

Rental Assistance Demonstration Program Conversions Underway

The conversion of 322 Public Housing units to Project-Based Program housing has begun, with completion slated for late 2017. This will enable the GRHC to undertake \$6 million in improvements. Details on page 3!

GRHC Receives GVSU Distinguished Community Engagement Award

The GRHC was honored to receive an award for a collaboration with the GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing that brings health services to residents of Adams Park Apartments. Details on page 5!

“Art Fest” Competitions at Leonard Terrace and Mount Mercy

Talented resident artists from two GRHC retirement developments competed for prizes and the admiration of the many art lovers who visited the early October events. Details on page 7!

GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION **NEWS**

AUTUMN 2016



Pictured from left: WOOD TV8 Community Affairs Director Eva Aguirre Cooper emcees the GRHC's 50th Anniversary Gala; keynote speaker Roy S. Roberts offers insights into a career that brought him to the top of the global auto industry; the Gala was both a celebration and a fund-raiser for the GRHC's Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Program, and we were honored to have the support of the McKee family.

GRHC Celebrates 50 Years of Service to Our Community

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) celebrated our 50th Anniversary with a September gala at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. The event was emceed by WOOD TV8 Community Affairs Director Eva Aguirre Cooper and included a reception followed by dinner and a presentation by keynote speaker Roy S. Roberts. Many thanks to these community leaders for donating their talents to our event!

The author of the autobiography “My American Success Story: Always the First, Never the Last,” Roy Roberts is a businessman and philanthropist who became the highest-ranking African American executive in the history of the auto industry. He is also a past president of the Grand Rapids chapter of the NAACP, served on the board of the Grand Rapids Urban League and was a Kent County Commissioner.

GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez also spoke at the event. “During the past five decades,

the Housing Commission has grown from 228 units of Public Housing in 1969 to more than 4,300 units provided through a diverse array of programs,” he noted. “We are grateful for the support of the many community partners who have joined us as we celebrate our successes over the years and also celebrate plans to undertake new ventures that will expand housing quality and opportunity in our community.”

The GRHC plans a total of \$6 million in improvements at its agency-owned housing developments in the year ahead (see related story on page 3), and our five-year plan includes the goal of developing new home ownership units that will be made available to low-income families. We are also exploring the option to participate in a new HUD demonstration program that would make it possible for us to develop a new retirement development near Campau Commons Apartments.

(continued on next page)

(GRHC Celebrates 50 Years of Service, continued from first page)



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The GRHC board and staff extend our sincere thanks to all of the community partners who joined us for the 50th Anniversary Gala. Local, state and national officials also offered their support, and we thank Grand Rapids City Commissioner Joe Jones, Representative David LaGrand, Mary Judnich from Senator Stabenow's office, Peter Dickow from Senator Peters' office and Stephen DenBoer from Representative Amash's office for their presence and participation.



Representative David LaGrand presents a proclamation from the State of Michigan.



City Commissioner Joe Jones presents a proclamation from the City of Grand Rapids.

Our 50th Anniversary event would not have been possible without our event sponsors:

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The Gala raised more than \$28,000 for the GRHC's Jean McKee

Resident Scholarship Program. Established in memory of longtime Housing Commissioner Jean McKee, this program offers college scholarships of up to \$2,000 to residents of our affordable housing programs. Since the scholarship's inception in 2000, the GRHC has supported the educational goals of 31 students, distributing \$31,500 in funds.

A grateful tip of the mortarboard to our Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Program direct donors: Bob & Ann Cooper
Adrian & Elizabeth Gerritsen
Grand Rapids Community College
Hurst Mechanical
F. William McKee Sr.
James & Barbara McKee
Patrick Miles Sr. & Shirley Miles
John Smith

Finally, we salute our stellar 50th Anniversary Planning Committee volunteers for lending our event their time and talents: Beverly Drake
Melvin Fox
James Haveman
Ellen James
City Commissioner Ruth Kelly
Peter Lozicki
Patrick Miles Sr.
Mary Alice Williams

2016-2017 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Winners!

Congratulations to the Jean McKee Resident Scholarship winners for the current academic year:

Jancy Mendoza-Vazquez is attending Calvin College where she is studying pre-medicine, with the goal of becoming a Physician Assistant.

Ashley Jones-Stewart attends Western Michigan University and is pursuing an Elementary Education degree.

Christian Jackson attends Kendall College of Art & Design as a Digital Media student.

