

GRHC Supports Community LIHTC Developments

To help meet our area's affordable housing needs, the GRHC will provide Section 8 Project-Based Program vouchers in support of six Low-Income Housing Tax Credit developments. Details on page 3!

Poster Contest Winners Announced

The GRHC held a poster competition for young residents in conjunction with the national NAHRO "What Home Means to Me" poster contest. Prizes have been awarded to three talented winners in grades K-12. Details on page 6!

GVSU Brings Fitness Study to Mount Mercy Apartments

The GVSU Movement Science and Nursing departments are conducting a senior fitness study at Mount Mercy, with the goal of determining how exercise support impacts fitness. Details on page 7!

GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

SPRING 2017

NEWS

COLLEGE PAYS.

FACTS FROM THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Earnings and unemployment rate by educational attainment, 2015

	Median usual weekly earnings	Unemployment rate
Master's degree	\$1,341	2.4%
Bachelor's degree	\$1,137	2.8%
Associate's degree	\$798	3.8%
Some college, no degree	\$738	5.0%
High school diploma	\$678	5.4%
Less than a high school diploma	\$493	8.0%

GRHC Offers \$2,000 Resident Scholarships—Apply by May 9

The GRHC's 2017 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship competition is underway! Established in 2000 in memory of longtime Housing Commissioner Jean McKee, the Resident Scholarship Program offers college scholarships to eligible residents of GRHC housing programs. Scholarship winners receive \$500 per year for up to four years, for a total scholarship award of up to \$2,000. Since the program's inception, the GRHC has awarded scholarships totaling \$31,500, helping 31 residents pursue higher education.

The Jean McKee Resident Scholarship competition is open to graduating high school seniors, residents currently attending college full time and residents seeking to return to college full time. The program has a preference for graduating high school seniors, Family Self-Sufficiency Program participants and undergraduate students.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must have been a resident of a GRHC housing program for the past year.
- Applicant must be sponsored by a GRHC employee who will confirm that the applicant's household is in good standing with the GRHC in accordance with our Admissions & Continued Occupancy Policies.

- Open to graduating high school seniors, current college or vocational school students, and adult residents seeking to begin or return to college or vocational school. Graduating high school seniors, Family Self-Sufficiency Program participants and undergraduate students will receive priority status.
- Applicants who are graduating high school seniors and those currently attending college must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 (C+ letter grade). See additional eligibility requirements on page 2.
- Applicants seeking to return to college or vocational school must provide an official high school or college transcript which demonstrates that the applicant is a high school graduate and had a cumulative high school or college GPA of at least 2.5. See additional eligibility requirements on page 2.
- Must attend an accredited vocational school, community college, college or university as a full-time student.
- Scholarship winners are eligible to renew the scholarship annually for up to four years. Continuing requirements of scholarship winners:
 - Must maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA.
 - Must maintain full-time enrollment.

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Additional Eligibility

Requirements by Applicant Status:

GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR:

- High school transcript that shows high school completion and minimum GPA of 2.5.
- Letter of recommendation from a teacher or administrator at the applicant's high school.
- Letter of acceptance from an accredited vocational school, community college, college or university.

CURRENT COLLEGE OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENT:

- Letter of recommendation from a teacher or counselor at applicant's college/school.
- Official college/school transcript that shows:
 - A cumulative GPA of at least 2.5.
 - Maintained full-time enrollment during the term preceding application.
 - Enrolled full-time for the upcoming fall term.

ADULT SEEKING TO BEGIN OR RETURN TO COLLEGE:

- Official high school or college transcript which demonstrates that the applicant is a high school graduate and had a cumulative high school or college GPA of at least 2.5.
- Letter of acceptance from an accredited vocational school, community college, college or university.
- Proof of full-time enrollment for the upcoming fall term.

Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Program application materials are available at www.grhousing.org.

