn more about the Healthy Homes Coalition! Tours and talks twice monthly at the Healthy Homes offices, 742 Franklin St SE. Light lunch will be provided.
R.S.V.P. (616) 241-3300.

More Fall Events on page 2

More Fall 2009 Events

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Lead-Safe Work Practices Classes

November 9 & 16

December 7 & 14

Home Repair Services

1100 South Division

Grand Rapids

EPA-approved curriculum teaches

landlords, homeowners and

remodelers how to work lead

safe. Must attend two sessions in

sequence to receive certificate.

\$30 materials fee.

Call (616) 241-2601 to register

Lead-Safe Work Practices Classes for Landlords

November 18

December 9

Corrosion Control Consultants

4403 Donker Ct SE

Kentwood

Sponsored by the Rental Property

Owners Association, this EPA-

approved curriculum teaches

landlords and property managers

how to work lead safe.

\$25 materials fee for RPOA

members, \$35 for others.

Call (616) 454-385 x223 to register

Get the Lead Out!

Collaborative

December 2, 2:30 PM

Eastern Avenue CRC

514 Eastern Ave SE

Bi-monthly meeting of the group

working to end childhood lead

poisoning in Grand Rapids. Open

to the public, come help! Call (616)

241-3300 for more information.

More Fall Events on Page 5

Flies and mice and roaches, oh my!

Tips for a pest-free home.

Pests such as roaches, mice, flies, and rats run rampant in various parts of the city. Here are a few quick facts and tips to keep them out of your home.

Fix that Leak! Pests love water. Mice, rats, and roaches need it to drink, and other pests use standing water as breeding grounds. That leak under the sink that bugs you a little bit could bug you a lot if left to drip. Use a wrench to tighten loose pipes and caulk to seal any drips that can't be hand tightened. If you can't do it yourself, call a plumber to save yourself the time, money, and headache that a major pest infestation can cost.

Holy Holes Batman! Holes in the foundation of your home and gaps between doorways are the perfect gateway for pests. Insects need very small, paper-thin space to sneak in. Mice can fit through a hole as small as a dime, and rats can fit through one the size of a quarter. Sealing these holes with a combination of copper mesh and expanding foam, as well as caulk, can help keep pests and the germs they carry out of your home.

Clean Up that Crumb Trail! It didn't work for Hansel and Gretel, but crumbs are a great way to lead pests to other areas of your home. They can smell even the smallest amount of food and need only to nibble on little pieces to get enough nutrition. Do your best to only eat in the kitchen or dining area of your home, and keep food out of living rooms and bedrooms where crumbs can be easily trapped in furniture or lost behind cushions.

Keep the Top On! Trash cans with open or loose-fitting lids leave an entry point for pests to find food. By keeping the lid on tight and putting trash out for immediate removal, you keep a main food source away from the pests in your home.

Clutter Free is the Way to Be! Clutter provides mice, roaches, and other pests a place to hide and breed. By keeping clutter to a minimum, you take away the hiding spots where these pesky buggers can live. Think hard about the things you have in the corners of your home, and if you don't use them, consider tossing or donating them.

Help! I Need Somebody! Lastly, don't be afraid to ask for help with your pest issues. People are going through the same things all over the city and there are people willing to help. If you need help with a pest issue, contact Healthy Homes Coalition and find out more about our Integrated Pest Management approach for reducing pests.

Call (616) 241-3300 for more information.

Healthy Homes Awarded \$26,248 FEMA Grant

The Healthy Homes Coalition was recently awarded \$26,248 in FEMA funding to make sure homes with children have working carbon monoxide and smoke alarms in their homes. This award will allow Healthy Homes to serve another 400 families with alarms.

With this funding Healthy Homes will install one carbon monoxide alarm in each home and adequate smoke alarms to bring the family's home up to local codes. Healthy Homes staff and volunteers will install the devices.

This program will build upon the successful program begun by the Kent County Health Department in 2008 where Healthy Homes installed alarms in 230 homes.

T.R.A.S.H. Awareness

As part of the Children's Environmental Health Initiative, Healthy Homes has partnered with the John Burgess Wellness center to raise awareness pertaining to trash and recycling issues. The partnership created a committee of individuals willing to serve and make an effort to reduce the negative effects of inadequate trash disposal, such as insect and rodent infestations. During an October 22nd event, the group collected more than 1130 lbs of electronic waste. Comprenew donated a bin for citizens to discharge e-waste free of charge and hassle free. The goal of the committee, T.R.A.S.H. (Trash Recycling Actions Save Homes), is to make recycling easier and to provide free, accessible resources to residents.

