

New Café at Leonard Terrace

The GRHC has partnered with Meals On Wheels to bring a new on-site “Power Tower Café” to Ransom Tower Apartments, serving breakfast on Wednesday at 8:30 a.m. and lunch each weekday at noon. Details on page 3!

Volunteers Support Mount Mercy

Volunteers from Bridge Street House of Prayer recently visited Mount Mercy Apartments, helping residents with chores, weeding gardens and painting a beautiful mural in the computer lab. Details on page 5!

New Rental Assistance Center

The GRHC is partnering with the City of Grand Rapids to create a new service that will increase the efficiency of the rental search for both renters and rental property owners. The center will open in a few months. Details on back page!

GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

AUTUMN 2018

NEWS



GRHC Awarded Mainstream Vouchers to Serve Homeless Disabled

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) has been awarded a \$344,507 U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) grant to fund 55 rental subsidies administered through the federal Mainstream Voucher program. Mainstream Vouchers offer a rental subsidy to support the housing needs of non-elderly persons who have disabilities; HUD defines “non-elderly” as under age 62. The program is particularly targeted to disabled persons who are transitioning out of institutional settings, at serious risk of institutionalization, homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, and our Section 8 Administrative Plan now includes a preference for this population.

The GRHC will start the referral process for the available Mainstream Vouchers by drawing from several hundred potentially eligible non-elderly disabled applicants who are currently on our Section 8 waiting list.

In addition to a rental housing subsidy, the Mainstream program will provide supportive services coordinated by the GRHC’s on-staff social work professionals in collaboration with The Salvation Army, Disability Advocates, the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, Cherry Health, Care Resources, local hospitals and nursing homes, and other community partner organizations that serve people who have disabilities. These services are designed to promote independence and dignity and may include home

modifications, case management, counseling services, chore workers, legal help, medication management, meal delivery, medical equipment and supplies, transportation, fall prevention services and emergency response services.

“The Housing Commission is excited to have this opportunity to diversify our portfolio of housing options and better serve some of our community’s most vulnerable citizens,” noted GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez. “We are very grateful to HUD and to all of the local partner organizations that will help us bring these residents supportive services that can empower them to enjoy stable housing and improved quality of life.”

Section 8 Waiting List Open November 5 - 19

The GRHC will accept new applicants to our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program November 5 - 19.

The secure online application process will be available at www.GRHClist.org. Households can also apply by calling 616/235-2622 November 5 - 19 between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Paper applications will not be available.

For complete information and updates:
<http://www.grhousing.org>.

GRHC Earns Awards for GVSU Nursing Collaborative & Creston Plaza Redevelopment

The GRHC was honored to receive two 2018 Awards of Merit from the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO), a housing and community development advocacy organization that supports affordable housing nationwide.



GRHC President Bobbie Butler and Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez (center) accept Awards of Merit from NAHRO Vice President Sunny Shaw (left) and NAHRO President Carl S. Richie (right).



A GVSU nursing student checks a resident's blood pressure.

GRHC-GVSU Nursing Collaborative

The GRHC received an Award of Merit for “Program Innovation: Resident and Client Services” for an ongoing partnership we have forged with the GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing. This collaboration has provided more than 14,000 hours of nursing care to GRHC residents, focusing on developments that serve senior citizens and disabled adults. Nursing activities are overseen by GVSU educators and are coordinated with GRHC social work professionals.

The collaborative effort features community-oriented health interventions based on assessments conducted by senior-

level nursing students in association with a GRHC Resident Services Specialist. Students have identified high-frequency health and social issues related to...

- Managing chronic health conditions
- Medication management
- Nutrition and exercise
- Safety
- Interpersonal relationships and emotional well being

Programs and services are tailored to each development and include:

- Blood pressure and blood glucose screenings
- Individual pain assessment
- Medication management and individual health counseling
- Personal fitness support
- Group activities focused on wellness and nutrition
- Relationship-building activities
- Recreational and social events

Consistent, targeted support reinforces the efforts of the GRHC Resident Services team and helps vulnerable households maintain their independence and quality of life.

Creston Plaza Apartments Redevelopment

The GRHC has earned an Award of Merit for “Program Innovation: Affordable Housing” in recognition of our Creston Plaza Apartments redevelopment project; the 100-unit, \$23.5 million project was completed in 2015.

Creston Plaza redevelopment was innovative in several areas:

- Project financing utilized both public and private resources. Participation in the HUD Rental Assistance Demonstration program enabled us to attract \$2.4 million in Low-Income Housing Tax Credits that were leveraged to acquire \$19.4 million in private investment. Financing also included monies from the HUD Capital Fund and Operating Fund programs as well as Fannie Mae mortgage loans.
- The development is designed so that units are integrated into the surrounding neighborhood through such features as a new road linking directly to a major street, 17 single-family homes that face the neighborhood along the periphery of the 12.4-acre site and a Community Center that offers meeting space for neighborhood programs and gatherings.
- The LEED-certified development incorporated green building materials and construction techniques as well as energy-efficient windows, doors and appliances.

