

“A Celebration of Hope” Supports Hope Community Residents

A mid-October reception and silent auction brought GRHC staff and community partners together to raise funds that will help Hope Community residents make the transition to permanent housing. Details on page 3!

“Art Fest” Competitions at Leonard Terrace and Mount Mercy

Talented resident artists from two GRHC retirement developments shared their recent creative work during friendly on-site art competitions juried by the many art lovers who attended. Details on page 5!

“Thanks for Giving” Volunteer Recognition Event

GRHC Resident Services staff hosted a special event to recognize and thank the many community partner organizations and volunteers who donate time, talent, goods and services to our residents and agency. Details on page 7!

GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

NEWS

AUTUMN 2017



GRHC Resident Services staff discuss the case studies that help SOAR trainees apply what they are learning in the program’s online training modules. Pictured left to right: Wanda Couch, Eulondon Reeves, Maria Lara, Lena Agnew, Laura Oesch.

Resident Services Staff Earn SSI/SSDI SOAR Program Certification

GRHC Resident Services Specialists recently completed specialized training that will help them to better serve individuals who are homeless or at risk for homelessness. The SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) program gives professionals who provide direct client services the information and insights they need to help vulnerable households successfully navigate the process of applying for Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance benefits. SOAR can open doors to housing, medical care, increased self-sufficiency and improved quality of life.

SOAR is funded by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and was created to address barriers that often prevent eligible citizens from accessing available benefits. SAMHSA reports that just 28 percent of SSI/SSDI applicants nationwide are approved on initial application; fewer than 14 percent of applicants who are homeless and have no one to assist them are approved. In Michigan the SOAR program is

administered by the state Department of Health and Human Services, the Michigan State Housing Development Authority and the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH).

To become SOAR certified, GRHC staff completed an extensive series of required online training modules and attended a SOAR Fundamentals course provided by SOAR Local Lead Victoria Sluga, a Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services professional who heads the Pine Rest “StreetReach” homeless recovery program, and Wayne Kennerly, the SOAR Liaison from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Services our staff will now provide to expedite the SSI/SSDI application process include linking applicants with needed health assessments and obtaining and filing required documentation.

Our staff looks forward to using their expanded Social Security program expertise to help eligible individuals access needed benefits.

Hope Community Residents Spread Holiday Cheer



A few of the colorful holiday cards created by Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program residents.

Hope Community residents recently used their artistic skills to make beautiful holiday greeting cards that have been sent to community partner organizations as well as to residents of Sheldon Apartments, a 45-unit senior housing community administered by the GRHC. Kudos to these residents for giving back to our community, and thanks to The Craft Outlet for donating card-making supplies and to GVSU Social Work intern Savanna Wright for facilitating the card-making effort!

New Hope Baptist Church Hosts Resident Special Events

The congregation of New Hope Baptist Church recently hosted a “Night Out 2017” event for residents of Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program that featured crafts, games, food, fun and prizes. Every Hope Community mother received a gift from Bath and Body Works, and the congregation also donated linens, tableware and personal care items. New Hope hosted a similar special event for residents of Campau Commons Apartments.

New Hope Baptist Church has a long tradition of lending a helping hand to GRHC residents, and we thank this generous congregation for their continuing support!

Gorman’s, Two Men and A Truck Support Hope Community



Many thanks to Gorman’s Home Furnishings for the recent donation of a beautiful dining room set and six mattresses to Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program! Thanks also to Two Men and a Truck for picking up the donated furniture and delivering it to Hope Community free of charge!

Hope Community is funded, in part, by a federal Supportive Housing grant, but relies on donations for many of its routine operating needs. For information about how you can support Hope Community as a donor or volunteer, please review the Hope Community “wish list” at www.grhousing.org, or call our staff at (616) 235-2893. Thank you!

Welcome, Fall Social Work Interns



Many thanks to the social work student interns who are supporting our Resident Services program! Pictured from left: Savanna Wright, Grand Valley State University (GVSU); Kelly McKay, GVSU; Brian Kruzell, GVSU; and Crystal Truong, Western Michigan University.

Interns handle duties that range from planning and coordinating resident social events and outings to helping residents find needed services. Interns are supervised by GRHC Resident Services staff.