\$6 Million in Improvements Planned at GRHC Housing Developments

HUD Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program awards are making it possible for the GRHC to convert 322 agency-owned housing units from the Low-Income Public Housing Program to Section 8 Project-Based Program housing. Conversion will provide 20-year contracts that are compatible with the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program, making it possible for the GRHC to attract the funding that will enable us to undertake much-needed capital improvement projects.

Units slated for RAD Program conversion include:

- Campau Commons Apartments, 92 units; conversion completed fall 2016.
- Adams Park Apartments, 188 units; conversion to be completed late 2016.
- Scattered Sites duplexes, 42 units; conversion to be completed late 2017.

HUD has approved the conversion of Campau Commons and \$100,000 in improvements are planned this fall, including parking lot repaving, concrete repairs and energy conservation enhancements.

Applications for a total of \$3.4 million in LIHTC have been submitted to fund \$400,000 in improvements at several Scattered Sites units as well as the following projects at Adams Park:

- Boiler replacement
- Air conditioning for all units
- Exterior lighting improvements



The Mount Mercy gazebo will be re-painted as one of many improvements planned at the northwest-side retirement development.

- Grounds improvements
- New furniture in the Adams Park gazebo
- Vinyl flooring replacement
- Roofing and window replacement/repairs
- New kitchen and bath cabinets and counter tops
- Parking lot improvements

Parking lot improvements at Adams Park will be completed this fall and other improvements will get underway when a LIHTC award is received. The GRHC expects a decision regarding our Adams Park LIHTC application by year end; a decision regarding our Scattered Sites application is expected by February 2017.

Capital Improvements at Leonard Terrace Apartments and Mount Mercy Apartments

Mortgage loan refinancing will make it possible for the GRHC to make numerous much-needed upgrades at Leonard Terrace and Mount Mercy in the year ahead.

Leonard Terrace will receive \$1.56 million in improvements, including:

- Parking lot resurfacing, sidewalk and curb repairs

- Trim trees, landscaping enhancements
- New west door and frame
- New windows and storm windows throughout the building
- Heating and ventilation improvements
- New apartment entry, bedroom and bathroom doors, with handicapped-accessible lever handles
- Modify bathtubs to walk-in tubs
- New kitchen cabinets and counter tops
- Additional security cameras
- New carpet in common areas
- New furniture in common areas

Mount Mercy will receive \$850,000 in improvements, including:

- Driveway and parking lot resurfacing
- Sidewalk repairs
- Exterior lighting and landscaping improvements
- Foundation repairs
- Storm windows in auditorium, café and chapel
- New exterior entrance doors
- Roof repairs
- New boilers and water heater
- New kitchen cabinets
- New bathroom cabinet doors
- Modify bathtubs to walk-in tubs
- Common area improvements, including painting and furniture replacement
- Security system improvements

No planned improvements will require displacing residents from their homes. For updates: www.grhousing.org/development.

GRHC Hosts Flint Housing Commission Tour

The GRHC recently welcomed staff and residents from Flint Housing Commission to Grand Rapids where the visitors got an overview of GRHC development activities and toured several of our housing developments. The late-May visit was part of a discovery process Flint Housing Commission has undertaken as a recipient of a \$500,000 HUD Choice Neighborhoods Grant award. Choice Neighborhoods is a program designed to help communities craft comprehensive plans to revitalize distressed neighborhoods.

Many thanks to City of Grand Rapids Managing Director of Community Services Connie Bohatch for offering the tour group information about City affordable housing initiatives, and thanks to Flint Housing Commission for giving the GRHC the privilege of participating in its efforts to improve Flint residents' access to affordable housing.



Clockwise from top: GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez (center) leads the Flint Housing Commission group through the historic Mount Mercy Chapel; the tour kicks off with a brief overview of recent GRHC development activities; members of the Flint group tour the Mount Mercy café.

GRHC Board Updates

New Housing Commissioner Monica Steimle



The Housing Commission and our staff recently welcomed a new member to our governing board. Monica Steimle is the Director of Community Relations for 616 Development, a company that develops urban real estate in Grand Rapids and Battle Creek.

Ms. Steimle's community involvement also includes service on the boards of Friends of Grand Rapids Parks, Local First and the Hispanic Center of West Michigan.

Thank You to Former Commissioner Robert Cooper

The GRHC board and staff extend our sincere thanks to Robert Cooper, who served on the Housing Commission for more than 15 years. Mr. Cooper has helped our agency navigate many challenges and maximize many opportunities over the years. We thank him for his support and are grateful that he continues to serve as the board President of development nonprofit Ransom Avenue Development Corporation.

