

Resident Asset-Building Program Gets Underway

The GRHC recently launched the asset-building initiative that is the research focus of our activities as a HUD “Moving to Work” Demonstration Program agency. Details on page 3!

Renovations Planned at GRHC Housing Communities

Renovations at Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program facilities and 15 Scattered Sites single-family units are underway or planned in the coming months. Details on page 4!

GRHC Hosts “Health & Unity” Resource Fair Event

The GRHC was pleased to partner with dozens of organizations to offer the 2nd Annual “Health & Unity in the Community” Resource Fair/Family Fun Fair at Campau Park. Details on page 5!



GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

NEWS

Fall 2023



HCV Waiting List Opens to New Applicants October 23 through 27

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) will open the waiting list for our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental subsidy program October 23 through October 27. This is the first time the HCV waiting list has opened since late 2019.

Those seeking a Housing Choice Voucher are invited to apply to the program during this period by logging on to www.GRHClist.org. The GRHC’s Housing Choice Voucher application process will be exclusively online, with no paper applications available or accepted. Applicants in need of technical assistance or an accommodation can call a phone helpline at (616) 235-2653 October 23-27 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Applicants should be aware that submitting an application does not guarantee immediate placement on the HCV waiting list. After the

application period has ended, a random selection process will add 5,000 households to the list. Because the selection of applicants and placement on the waiting list will be random, there will be no advantage to applying early during the application period.

The GRHC’s HCV Program provides a subsidy to low-income households renting privately owned property within Kent and Ottawa counties, and the Administrative Plan that governs the program requires that our agency serve residents of these counties before we serve families applying from outside of the area.

Get answers to frequently asked questions regarding the HCV Program on page 2 of this newsletter, or visit www.grhousing.org for program information and updates regarding the application process.

Housing Choice Voucher Program FAQ and Details of the 10/23 - 27 Open Application Period

The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program is the largest voucher program administered by the GRHC. Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), HCVs provide a monthly rental subsidy that supports low-income households renting privately owned property. Rent for income-eligible households is typically 30 percent of adjusted monthly household income.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Does the HCV Program waiting list allow applicants from outside of the GRHC's service area?

The GRHC's HCV Program has a preference* for residents of Kent and Ottawa counties; this means that we serve these populations before we serve those applying from outside of our area.

*The GRHC also offers a preference to Veterans with honorable discharge status and/or the surviving spouse of a veteran.

What are the household income limits for the GRHC's HCV Program?

Income limits are set annually by HUD.

Kent County Income Limits

Family Size	Maximum Annual Income
1	\$53,050
2	\$60,600
3	\$68,200
4	\$75,750
5	\$81,850
6	\$87,900
7	\$93,950
8	\$100,000

Ottawa County Income Limits

Family Size	Maximum Annual Income
1	\$55,800
2	\$63,800
3	\$71,750
4	\$79,700
5	\$86,100
6	\$92,500
7	\$98,850
8	\$105,250

I applied to the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program at a different local housing authority. Does this mean I am already on the GRHC's Housing Choice Voucher waiting list?

No. There are several housing authorities that offer Housing Choice Voucher programs in Kent and Ottawa counties; these are all independently administered and do not share waiting lists. For an opportunity to be added to the GRHC's HCV Program waiting list, you must complete and submit an application during the October 23-27 open application period.

How will the HCV Program open application process work?

- Applicants log on to www.GRHClist.org to access the GRHC's online waiting list application.
- Follow the screen prompts to complete the application process.
- Technical difficulties with the application process? Call the GRHC application helpline at (616) 235-2653; the helpline will operate 10/23-27 between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Please have your Social Security number available when you call.

What happens after I apply to the HCV waiting list?

We anticipate that the selection process that will add applicants to the HCV waiting list will be completed by early December. As soon as the finalized 2023 waiting list is available, a "check your HCV application status" link will be posted on the GRHC website, www.grhousing.org. Click the link to access the applicant portal where you will be able to check your waiting list status.

If my household is among those added to the GRHC's HCV Program waiting list, how long will it take to receive a voucher?

Because the demand for housing assistance far exceeds our supply of Housing Choice Vouchers, it may be several years before those added to the waiting list in 2023 are contacted to begin the next steps in the application process. The GRHC is currently serving households that applied to the program in late 2019.

If my application is among those selected and added to the HCV Program waiting list, how do I keep the information on my application up to date during the waiting period?