Application deadline:

May 9, 2017

GRHC Development Update

The GRHC continues to forge ahead with plans to convert Adams Park Apartments (188 units), Campau Commons Apartments (92 units) and 20 rental units within our Scattered Sites Program from the Low-Income Public Housing Program to Section 8 Project-Based Program housing. Conversion will provide more stable funding that will enable the GRHC to attract private resources to support much-needed capital improvement projects. The conversion process is nearing completion, with all conversions expected to be finalized this year.

The GRHC is pursuing Low-Income Housing Tax Credits that will help us leverage funding to undertake needed improvements at Adams Park Apartments.

Funding is in place to undertake renovations at Mount Mercy Apartments and Leonard Terrace Apartments, and exterior improvements will get underway this spring. PelGC will be the general contractor for exterior site work at both developments; this will include parking lot, driveway and sidewalk improvements at Mount Mercy and parking lot and exterior lighting improvements at Leonard Terrace.

The Housing Commission has selected M.C. Smith Associates and Architectural Group to provide architectural and engineering services for these capital improvement projects.



The Hope Community Service Center.

Additional RAD Program Conversion Planned at Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program

Last year the GRHC received HUD approval to convert an additional 22* units of Scattered Sites Program housing to Section 8 Project-Based units under the agency's Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) Program. The GRHC has since requested a Transfer of Assistance that would enable us to move this rental subsidy to 24 units of Rapid Re-Housing at Hope Community, a severely distressed development that serves homeless women and children.

Built in 1990 with the support of volunteers and donors from the Home & Building Association of Greater Grand Rapids, Hope Community is supported by federal Supportive Housing grants and has relied on donors for much of its routine operating needs. The program has struggled to fund major capital improvements, and the issues that will be addressed after conversion to the Section 8 Project-Based Program will include needed roofing repairs or replacement, heating, electrical and plumbing repairs, carpet and tile replacement, and interior painting.

*One of the 22 Scattered Sites units originally approved for conversion will be demolished due to extensive fire damage incurred last summer; the other 21 homes plus two additional Scattered Sites units will be sold to low-income households under a new Section 32 Homeownership Program (see "Five-Year Plan Objectives" story on facing page). Current residents of these units who are unable or unwilling to purchase will be offered relocation assistance, including reimbursement for moving costs and Section 8 rental assistance.

GRHC Supports Community Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Development Projects

In recent years the Grand Rapids area has experienced one of the highest rental occupancy rates in the country; in fact, a 2015 study from Zillow.com reported that Grand Rapids had a 1.6 percent vacancy rate—the lowest in the nation. The high demand for rental housing means rents are often higher than HUD-prescribed “fair market rents” (FMRs) in our community, and this makes it difficult for low-income families to find housing.

The National Low-Income Housing Coalition recently published 2016 housing statistics and analysis for Kent County that clarify the challenges facing low-income families:

- Thirty-one percent of households rent housing.
- The FMR for a three-bedroom unit is \$1,091.
- The annual income needed to afford a three-bedroom unit is \$43,640.
- The annual income for a one-breadwinner family working 40 hours per week at the \$8.50/hour minimum wage is \$17,680; the breadwinner would need to work 99 hours per week to afford a three-bedroom unit at the fair market rent.

To help meet our community’s housing needs, the GRHC is supporting the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) applications of non-profit community partners by providing Section 8 Project-Based Program vouchers that will help them leverage private financing for the construction of affordable rental housing. The agencies we are working with include:

Developer: Inner City Christian Federation

- 501 Eastern SE, 65 units new construction - 10 vouchers
- Stockbridge Apartments, 64 units new construction - 15 vouchers

Developer: Genesis Non-Profit Housing Corporation

- St. James Apartments, 52 units new construction - 8 vouchers

Developer: Dwelling Place

- Harrison Park Apartments, 45 units new construction - 11 vouchers
- Pine Avenue Apartments, 23 units new construction - 5 vouchers

Developer: LINC Community Revitalization

- Garfield Park Lofts, 36 units new construction - 8 vouchers

Five-Year Plan Objectives Seek to Expand Housing Opportunity

The GRHC’s 2015-2019 Five-Year Plan includes several development objectives designed to increase access to affordable housing.