GRHC Development News

LIHTC Sought for Adams Park Improvements

The GRHC recently applied for \$1,095,055 in federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) which will be leveraged to fund \$4.87 million in improvements at Adams Park Apartments, a 188-unit Low-Income Public Housing development that serves disabled adults and seniors ages 62 and older. This development is slated for conversion to Section 8 Project-Based housing through the HUD Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program.

LIHTC Sought for Veterans Development

The GRHC recently applied for \$1,413,143 in federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits which will be leveraged to fund construction of Antoine Court, a 50-unit Section 8 Project-Based program development tailored to meet the housing and supportive needs of homeless veterans. The site for the planned development is Division Avenue between Antoine and Delaware Streets SW. The GRHC has been awarded 22 HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) vouchers and plans to apply for an additional 28 vouchers that will support the planned development.

LIHTC Sought for Hope Community Improvements

The GRHC recently applied for \$260,222 in federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits which will be leveraged to fund \$1.18 million in improvements at Hope Community, a 24-unit Rapid Re-Housing program development that serves homeless women and their minor children.

For the latest development news:
www.grhousing.org/development.html.

New Meals On Wheels Dining Center at Ransom Tower

Residents of Ransom Tower Apartments are enjoying fresh hot meals with friends and neighbors at the “Power Tower Café,” a new on-site Meals On Wheels Dining Center that opened in mid-September as part of the GRHC’s ongoing partnership with Meals On Wheels. Ransom Tower serves ages 62 and older.



Above: Meals On Wheels Kitchen Coordinator Joslin Blakes (center) and her team serve up comfort-food classics.

Located in the Ransom Tower Community Room at 50 Ransom Avenue NE, the Power Tower Café serves Wednesday breakfast at 8:30 a.m. and lunch each weekday at noon. The suggested donation per meal is \$2.50 for Ransom Tower residents and visitors ages 60 and older; the donation for younger visitors is \$3.50. No diner is turned away for lack of ability to donate.

Thanks to Meals On Wheels Community Program Manager Tammy Mick, Power Tower Café Kitchen Coordinator Joslin Blakes and crew for all they do to make this wonderful new service possible, and kudos to resident volunteer Susan Stewart for helping with the mealtime sign-in process.

Meals On Wheels also administers Dining Centers at Mount Mercy Apartments on Bridge Street NW and at Leonard Terrace Apartments on Leonard Street NE.

In addition to offering tasty hot meals, the Dining Centers provide

wonderful opportunities for seniors to connect with neighbors, either while enjoying lunch or by volunteering to help with the meals. For more information and to view menus: <http://mealsonwheelswesternmichigan.org>.

Meals On Wheels Honors Resident Volunteers

Several GRHC residents who volunteer at their community’s Dining Center have been honored by the Meals On Wheels program in recent months. Congratulations to...

- Jackie Field, a resident volunteer at Mount Mercy’s Café On the Mount. Jackie has been a café volunteer for three years and was recently named 2018 Volunteer of the Year!
- Barb Smalley, a volunteer at the Leonard Terrace Dining Center, has pitched in at the center since it opened two years ago. Barb was named July Volunteer of the Month!
- Benita Gray, another Leonard Terrace volunteer who has worked at the development’s Dining Center since its opening, was named August Volunteer of the Month!



“Meet Up & Eat Up” Program Wraps with Back-to-School Bash

The Housing Commission thanks all who supported the USDA “Meet Up & Eat Up” Summer Meal program at the Campau Commons and Creston Plaza community centers! In addition to offering healthy and delicious weekday lunches to children ages 18 and under, the program dished up plenty of summer fun, thanks to SERVE group volunteers and Debbie Jones from Volunteers in Service.

Meet Up & Eat Up wrapped with a mid-August “Back-to-School Bash” at each development. Dozens of young diners gathered to enjoy lunch, back-to-school bingo and school-related prizes! Our staff and volunteers passed out more than 40 backpacks and loads of school supplies thanks to the generosity of the following organizations:

- Campau Connections
- Delaware Manor
- Friends of Grand Rapids Parks
- Grand Rapids Public Schools
- Kent County Department of Health & Human Services
- Kent County Health Department
- YMCA



Pictured clockwise from top: GRHC Resident Services staff distribute backpacks and school supplies in the Campau Commons Community Room; back-to-school bingo brings a smile; BINGO— every child was a winner!; marking bingo cards; a YMCA staffer shows a young resident how to play with a Chinese yo-yo.

Bridge Street House of Prayer Volunteers Support Mount Mercy Apartments



Volunteers from Bridge Street House of Prayer spent a summer afternoon lending a hand at the GRHC's Mount Mercy Apartments. Groups of high school and college students led by adult volunteers helped with grounds maintenance at the senior development and designed and painted a colorful mural in the resident Computer Lab. Volunteers also shared lunch with residents and helped them with household chores.

Bridge Street House of Prayer provided all of the supplies, tools, talent and labor to make it all happen, and the GRHC thanks all of these generous volunteers for supporting Mount Mercy and our wonderful resident community!