Households on a GRHC waiting list can update their application online using the applicant portal linked from www.grhousing.org.

Note to families on a GRHC waiting list:

It's important to keep your mailing address, email address and phone number up to date on the GRHC applicant portal. When your name reaches the top of the list, we will use the information on your application to contact you with next steps in the application process.

Find us on 

Follow the GRHC on Facebook for the latest program updates and special event highlights:
[facebook.com/grhousing.org](https://www.facebook.com/grhousing.org)

“Moving to Work” Resident Asset-Building Initiative Helps Families Build Savings



HCV Program Manager Wanda Couch introduces the new “Moving to Work” Asset-Building Program to residents during an orientation meeting at the Grand Rapids EnVision Center

The GRHC recently launched the resident Asset-Building Program that is the research focus of our activities as a HUD “Moving to Work” Demonstration Program agency. This initiative will assess the impact of personal savings on assisted families’ ability to maintain stable housing.

The GRHC has randomly selected 40 Housing Choice Voucher Program participants from the 99 households that attended an informational meeting or expressed interest in the program; those families have agreed to open a savings account with a participating bank or credit union. Each head of household’s account will receive a monthly \$50 cash deposit from the GRHC; participants can deposit additional amounts the GRHC will match on an annual basis up to \$1,000. We will continue to make deposits for two years or until the account balance reaches \$5,000.

There is also a youth program component that encourages families’ teen children to save. Up to three youth ages 13-18 in each participating household can open a savings account to receive a monthly GRHC deposit of \$25. Youth participants can deposit additional amounts that will be matched by the GRHC on an annual basis up to \$500 per year for two years or until the account balance reaches \$2,500. The goal for all participants is to let funds accrue in the savings accounts for at least two years.

Staff recently met with representatives from area banks and community partner organizations to encourage their participation as providers of financial support, banking services and/or financial literacy training. We are pleased to have received commitments from Fifth Third Bank, Home Repair Services, Horizon Bank, Huntington Bank, Independent Bank, Lake Michigan Credit Union, Mercantile Bank, Michigan First Credit Union, MSU Extension and Northpointe Bank as we begin the first phase of this new program.

Family Self-Sufficiency Program: Another Path to a Stronger Financial Future

The GRHC administers a voluntary Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program that offers our affordable housing program participants a great opportunity to build a financial “nest egg” when an increase in earned income increases the household’s share of monthly rent; an amount roughly equal to the rental payment adjustment is deposited into an escrow account each month for the family. Escrow can accrue for up to five years and is disbursed when the participant graduates from the program.

To successfully complete the program, a family must be free of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cash assistance for at least the last 12 months of the FSS contract, the head of household must have income from gainful employment, and the family must have fulfilled all training and service plans. During 2022 the FSS Program disbursed a total of \$240,973 to 34 program graduates, with an average escrow award of \$7,087.

GRHC residents can discover the benefits of participation in the FSS Program by attending one of many orientation meetings scheduled throughout the year. More information and a link to an FSS Self-Referral and Orientation Meeting Registration Form are available online at: www.grhousing.org/fssSelfReferral.html

HCV Homeownership Orientation Meeting Offered December 12



The GRHC’s HCV Homeownership Program offers eligible Housing Choice Voucher recipients the opportunity to use their Housing Assistance Payment toward a home mortgage payment rather than rental housing expenses.

The program will offer an Orientation Meeting in December:

Tuesday, December 12

2:00 p.m.

Wyoming Public Library

3350 Michael Avenue SW, Wyoming

Registration is required. To register or for more information about the program:

www.grhousing.org/home-ownership-program.php

Development Update: Renovations Underway and Planned at GRHC Housing Communities

At its August meeting the Housing Commission approved the award of contracts to MCSA Group and Integrated Architecture, two architectural and engineering firms that will work with GRHC staff to support a variety of maintenance, improvement, rehabilitation and construction projects over the next several years.

A priority for the GRHC development team is a much-needed renovation of the Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program Service Center, which houses 12 dwelling units as well as management offices and resident meeting space.



Hope Community Service Center renovations will get underway this fall

A \$500,000 City of Grand Rapids HOME-ARP/ERRIS grant will fund the first phase of our Service Center renovations, which will include replacing the facility's heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems. Additional renovations to both the Service Center and 12 Hope Community duplex units in the surrounding neighborhood will get underway as funding is available. The GRHC has identified a total of \$2.4 million in needed capital improvements at the program's facilities, which house families experiencing homelessness. We continue to seek financial resources to complete this important rehabilitation project.