The GRHC plans to develop a Section 32 Homeownership Program in the year ahead. The Section 32 program replaces the Section 5(h) Homeownership Program under which we previously sold rent-to-own homes to low-income households.

When the new home ownership program receives HUD approval, the GRHC will sell 23 existing single-family homes, and the

Housing Commission intends to build or acquire 50 additional affordable rent-to-own homes that will be sold through this program. The Section 8 Homeownership Program that makes it possible for Section 8 voucher program participants to use their rental subsidy toward home mortgage payments will also continue.

The GRHC plans to apply to HUD’s “Moving to Work” (MTW) Demonstration Program, which affords public housing authorities the flexibility to use their federal funding to develop strategies that meet specific local needs. Participation in MTW



One of 23 single-family home ownership units that will be sold to low-income families.

would give the GRHC the flexibility to build a 50-unit development near Campau Commons Apartments, with the goal of providing affordable housing for veterans and their families.

COMMUNITY CONNECT

Community Partners Bring Health, Nutrition, Employment and Social Resources to Adams Park

Generous partner organizations and volunteers ensured that Adams Park residents enjoyed a winter season of good food, good friends, job opportunities and healthy habits. Many thanks to:

- St. Alphonsus Church volunteers for donating Thanksgiving meals
- A volunteer who provided a communal Thanksgiving feast for Adams Park residents
- Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church for donating Thanksgiving food baskets and food to the on-site pantry
- Unity Christian High School for treating residents to a festive evening of gifts, music and food
- ACSET for working with staff to bring the USDA Commodity Supplemental Food Program to Adams Park
- Two Men and a Truck for donating their time and abilities to deliver seven skids of food to Adams Park in support of the Supplemental Food Program
- Mulders Vending for donating a Christmas tree that brightened the Community Room
- Effex Management Solutions for offering an on-site job fair
- Multitude Ministries and New St. Mark Baptist Church for distributing 100 holiday food boxes to residents
- Home Instead Senior Care for bringing holiday gifts to all residents over age 65
- Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church for giving residents healthy fresh fruit gifts
- Metro Health and the Kent Co. Health Department for helping residents get the New Year off to a healthy start by offering on-site mobile mammography services
- Grand Rapids Christian High School students for sprucing up Adams Park and for treating residents to an ice cream social
- The Grand Rapids Dream Center and Buist Community Assistance Center for hosting a “Blessing Party” supported by volunteers from Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church
- The Grand Rapids Urban League for sponsoring a “Stop Smoking” program
- Business Management Solutions for donating personal items to the Adams Park Food Pantry



Below left: A volunteer from Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church helps a resident select fresh produce. Below: Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church Pastor Nate McCarron greets a resident.



TIONS



Adams Park Apartments

Pictured top: Metro Health and the Kent County Health Department brought mammography screening to Adams Park residents.



Pictured left, top to bottom: Buist Community Assistance Center founder Larry Buist (standing center) chats with residents enjoying the "Blessing Party" the Center hosted in partnership with the Grand Rapids Dream Center and Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church; volunteers serve the hot dog dinner and ice cream that were a delicious part of the community celebration. The Blessing Party also provided each resident with a bag of fresh perishable foods and a selection of personal care items.

Pictured below: An Adams Park resident volunteer (seated right) helps distribute personal care items during the "Blessing Party."



Above: Two Men and a Truck delivered food from the USDA Commodity Supplemental Food Program.

Left: A representative from Effex Management Solutions (right) helps Adams Park residents explore available job opportunities.