Pictured clockwise from top: Bridge Street House of Prayer volunteers paint a mural in the Mount Mercy Computer Lab; volunteers enjoy lunch with a resident; pruning and weeding in the Mount Mercy gardens; volunteers carry a resident's heavy laundry basket.

Resident Volunteer Readies Shuffleboard Courts for Action!



Many thanks to Mount Mercy resident volunteer Herman Blackmon for painting and edging the Mount Mercy shuffleboard courts, preparing them for the installation of gravel borders.

We appreciate our incredible resident volunteers!

Human Resources Update

Welcome, New Staff!



Mia Gutridge is the GRHC's new Senior Human Resource Generalist. Mia has seven years of experience in human resources, including a position with Grand Rapids Public Schools. She attended DeVry University where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Technical Management.



Sarah Miller is the new Waiting List Specialist at the GRHC administrative office. Sarah comes to us from Kent County

Community Action where she was employed as a Clerk II. She has 12 years of customer service experience.

Welcome, Fall Resident Services Interns!



Pictured from left: Devon Lucas, Andrew Schohl and Kelli Postema, all from Western Michigan University.

The Housing Commission is pleased to welcome our fall social work student interns! Interns support our Resident Services program, helping GRHC staff plan and coordinate resident events and outings, and also linking residents with needed community resources.

Adams Park Hosts "Floats with First Responders"

Adams Park Apartments hosted a series of summer "Floats with First Responders" events in appreciation of the responders who help to ensure the health and safety of our residents and staff. Many thanks to all of the police officers, fire fighters and ambulance crews who joined us for ice cream and friendly conversation. We are grateful for all you do to support our community!

Thanks also to the resident and SERVE volunteers who helped dish up the floats and to Senior Sing A-Long for providing live musical entertainment.

Pictured: Grand Rapids Fire Department fire fighters join Adams Park residents for floats served by resident and SERVE volunteers. Below: Singer/guitarist Steve Middendorp performs.



GRHC Seniors Celebrate Summer at Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park

Residents of GRHC senior developments recently enjoyed a trip to Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park. The group took a walk through the conservatory and enjoyed a tram ride through the lovely summertime grounds and outdoor sculpture garden.

Thanks to Meijer Gardens for offering our group discounted ticket pricing that included the tram ride, and kudos to residents Mike Favreau, Benita Gray and Rita Simon for providing their neighbors with a ride to the gardens!



Pictured above: GRHC residents and staff enjoy the Meijer Gardens grounds. Left, top to bottom: Exploring the conservatory; all aboard for a tram tour; GRHC residents, Resident Services Specialists and Resident Services intern Sara O'Toole (right) savor the beautiful surroundings.



New Resident Advisory Board Member

The Housing Commission is pleased to announce that Mount Mercy Apartments resident Katherine Higgins has joined our Resident Advisory Board.

The Resident Advisory Board meets several times a year to help review and refine policies and practices so that we can more effectively meet the needs of the families we serve.



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SERVE Volunteers Spruce Up GRHC Properties



Pictured: Ada Christian Reformed Church youth group leader Noah Szenderski leads a group of SERVE volunteers at the GRHC administrative office.

Many thanks to Ada Christian Reformed Church youth group leader Noah Szenderski and the team of SERVE volunteers who spruced up the grounds at our administrative office on a sunny mid-July morning. The group weeded flower borders, painted the curbs along the parking area, and also helped with lawn chores at Adams Park Apartments next door. The hardworking service-learning group included middle school students visiting from a church in Canada as well as students from Ada CRC.

City, GRHC to Launch Rental Assistance Center

The GRHC is partnering with the City of Grand Rapids in a two-year pilot program that will establish a Rental Assistance Center to connect low-income households with vacant rental properties and refer “rent ready” applicants to property owners; the new center will increase the efficiency of the rental search for both renters and landlords. “Low income” includes households that earn 80 percent or less of the Area Median Income (AMI); the AMI for a family of four is currently \$55,900.

Funded by the City, the new Rental Assistance Center reflects the City’s commitment to addressing a shortage of affordable housing in our community.

“The Housing Commission is pleased to work with the City to help low-income households successfully rent quality housing,” said GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez. “The rental market in our area is competitive, and for many families, the search for rental housing is complicated by poor credit or other impediments; a key service of the Rental Assistance Center will be to link households with resources that can reduce or eliminate these barriers.”

How the New Rental Assistance Center Will Work

- The Rental Assistance Center’s services will be available to low-income households free of charge.
- The household seeking a rental unit will fill out an online rental application form.
- A GRHC social worker will use resources that meet industry standards to complete the credit history and background checks required by rental property owners.
- The social worker will flag any potential problems and will work with the applicant to resolve those. Assistance may include...
 - » Security deposit assistance
 - » Help with securing utilities
 - » Referrals to credit repair resources
 - » Referrals to resources for overcoming poor landlord references
- Applicants will “graduate” from the center with a Rent Readiness Certification that’s valid for 90 days.
- “Rent ready” households will be referred to participating landlords.

The Rental Assistance Center will open its online portal in a few months. Visit www.grhousing.org for updates.

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