In Memoriam: Bruce Dutcher

Leonard Terrace Housing Corporation board President Bruce Dutcher passed away on March 5, 2016. Mr. Dutcher served on the Leonard Terrace board for decades and we extend our gratitude as well as our sincere condolences to his family.

The GRHC thanks Housing Commissioner Patrick Miles Sr. for agreeing to serve as President of the Leonard Terrace Housing Corporation.

New Resident Advisory Board Members

Welcome to the following recently appointed members of our Resident Advisory Board:

- Teresa Boileau represents Adams Park Apartments
- Barbara Jones represents Ransom Tower Apartments
- Tiana Ortiz represents Campau Commons Apartments
- Leonard Webster represents Creston Plaza Apartments

Church Group Spruces Up Adams Park



*Above: TASC volunteers paint a picnic table in the Adams Park gazebo.
Below: Volunteers refurbish a resident garden box.*

Adams Park Apartments residents are benefiting from the efforts of teen volunteers who improved the grounds at Adams Park this past summer.

resident garden boxes. The group also hosted an ice cream social. Many thanks to TASC for this much-appreciated support of our residents and agency!

Teens Actively Serving Christ (TASC), a one-week Christian service program, donated the services of a seven-person volunteer crew that included a retired carpenter. The volunteers braved the mid-July heat to sand and paint the furniture in the gazebo and refurbish several



GRHC Receives GVSU Award

The GRHC and the GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing recently received a Distinguished Community Engagement Award from Grand Valley State University in recognition of a partnership that brings GVSU nursing students to Adams Park Apartments. The nursing students receive valuable field experience while providing regular health screening and health educational events to the disabled and senior residents who make Adams Park their home. The award included a \$1,000 contribution to support the Adams Park initiative.

A key force behind the ongoing collaborative effort is Dr. Meridell Gracias, a longtime GRHC community partner who has assisted Adams Park residents for more than a decade, supporting the on-site food pantry, nutrition education programs and other resident health services. We are proud of our association with Dr. Gracias and the Kirkhof College of Nursing team, and we look forward to continuing to work with them to provide vital health services to our residents.

GVSU has created a video that provides an overview of the award-winning health partnership at Adams Park—View it online at <https://youtu.be/VeNARsAl01s>

Mount Mercy Hosts Craft Sale



Mount Mercy residents joined creative forces for a spring craft sale in the retirement development's on-site café. Resident shoppers chose from a colorful variety of handcrafted floral arrangements, frames, accessories and more, plus fresh baked goods. Kudos to our residents for sharing their talents!

GRHC Human Resources Update

Staff Promotions

Barb Adams has been promoted from Office Assistant at Adams Park Apartments to Administrative Assistant for our main office.

Russell Hamlett has been promoted from Waiting List Specialist to Section 8 Coordinator.

Laura Oesch has been promoted from Resident Services Specialist to Assistant Asset Manager for Adams Park Apartments and Campau Commons Apartments.

Damaris Valle has been promoted from Office Assistant to Waiting List Specialist.

Staff On the Move

Assistant Asset Manager Talimma Billips is now assigned to Creston Plaza Apartments, Sheldon Apartments and the Scattered Sites Program.

Assistant Asset Manager Margo Gatling is now assigned to Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program in addition to Mount Mercy Apartments.

Joyce Smith has transferred from Communications & Information Program Manager to Communications and Program Coordinator.

Welcome, New Hires!

Lena Agnew is the Resident Services Specialist for Mount Mercy Apartments. Lena has worked as a social worker for the YWCA and has an MSW degree from Western Michigan University.

Trenessa Allen is the Resident Services Specialist for Ransom Tower Apartments. Trenessa has worked for HQ Family Promise and The Bridge as a social worker. She has experience working in crisis intervention and with older adults, and has an MSW degree from Grand Valley State University (GVSU).

Deshario Collins is the Custodian for Sheldon Apartments and the Scattered Sites Program. Deshario has five years of experience working in the custodial and sanitation fields.

New Hires , continued

Wanda Couch is the Resident Services Specialist for Hope Community. Wanda has worked for GRPS, Lighthouse Academy, Project Rehab and ICCF. She has a master's degree in Counseling Psychology from Western Michigan University and is a limited license psychologist.

Anita Elmer is the Office Assistant for Adams Park. Anita comes to the GRHC from a position as a ministry assistant. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business from Grand Rapids Baptist College.

Maria Lara is the Resident Services Specialist for Sheldon Apartments. Maria's experience includes jobs with Family Outreach Center and Spectrum Health. She has an MSW degree from GVSU.

