

Ten-Month Old Child Rushed to Hospital with Lead Poisoning, Healthy Homes Responds



It is intuitive to think children are sick when their cheeks have turned red or their forehead has become hot. Concerned parents conclude children are sick by assessing symptoms, not the environment. But, it wasn't until staff from the Healthy Homes Coalition inspected Randi's home, that she was aware her child might be sick.

When it comes to lead poisoning, signs of sickness come later in life when conditions are irreversible—and a family's home can be the only sign that a child is at risk for lead poisoning. Because young children explore their world through touch and taste, it is advised that children be tested for lead poisoning when they are one year old if they are living in a pre-1978 home.

This story began when Stephanie, Randi's mother and Nyi-Cear's grandmother, called Healthy Homes about pests. Their landlord previously attended an Integrated Pest Management workshop that Healthy Homes sponsored in partnership with the Rental Property Owners Association (RPOA), and he referred Stephanie to Healthy Homes.

Stephanie and Randi are like most people who call Healthy

Homes. Most people call about a specific problem in their home such as pests or lead, but Healthy Homes encourages a full inspection during these visits to assess for moisture, mold, asthma triggers, lead, radon, carbon monoxide, and pests.

Staff from Healthy Homes saw obvious signs of lead hazards during the home inspection of Randi's rental home and urged her to get her child, Nyi-Cear, tested for lead poisoning.

It was then, in the doctor's office, that Randi found out her ten-month old had lead poisoning. With a blood lead level five times higher than what most doctors consider lead poisoning, Nyi-Cear was checked into the Helen DeVos Children's Hospital for treatment. After a week, her lead level dropped.

After Nyi-Cear received the medical treatment she needed and her lead level dropped, staff from Healthy Homes helped the family find alternative housing by connecting Stephanie and Randi with LINC, a non-profit housing provider. The family now lives in a lead-safe home where Nyi-Cear can grow up healthy and strong.

City of GR Promotes Safe Homes for Kids!

The City of Grand Rapids recently passed a new ordinance making it mandatory for single-family rental properties to be inspected prior to being rented. These inspections will ensure certain housing quality standards and families will be able to live in safer, up-to-code homes. For more on this ordinance change, see page 5.



Winter 2011 Events

Intro to Healthy Homes

Various Dates and Times

Healthy Homes Coalition
742 Franklin St SE

The Intro to Healthy Homes class focuses on lead poisoning prevention and other health hazards in the home. Come learn simple, low-cost ways to keep your home lead-safe, free of pests, healthy, and more. Free food and prizes! Questions? Call Emily at (616) 241-3300.

Building Healthy Homes Tours

January 20, Noon

February 8, Noon

March 9, 8:00 am

April 25, Noon

May 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/breakfast provided. Questions? Call Paul at (616) 241-3300.

SWAN Healthy Homes Night

January 17, 6:00pm

Healthy Homes and the SWAN neighborhood team up to promote radon awareness and healthy living.

MLK Day of Service

January 21

Grand Valley State University students and Healthy Homes promote children's safety.

Volunteers are at the Heart of Healthy Homes

Irreplaceable time, passion, and skills put volunteers at the heart of Healthy Homes. Volunteers are highly valued and provide essential contributions in creating a community free of hazardous housing conditions.

The Grand Rapids Community Foundation has provided funding for two *Encore!* positions at the Healthy Homes Coalition. Betsy Quinlan (Outreach Coordinator) and Brittany Schlosser (Volunteer Coordinator) are working to build



and mobilize a team of committed, "experienced adult" volunteers to make a noticeable impact in the community.

Adults fifty years of age and up—the "baby boomers"—make up a large percent of the Grand Rapids community. The Healthy Homes Coalition wants to make sure that these experienced adults are provided with meaningful opportunities to use their life experiences to make positive changes in the lives of families in need.

To reach this population, Betsy will visit community businesses, churches, schools, and other venues to present the mission of the Healthy Homes Coalition for the purpose of recruiting volunteers. Brittany will meet with referred volunteers to discuss expectations and discover how their passions can be incorporated into their volunteer experience.