For more information or to learn how you can help, 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**

 **Get the Lead Out!**
Preventing Childhood Lead Poisoning Through Partnership

www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org

A Special Thanks to the Following 2009 Contributors!

Commissioner Rosalynn Bliss • Connie & Roman Bohatch • Harvey Bratt & Phyllis VanVugt-Bratt • Anne Bruingooe
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Join the Healthy Homes Giving Circle with a multi-year pledge

Healthy Homes Builders (Pledge of \$500 or more for five years)

Melissa & Henry Kuiper • Lynn Heemstra & William VanVugt

Healthy Homes Friends (Pledge of \$250 or more for five years)

Michelle Davis-Poeder & Brandon Poeder • Joan Dyer-Zykowski & Alex Zykowski • Marylou Dykstra • Barb Meconis
Paul Haan & Julie Nietling

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



Friends Promote Healthy Homes

by Paul Haan, Executive Director

When Healthy Homes Coalition was formed three years ago, the founders made a deliberate decision to incorporate the organization as a membership-based organization. The founders did that because they did not

want to rest control of this important work in the hands of a few. And they did it because they had a vision for growing our circle of friends and supporters.

On September 22nd, more than 100 people gather for Healthy Homes; first Building Healthy Futures event - a celebration of healthy homes for children. It was a time to enlarge our circle and to inspire people to financially support the work that we do.

I look back on that day with fond memories. Recalling the faces of those who were there and their words of support provide the motivation to keep this organization growing. Yes, we met some important fundraising goals that day. But more importantly, we had dozens of new friends join our organization and support our work.

I'd like to personally thank the Steelcase Foundation for the encouragement and support they have provided for our efforts to build our circle of friends.

If you weren't able to join us, I encourage you to visit our website to check out the short, nine-minute video we shared that day. The video is at www.healthyhomescoalition.org/support

Healthy Homes Community Partner of the Year Honored

Michelle Davis-Poeder helps Healthy Homes get the BUGS out!

On September 15, the Healthy Homes Coalition held its third Annual Meeting for board members and supporters. At this event, the coalition also proudly presented their second Community Partner of the Year award to Ms. Michelle Davis-Poeder of the Kent Count Health Department.

Michelle has worked side-by-side with Healthy Homes to start a program for low-income families to check for and rid their homes of pests, such as mice and roaches. All work is done in an eco- and kid-friendly manner. Michelle's work to organize community trainings about safe and effective ways to reduce and eliminate pests in homes as been critical to the work being done in Grand Rapids to make homes safe for kids and families.



Again, special thanks to Michelle for helping the Healthy Homes Coalition homes safe for kids and families in West Michigan!

More Fall 2009 Events

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Keeping a Lead-Safe Home

November 12, 6:30-8:00 PM

Belknap Commons

751 Lafayette NE

Grand Rapids

Discussions with parents who live in older homes about simple strategies for reducing your child's exposure to lead hazards. Income eligible parents receive \$25 in cleaning supplies. Call (616) 241-2300 to register or for more information.

More dates TBA - Call (616) 241- 3300 for times and locations.

 Sustainably printed, with our kids' future in mind!

'Tis the season for radon, carbon monoxide and pests

Summer has come and gone, and the change in weather means now is the time to have a healthy homes check-up. Here are a few simple things that can be done to help ensure health and safety at home.

Check your home for radon. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S. Any home is susceptible to high levels of radon. The only way to know is to test. The Healthy Homes Coalition can assist homeowners with checking their home with a simple test kit that only costs \$5.

Have at least one working carbon monoxide alarm installed in your home. Carbon monoxide is the number one cause of poisoning death. Because it is a tasteless, odorless and colorless gas, it can be hard to detect. A carbon monoxide alarm can detect very low levels and will help protect families from this deadly gas. If there are children under 6 in the home, Healthy Homes can come install an alarm, free of charge within the Grand Rapids metro area.



Keep out those pests. Pests are a nuisance and as the weather gets colder, they will try to find warmer places to live, especially in a nice, warm home. Read more inside on page 2 for useful tips on how to safely keep the pests at bay.