Scattered Sites Renovations Underway



One of 15 Scattered Sites homes being renovated in preparation for sale

Units Available Soon at Several GRHC Senior Communities



Mount Mercy Apartments grounds

Several GRHC senior housing developments have relatively short waiting lists, with vacancies expected within the next six months. All of these well-maintained properties offer affordable rent that includes utilities, on-site laundry facilities, food pantry and supportive services, scheduled social events and much more.

Properties anticipating vacancies include:

- Adams Park Apartments, 1440 Fuller Avenue SE
- Leonard Terrace Apartments, 1315 Leonard Street NE
- Mount Mercy Apartments, 1425 Bridge Street NW
- Ransom Tower Apartments, 50 Ransom Avenue NE

For more information about these and other GRHC senior communities: www.grhousing.org/senior-apartments.php

The GRHC continues to work toward selling the remaining 15 Scattered Sites home ownership units in our Low-Income Public Housing inventory. A total of \$749,000 in capital needs at these properties are currently being addressed, after which the Housing Commission will apply for disposition through the HUD Section 18 Program.

All Scattered Sites units sold under the Section 18 disposition approval will remain affordable either through sale to the current resident, a GRHC Family Self-Sufficiency Program participant, a nonprofit organization or a resident of the community whose household income is not greater than 80 percent of area median income.

Scattered Sites residents who do not purchase the homes they currently occupy will be offered another form of housing assistance and may be eligible for relocation assistance under the Uniform Relocation Act.

Funds from the sale of these homes will support new development projects as well as the rehabilitation of existing properties.

GRHC Hosts 2nd Annual “Health & Unity in the Community” Event at Campau Park

The GRHC was pleased to partner with the Black Impact Collaborative, Cherry Health and dozens of other organizations to offer the 2nd Annual “Health & Unity in the Community” Resource Fair/Family Fun Fair at Campau Park during late June. In addition to health care and community services information, resources and support, the event featured a bounce house, children’s games, face painting, temporary tattoos, snowcones, popcorn, cotton candy, music provided by Main Street Association and a delicious lunch hot off the grill.

Many thanks to GRHC Resident Services Specialist Erin Shibley for coordinating this event, to our staff volunteers, to Leonard Leek and Main Street Association for emceeing, to the GRPD officers who stopped by and to all of the organizations who provided goods, services and resource tables, including...

- AARP
- Area Agency on Aging
- Bimbo Bakeries
- Black Impact Collaborative
- Cherry Health AmeriCorps
- Corewell Health
- Elara Caring
- Family Outreach Center
- Feeding America West Michigan
- Grand Rapids Community College
- Grand Rapids Public Library
- GRPS Nutrition Services
- Head Start of Kent County
- Hispanic Center of Western Michigan
- Humana
- Humane Society of West Michigan
- Legal Aid of Western Michigan
- Main Street Association
- Oak Street Health
- PACE/Care Resources
- Renew Mobility
- Senior Neighbors
- Sheldon Clubhouse
- THAW Fund
- The Rapid
- Two Men and a Truck
- United Methodist Community House
- Verizon Wireless



Above: Dollie Grant from the Black Impact Collaborative offers information, fun and prizes

Right, clockwise from top: the team from Cherry Health gift a free squeezable “stress critter” to an attendee; Feeding America staff offer information about food resources; the GRPL Mobile Library provides on-site library resources; young attendees enjoy a ball toss game; friendly GRPD officers join in the fun; AARP staff and their happy visitors; young winner of some tasty candy treats



“Health Care Extravaganza” Brings Resources, Summer Fun to Adams Park Apartments

The GRHC hosted a late-July “Health Care Extravaganza” at Adams Park Apartments. Twenty-three community organizations joined us to provide Adams Park residents and their neighbors with helpful resources as well as prizes and a variety of tasty summer treats. The event also featured an American Red Cross Blood Drive.