Levi Nation is the Maintenance Technician for Leonard Terrace and the Scattered Sites Program. Levi was formerly employed as a maintenance supervisor for the City of Killeen Housing Authority.

Benjamin Radue is a Section 8 Coordinator at the GRHC administrative office. Benjamin was formerly employed as a case manager for Serenity Point and has an MPA degree from GVSU.

Destiny Willis is a Waiting List Specialist at our administrative office. Destiny's work history includes a position as a case worker for the Department of Human Services (DHS).

Congratulations, Betsy Chambers-Hole!

Main office Administrative Assistant Betsy Chambers-Hole retired in June after a career of more than 30 years with the GRHC. We wish her well as she begins an exciting new chapter in her life.

In Memoriam

The GRHC staff and board are saddened to report the passing of two valued employees this past spring.

Computer Network Systems Coordinator Duane Gage passed away March 26. Duane was our resident technical expert for more than 15 years. His extensive expertise and dry sense of humor are sorely missed.

Maintenance Technician John Abram passed away on May 19. John served our residents and agency for more than 15 years, working at Leonard Terrace, Mount Mercy and Scattered Sites.

Condolences to the families of these two exceptional men.

First Leonard Terrace Art Fest!

Leonard Terrace Apartments hosted the retirement development's first "Art Fest" competition during early October. Seven talented resident artists presented textiles, wood carvings, collage and crayon works, and more. The 1st Place winner was Lyle Walkinhood who entered a beautifully intricate cane he carved during his time in the military. Renee Bercel won 2nd Place with her crocheted blanket and etched-wood landscape, and Mike Favreau earned a 3rd Place award with his "stained glass" depictions of soldiers. Prizes were Family Fare gift cards.



Congratulations to all of the winners, and many thanks to our resident Art Fest volunteers and to the 89 art lovers who cast their ballots!



Pictured from top: First Place-winning carved cane by Lyle Walkinhood; Renee Bercel with her Second Place-winning blanket and etched-wood landscape; one of the Third Place-winning multicolor resin images of soldiers by Mike Favreau.

Mount Mercy Art Fest Is Back!



*Above: Brenda Evans with her 1st Place-winning painting "Birch View" and other artwork.
Below: Charles Hinzmann's 2nd Place-winning work "Flowers at Mount Mercy in Summer."*

"Art Fest" returned to Mount Mercy Apartments this fall! The early October competition featured works by many talented resident artists, with media ranging from fiber and paint to mixed media and photography. Ninety-



one art lovers cast their votes to award 1st Place to Brenda Evans for her painting "Birch View." Charles Hinzmann won the competition's 2nd Place award for his mixed-media sculptures "Flowers at Mount Mercy in Summer." Third Place went to Stephen Rosselet for his work "Turtles." First and 2nd Place winners received a gift card, trophy and certificate, and the 3rd Place winner received a gift card and certificate.

Congratulations to all, and thanks to all of those who stopped by to enjoy the competition and vote!



Left: Photographer Michael Burns shows a beautiful and tranquil winter scene.





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Lois Alexander Retires



Ransom Tower residents and GRHC staff gathered in the Ransom Tower Community Room in early July to bid a fond farewell to retiring Resident Services Specialist Lois Alexander, LMSW. Lois was with the GRHC for 13 years, first as our Family Self-Sufficiency Program Manager and for the past few years as part of our Resident Services team.



Lois' retirement plans include bicycling trips and many exciting travel adventures. She will also continue her part-time counseling practice.

Congratulations, Lois, and best wishes!



GRHC Resident Reflections: New Video Online!



To mark our 50th Anniversary, the GRHC invited residents of our housing developments and participants in Section 8 Homeownership and Family Self-Sufficiency Programs to offer their thoughts about GRHC housing programs. Their responses are recorded in a celebratory video that can be viewed on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/Fm4zrythITw>.

Ransom Tower Residents Host Tea Party



Ransom Tower hosted a spring tea party in the development's Community Room. Guests enjoyed live classical violin music, a speaker, tasty tea cakes and treats, and of course... hats! Kudos to the residents who planned this lovely event.

Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:

Bobbie Butler, President; Betty Zylstra, Vice President; Angela Bunn, Patrick Miles Sr., Monica Steimle; GRHC Executive Director: Carlos A. Sanchez

Editor: Joyce Smith; Staff Contributors: Lena Agnew, Trenessa Allen, Judy Cannon-Groce, Felicia Clay, Kathy Monroe, Eulondon Reeves, Carlos A. Sanchez, Erin Shibley, Hattie Tinney, Michael Weaver, Erin Wiczorek

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