The Healthy Homes Coalition is seeking volunteers to serve as general mentors, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) coaches, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector installers, radon testers, and to help with other tasks necessary to make sure all children in Grand Rapids have healthy homes. As experienced adults, these volunteers will be encouraged to share their life skills, talents and abilities with the families they serve.

If you or someone you know is interested in volunteering with Healthy Homes, we would love to hear from you! Please contact Betsy at (616) 241-3300 or betsy@healthyhomescoalition.org, or stop by the office.

A special thank you to the Grand Rapids Community Foundation for making these volunteer opportunities possible.

Fires and Burns Top the Chart for Child Death from Injury

Healthy Homes to Provide Free Alarms for Eligible Families



When most people think of child injury deaths, they think of auto accidents and poisonings and not burns and fire. But did you know that fire and burns are the leading cause of injury death for children 1-14 years of age?

There are many things that parents can do to promote fire and burn safety. First, parents should be aware that infants and toddlers can easily be scalded by hot tap water. While a bath thermometer is a good defense against children being scalded, it is also important for families to keep their water heater set so that water from the tap does not exceed 120°F. With water that is just a few degrees warmer, children can be scalded in seconds!

Along with hot water, fire is a common cause of burns. During this holiday season, parents are reminded to keep matches, lighters and candles out of reach of youngsters who do not understand the danger these things pose. Further, parents should make sure that their home has the recommended number of smoke detectors. Fire safety experts recommend the following:

- One smoke detector on each habitable floor of the home, including the basement.
- One smoke detector in each bedroom.
- One smoke detector in the hallway outside of each bedroom.

In the typical two-storey, three-bedroom home, this means six smoke detectors! With renewed funding from FEMA, the Healthy Homes Coalition will provide these devices for free to 400 eligible families. Low-income homeowners can get enough smoke detectors to bring their homes up to code. Families who rent can get two free smoke detectors and the Healthy Homes Coalition will give the landlord 30 days notice that the home needs to be brought up to local code before filing a complaint with code enforcement. Eligible families will also receive a carbon monoxide detector. To get smoke detectors for your family, call **(616) 241-3300**.

Building a Movement for Healthy Homes



House-by-house, staff and volunteers from the Healthy Homes Coalition have been working hard during the past five years to make sure children are kept safe from environmental hazards like lead poisoning, asthma triggers and house fires. That one-by-one work is important. And while the contributions of the staff and volunteers who serve those children is nothing short of heroic, it sadly is not enough.

In addition to those foundational relationships, we need to take things one step further towards full protection our community's children. Our response needs to go beyond charity—where an organization like Healthy Homes relies upon the needs of children for its very existence.

As a community, we need to work together to build a *collective* response that develops policies and systems that protect children. We need to develop a *total* response that ensures that all children have access to safe and affordable housing. In effect, we need to put the Healthy Homes Coalition out of business.

At Healthy Homes, we recognize that this goal cannot be accomplished by charity alone. It requires that we engage parents, business people, community leaders—all of us—in seeking a better, more just future for all children. What we need is a shift in attitudes and priorities for the well-being of our children. What we need is a movement that values children so much that we stop at nothing to ensure that their safety is protected.

Special Thanks to PNC Bank...

The Healthy Homes Coalition would like to publicly thank PNC Bank for their recent, generous support to help bring modest technology upgrades to Healthy Homes. As a five-year old organization, the Healthy Homes Coalition is ready to move beyond our antiquated phone system that still has staff using those retro pink phone message pads instead of voice mail. Other upgrades will include software updates, mobile technology for teaching classes in community locations, and specialized technology to assist staff in detecting hazards like gas leaks, carbon monoxide, and moisture in children's homes. Thanks PNC Bank for providing this critical support!

...More Thanks to Calvin, Comerica and an Anonymous Donor...

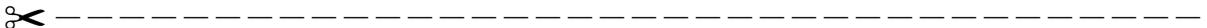
Healthy Homes would like to thank Calvin College, Comerica Bank, and an anonymous donor for their support of our successful October 14 *Building Healthy Futures* fund raising event!

... And Many Thanks to the 2011 AmeriCorps Team!

The Healthy Homes Coalition extends a big *thank you* to its graduating CLEARCorps members Melinda Bertotti, Laura Hanley, Danielle Ostafinski, and Benjamin Siekmeier.