Many thanks to GRHC Resident Services Specialist Eric Turkaleski for organizing the Extravaganza, to our staff volunteers and to all of the community partners who donated time and resources to make this event a success:

- Aetna
- American Red Cross
- Amplify GR
- Area Agency on Aging
- Black Impact Collaborative
- The Care Team Hospice
- Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative
- Elara Caring
- Family Outreach Center
- Feeding America West Michigan
- Grand Rapids Red Project
- Hispanic Center of Western Michigan
- Humana
- Humane Society of West Michigan
- Kent County Health Department
- Life EMS
- Mobile Happy Lights Relaxation Station
- Molina Healthcare
- Oak Street Health
- Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services
- The Rapid
- Senior Neighbors
- Team Get Fit



Pictured clockwise from top: Grand Rapids Fire Department EMS Captain Steve MacBride welcomes recruits to the Junior Fire Brigade; GRHC Asset Manager Ufoma Johnson, Resident Services Specialist Eric Turkaleski and an AARP volunteer take a break from cookout duties; the Amplify GR team displays raffle prizes; a Hispanic Center staffer offers service information; GRHC HCV Coordinator Nate Jindra mans the popcorn station; a representative from the Kent County Health Department offers health screenings and resources; Senior Neighbors staff greet an attendee



Human Resources Update

Staff Promotion



José Capeles has been promoted from Business Intelligence Analyst to a new Policy and Program Planning and Implementation Manager position within the GRHC's

Administrative Office. José has also served as a Housing Choice Voucher Manager at our agency and has extensive knowledge of GRHC programs and initiatives. In his new role he will work with the executive team to plan and implement various programs, including "Moving to Work" initiatives. He will also oversee strategic planning efforts, analyze policy and make recommendations to achieve agency outcomes.

Staff Transfer



Felicia Clay, LMSW, has transferred from her position as Director of Asset Management to a re-established Director of Resident Services position. In her new role Felicia


will oversee the GRHC Resident Services division, including the services offered at our agency-owned housing developments as well as the new "Moving to Work" resident Asset-Building Program and Grand Rapids EnVision Center activities. Felicia has been with the GRHC since 2008 and has prior experience leading our Resident Services team and partnering with service organizations.





View the employment opportunities currently available with the GRHC:

<https://www.grhousing.org/employment-opportunities.php>

New "Introduction to the HCV Program" Video for Landlords

Owner Benefits



-  **Payments:** Receive consistent payments from GRHC every month; tenants are more likely to pay rent timely.
-  **Flexibility:** Choose your tenants, use your own lease, and set your own lease terms.
-  **Increased Retention:** Experience lower vacancy rates and easily submit rent increase requests to GRHC.
-  **Additional Resources:** Benefit from free unit advertising, tax savings programs, and free property inspections.

Frame from "The Housing Choice Voucher Program for Owners" video

The GRHC Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program has produced a new video introduction to the program designed specifically for our landlord partners. This short presentation explains how the HCV Program works, the responsibilities of the GRHC, the rental property owner and the tenant, the lease-up and unit inspection processes, how Housing Assistance Payments are

determined and disbursed, and the benefits that accrue to owners who participate in the program. The program also explains how to participate in the GRHC's new Landlord Incentive Program.

Find a link to this helpful new video here: <https://www.grhousing.org/rental-property-owners.php>

Bobbie Butler Community Center Hosts "National Night Out" Celebration



From left: GRHC staff join residents in a game; a GRPD officer plays Jenga with young residents

The Bobbie Butler Community Center at Creston Plaza was pleased to offer an early August "National Night Out" event for GRHC residents and their neighbors. The event was hosted by GRHC Resident Services and Asset Management staff and included games, fun and treats for all.

Many thanks to GRPD Chief Eric Winstrom and all of the GRPD officers who stopped by to join the celebration. Thanks also to Main Street Association for providing music during this fun special event.



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School Year Kicks Off with “Back to School Bash” at GRHC Family Housing Developments

The GRHC celebrated the early fall season with “Back to School Bash” events at the Campau Commons Community Center and the Bobbie Butler Community Center at Creston Plaza. Both events featured games, prizes, treats and, of course, sturdy backpacks and plenty of school supplies!

Many thanks to The StoreHouse for providing an incredible discount on dozens of great backpacks, to the congregation of New Hope Baptist Church for donating bikes and helmets that made some lucky young prize winners very happy, and to all of the GRHC staff donors and volunteers who supported these fun family events. Here’s to a great school year!



Creston Plaza bash, clockwise from top: GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames (right) and Director of Resident Services Felicia Clay (center) award a parent prize winner her gift card; lucky winner of a new bike; Jenga game fun; two friends check out the new school supplies; GRHC Resident Services Specialist Latasha Maberry serves up a treat

Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:

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