GRHC Hosts “A Celebration of Hope” Event In Support of Hope Community Residents

GRHC Resident Services staff hosted a mid-October “Celebration of Hope” reception and silent auction that raised \$1,518; these funds are being used to help families living at Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program pay some of the expenses associated with a move to permanent housing, including rental application fees, security deposits, the first month’s rent, moving costs, furniture and other household necessities.

Attendees enjoyed refreshments, inspiring talks by past and current Hope Community residents, and the opportunity to win an easy chair and bid on exciting auction items that included retail and restaurant gift certificates, fine jewelry, tickets to local attractions and gym memberships.

Many thanks to Great Lakes Furnishings for loaning their showroom to this event and for

donating the raffled easy chair. Thanks also to Hope Community resident Evelyn Echols for sharing her story, to Resident Assistant Tica Floyd for offering insights into life at Hope Community, to the staff and community partners who joined us and to all of our event sponsors and donors:

- Bittersweet Ski Area
- Celebration Cinema
- Grand Rapids Children’s Museum
- Grand Rapids Public Museum
- Grand Rapids Symphony
- Grand Rapids Police Department
- Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park
- Great Lakes Furnishings
- Jimmy John’s
- Ken’s Furniture & Mattress
- The Kroc Center
- Marie Catrib’s
- The Mosley Family Reserve Wine & Food
- Walmart



Pictured clockwise from top: Trying out the easy chair donated by Great Lakes Furnishings; attendees enjoy good food and great company; GRHC staff make their silent auction bids; raffle drawing; fresh hot popcorn was a hit with kids of all ages; Hope Community Resident Assistant Tica Floyd addresses the group; resident Evelyn Echols shares her story.

Summer Meal Program Wraps with “Back-to-School Bash”



Campau Commons and Creston Plaza wrapped up the on-site “Meet Up and Eat Up” summer meal program with a “Back-to-School Bash” at each development. Dozens of young diners joined GRHC staff to enjoy lunch, a flash card game, back-to-school bingo and loads of school-related prizes! The USDA-funded meal program strives to ensure that children who rely on school meal programs during the school year don’t go hungry in the summer months.

Thanks to Grand Rapids Public Schools for facilitating the summer meal program in our community, and kudos to GRHC staffers Lena Agnew, Esther McMurray, Laura Oesch and Eulondon Reeves for coordinating GRHC participation in the program.



Pictured clockwise from top: Lead Resident Services and FSS Specialist Laura Oesch helps a young diner decode a flash card; winner of cool back-to-school shades models his prize; multiple bingo winners vie for the attention of Campau Commons Office Assistant Esther McMurray; conferring at the prize table; a winner shows off her new pencil case; bingo players lend each other a hand.

Leonard Terrace “Art Fest!”

The 2nd Annual Leonard Terrace Apartments “Art Fest” competition was held in early October. This year saw double the number of entries from the inaugural competition, and it was a very close race—with 126 ballots cast, there were just two votes separating the first- and second-prize winners and just five votes separating second and third prize. Sixteen talented resident artists presented textiles, leather work, wood carvings, collages, sculptures, paintings, crayon works and more.



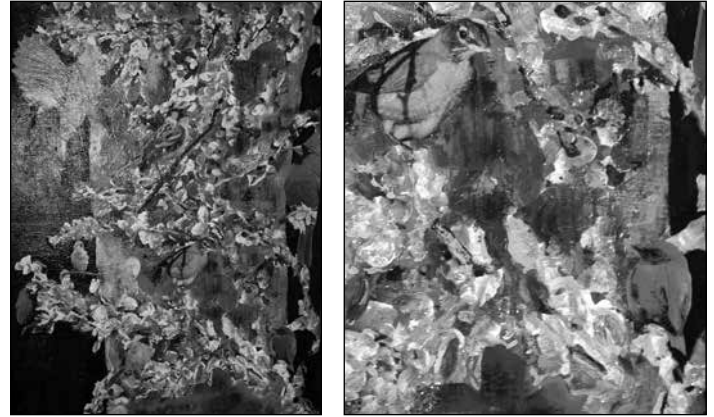
Lyle Walkinhood won 1st Place once again with a highly polished table decorated with wood-burned animal designs. Florine Guyton won 2nd Place with her painting of the Eiffel Tower, and Sandy Waters earned a 3rd Place award with her embossed leather designs. Prizes were Family Fare gift cards.