CLEARCorps is a national network affiliated with AmeriCorps, a national service program dedicated to bettering the community through service and civic engagement. The Healthy Homes Coalition has been fortunate enough to have four different AmeriCorps teams serving with the organization since 2008. Fifteen members served full-time for eleven months and volunteered at least 1700 hours with the organization.

The 2011 CLEARCorps team volunteered 6,829 hours and helped more than 250 families with environmental health hazards in their homes. The team members wrapped up their term of service in September and Healthy Homes wishes them all the best in their future endeavors!



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!

Healthy Homes
Coalition of West Michigan



Checks should be made payable to:
Healthy Homes Coalition
742 Franklin SE
Grand Rapids MI 49507
Or made online at
www.HealthyHomesCoalition.org

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.

Get the Lead Out! Resource Book Published

Between 2004 and 2011, the *Get the Lead Out!* program made more than 1,000 homes lead-safe with funding from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Unfortunately, HUD funding was not renewed this year.

In response to the lack of funding, the Healthy Homes Coalition has put together a pre-1978 Home Repair Guide available at www.GetTheLeadOutGR.com. The book will help homeowners and landlords who have lead problems in their homes identify good, better, and best solutions. The book also has a list of community resources that can help people make or afford repairs.

The book also informs families of the EPA's Renovation, Repair, and Painting Law, requiring contractors to be certified in lead-safe practices when dealing with more than six square feet of interior lead-based paint or twenty square feet on the exterior of their home. Because of the newness of the law (enacted in April 2010), families should ask to see a contractor's certificate before home repairs are conducted to ensure the contractor is adequately trained and certified.

Lead is a major issue in homes, particularly in Grand Rapids where 85% of homes were built prior to 1978, the year lead based paint was prohibited. Children birth through five years of age are the most at risk for lead poisoning, especially one and two year old children. Lead-tainted paint chips, dust, and soil can cause lead poisoning. Lead can easily spread within a home through simple, everyday acts such as opening and closing windows. Lead poisoning is a major issue and has the potential disrupt the nervous system, causing learning disabilities, ADHD, and other cognitive impairments.



New Housing Ordinance Protects Children and Families

The Grand Rapids City Commission passed a new ordinance October 25, 2011 that requires single-family rental properties to be routinely inspected for compliance with the City of Grand Rapids Housing Code. Prior to this action, a loophole existed that made single-family rental properties exempt from the requirement to be inspected.

“This ordinance is important because we see far too many families living in single-family rental properties with code violations that negatively impact children’s health,” said Paul Haan, Executive Director at Healthy Homes. “Our staff has witnessed—again and again—homes with severely peeling lead-based paint, water leaks contributing to dampness, mold and poor air quality, missing railings, missing smoke alarms, and other dangerous hazards for children that are against existing city codes.”

More than two years ago, the Healthy Homes Coalition began working to strengthen local codes to better protect children. This work began with a community meeting attended by more than fifty community leaders. The effort was further focused when neighborhood association leaders made it clear that they were interested in making sure local codes were enforced more consistently and proactively.

The new housing ordinance will effect landlords and tenants in Grand Rapid’s 8,500 single-family rental properties beginning July 1, 2012. Inspections will be required every four to six years.

Prior to the passage of this ordinance, inspections for single-family rental housing were only initiated by complaint. Fearing retaliation by landlords, tenants were often reluctant to make complaints. As a result, unsafe living conditions and health hazards continued to persist in many single-family rental homes. One such property had paint chips spread throughout the lawn and in windowsills, resulting in a ten-month old child being admitted to Helen DeVos Children’s Hospital with a blood lead level five times higher than the threshold set by Centers for Disease Control (see related story on page one).



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Grand Rapids, MI 49507-1307
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Healthy Homes Takes on Old Man Winter!



The Healthy Homes Coalition is working hard to make sure families are safe this winter.

January is Radon Action Month

During January, the Healthy Homes Coalition will be providing free do-it-yourself radon test kits. Stop by our office at 742 Franklin to pick one up!

Protect Your Family from Carbon Monoxide

The Healthy Homes Coalition has a limited number of carbon monoxide alarms for low-income families. Call (616) 241-3300 see if your household qualifies to have one installed.