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



Mount Mercy “Art Fest!”



Above: 1st Prize-winning “Autumn,” a painting by Lynda Lalonde (left), and detail from the painting.

Below: Charles Hinzmann’s 2nd Prize-winning “Nature’s Creation.”



“Art Fest” returned to Mount Mercy Apartments in early October, bringing a record number of entries from resident artists. The competition featured a wide range of media,

including fiber, paint, crayon, pastels, glass, mixed media and photography. Dozens of art lovers cast their votes to award 1st Place to Lynda Lalonde for her painting “Autumn.” Charles Hinzmann won the competition’s 2nd Place award for his mixed-media sculpture “Nature’s Creation.” Third Place went to Brenda Evans for her painting entitled “Moonbeams.” Winners received cash prizes.

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

Right: “Moonbeams” by Brenda Evans was the Art Fest 3rd Prize winner.



“What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest Invites Entries from K-12 Students

The GRHC invites residents in grades kindergarten through 12 to enter the 2018 “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest. The contest is sponsored by the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO) and offers awards in local, state, regional and national competitions within the following age categories: Elementary: grades kindergarten - 5 Middle: grades 6 - 8 High: grades 9 - 12

The local GRHC competition is open exclusively to residents of Grand Rapids Housing Commission affordable housing programs. Posters must meet the following specifications to be potentially eligible for state, regional and national awards:

Theme: “What Home Means to Me”

Size: 22 inches x 28 inches

Media: May use any media (marker, crayon, paint, etc.); posters must be suitable to be packaged, mailed and reproduced.

Poster Making Workshops at Campau Commons and Creston Plaza—All GRHC Residents Welcome!

The Community Centers at both developments will offer “open hours” when young GRHC residents in grades K-12 can create a “What Home Means to Me” poster contest entry:

- Campau Commons Community Center, 861 South Division Ave.: February 5 - 8, 3 - 5 p.m.
- Creston Plaza Community Center, 1080 Creston Plaza Dr. NE: January 29 - February 1, 3 - 5 p.m.

Poster board, crayons, markers, colored pencils, glue and snacks will be provided!

Deadline to enter the local competition: February 20, 2018.

The GRHC will award one \$25 gift card in each of the three contest age categories. All local entries will be sent on to the Michigan NAHRO poster competition; winners of the state contest will be sent to the regional competition, and regional winners will advance to the national “What Home Means to Me” poster contest in Washington,

DC. National prizes will be announced in January; this past year 12 national winners each received a \$100 gift card, and one grand prize winner received an iPad and a trip for two to Washington, DC.

Poster contest entrants must complete an application form and must provide a written paragraph about what inspired their poster design. For complete information and an application form, visit the GRHC website: <http://www.grhousing.org>.

“Age-Friendly Communities” Listening Tour Welcomes Input from GRHC Residents

An “Age-Friendly Grand Rapids” Listening Tour designed to gather community input that will help city leaders make Grand Rapids more accommodating to the needs of older adults visited four GRHC retirement developments during September and October. A tour stop at Leonard Terrace Apartments garnered a number of useful suggestions related to housing, including:

- Offer more affordable housing downtown
- Design or adapt housing to accommodate wheelchairs, design with the needs of seniors in mind
- Offer needed services (health care, banking, shopping) closer to housing
- Offer secure walkways and parking



Grand Rapids Mayor Rosalynn Bliss (left) and Ginny Smith from the City Planning Department address Leonard Terrace residents.

- Offer on-site opportunities for activities and hobbies

The tour also gathered ideas related to transportation, outdoor spaces and buildings, social needs, civic participation and employment, access to technology, and community and

health services. Residents were invited to join work groups that are being formed to further explore these topics. For more information about this ongoing initiative, contact the City Planning Department at 456-3051.



Leonard Terrace residents and GRHC staff brainstorm ideas for making Grand Rapids more “age friendly.”

Resident Services Staff Host “Thanks for Giving” Volunteer Recognition Event

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission Resident Services team hosted a mid-November “Thanks for Giving” event to celebrate all of the wonderful community organizations and volunteers who regularly support our residents and agency. Many thanks to all of the organizations and individuals who partner with us, including...

Age Friendly Grand Rapids
 Airway Oxygen
 Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan
 Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired
 Baby Scholars
 Marion Barrerra-Young
 Baxter Community Center Pantry
 Baxter Neighborhood Association
 Boston Square Christian Reformed Church
 Bridge Street House of Prayer
 Buist Community Center
 Calvin College
 Calvin College School of Nursing
 Care One Home Health Services
 City of Grand Rapids Mobile GR & Parking Services
 ClearCaptions
 Comcast
 Community Action Partnership of Kent County
 Compass Properties
 Comprenew
 Daybreak Church
 Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services
 Decon
 Kent County Department of Human Services
 Diabetes Prevention Program
 Disability Advocates of Kent County
 Easter Seals
 Effex Management Solutions
 Express Employment Professionals
 Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank
 Fellowship Chapel Kids Club
 First United Methodist Church
 Forest Hills Presbyterian Church
 Forgotten Seniors Ministry
 Pastor David French
 Margaret and Kurt Freund
 Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church
 Go Docs Go
 Grand Rapids Black Nurses Association
 Grand Rapids Dream Center
 Grand Rapids Police Department
 Community Policing
 Grand Rapids Symphony Scorecard Program
 Grand Rapids Urban League
 Grand Rapids Public Schools School Lunch Program
 Guardian Angel Home Health Care

Grand Valley State University (GVSU)
 GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing
 Holland Home
 Home Instead Senior Care
 Hurst Mechanical
 Indian Trails



GRHC Resident Services Specialists were on hand to thank the many generous community partners who assist our residents and agency. We are very grateful for your support!



Honorees at the “Thanks for Giving” event included Lorraine Young from the Kent County Department of Human Services (left photo, center) and Maria Goodfellow from Meals On Wheels of Western Michigan (right photo, right).



Kent County Garden Club
 LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church
 Life EMS
 Lorraine Young
 Earnestine Mays
 Meals On Wheels of Western Michigan
 Mount Zion Food Ministry
 Michigan State University Extension
 Faye Myers
 National Kidney Foundation
 New Hope – Campau Connections
 New Hope Baptist Church
 New St. Mark Baptist Church
 North End Community Ministries
 Oakdale Neighbors
 One In Christ Ministries
 Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services
 The Red Project
 SALT
 Samaritas

Santa Claus Girls
 SECOM
 Senior Neighbors
 Senior Sing A-Long
 Simply A Loving Touch
 St. Alphonsus Church
 St. Luke A.M.E. Zion Church
 St. Robert of Newminster Parish
 James Trimble
 Two Men and a Truck
 Unity Christian High School
 University of Detroit Mercy
 Urban Pharm
 Volunteer Management Assoc. of West Mich.
 Volunteers In Service
 Walmart
 West Michigan Works
 Western Michigan University
 YMCA and YMCA Veggie Van
 YOGA



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Calvin College Volunteers Pitch In for Fall Cleanup



Volunteer Sam Runhoor trims perennials at the GRHC administrative office.

In early September, the Calvin College “StreetFest” program marked 25 years of service by sending another willing crew of first-year student volunteers out into the community. Dozens of volunteers lent a hand at Adams Park Apartments and at our administrative office, taking on landscaping, painting and cleanup chores. Volunteers also cleaned and helped with grounds maintenance at Ransom Tower Apartments.

A program of the Calvin College Service-Learning Center, the StreetFest program has a long history of pitching in to help maintain GRHC facilities. We are very grateful for the program’s consistent and invaluable support!

GVSU Nursing Students Host Thanksgiving Feast at Adams Park Apartments



Above: GVSU nursing students prepare gift bags to distribute at Adams Park. Right: Dr. Meridell Gracias (left) and GVSU students serve a delicious turkey feast.



Residents of Adams Park Apartments enjoyed a wonderful Thanksgiving feast courtesy of a generous longtime donor. Turkey and all the trimmings were served by students and faculty from the GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing.

Many thanks to our meal donor and wonderful GVSU nursing partners, and special kudos to student Lora Williams Herweyer for spearheading a donation drive that provided 30 turkeys to raffle to residents as well as gift bags of much-appreciated personal care items.

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