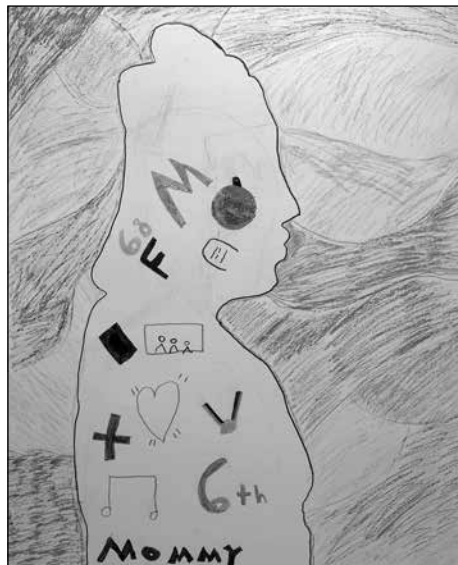
GRHC “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest Winners Announced



The GRHC recently invited young residents in grades kindergarten through 12 to participate in the 2017 “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest sponsored by the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

The GRHC held a local poster contest that awarded \$25 to one winner in each of three categories: grades K-5, 6-8 and 9-12. All eligible entries received were sent on to the regional “What Home Means to Me” poster contest, and regional winners’ entries will be sent to the national contest in Washington, D.C., for a chance to win one of 12 \$100 gift cards or the contest Grand Prize—an iPad and a trip to Washington, D.C.

Congratulations to our local contest winners, and thanks to all of the children who shared their wonderful artwork. See contest art at www.facebook.com/grhousing.



Top left: Jaylien Parks, age 10, was the K-5 winner in the GRHC’s local poster contest. Jaylien wrote that his home is his “safe haven,” where he can play with his siblings and enjoy his mother’s cooking.

Top right: Gabo Abdi, age 17, was the grades 9-12 local winner. Gabo noted that “A home is a safe place where you can feel loved because the people you love and care about are around you.” Above: Alanna Johnson, age 12, was the grades 6-8 local winner. She said home means wonderful memories shared with family.

GRHC Human Resources Update

Staff Promotion

Viet Tran has been promoted from Section 8 Coordinator to Computer Network Systems Coordinator.

Welcome, New Staff

Amy Cogswell is a Section 8 Coordinator at the GRHC administrative office. Amy comes to our agency from Dwelling Place where she was employed as a property manager. She has also held positions with several other GRHC community partners. Her academic accomplishments include a Bachelor of Arts in history from Calvin College.

Mark Eurich is a Maintenance Technician for Leonard Terrace Apartments and the Scattered Sites program. Mark has held positions as a tool room technician and machine operator with Amerikam and as a maintenance technician for the Plaza Towers Apartments downtown. He also served five years in the Navy as a hull maintenance technician and is experienced with electrical, plumbing, HVAC, drywall and carpet repairs.

Congratulations, Mary Beattie!

Section 8 Coordinator Mary Beattie has retired after 39 years with the GRHC—see back page!

GVSU Movement Science and Nursing Departments Bring Fitness Study to Mount Mercy

The Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Department of Movement Science, the GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing and a group of fitness-minded Mount Mercy residents have joined forces to conduct an eight-week exercise study to explore how supports such as fitness tracking equipment and regular instruction from a health care professional impact the physical activity levels and fitness of seniors.

Led by Movement Science Assistant Professor Dr. Chris Dondzila and Kirkhof College of Nursing Associate Professor Dr. Elaine Van Doren, the study got underway in mid-February, with resident volunteers divided into intervention and control groups. Residents' height, weight, heart rate, blood pressure and physical functioning were assessed with the help of nursing students during week one of the study. Residents in the intervention group were given an activity tracker to wear during all waking hours as well as individualized exercise goals and resistance band training. Residents in the control group received educational fliers about physical activity.

Residents in the intervention group are getting a weekly 30-minute support session from a GVSU nursing student. At the conclusion of the study, residents from both the intervention and control groups will once again have their height, weight, heart

rate, blood pressure and physical functioning assessed so that the impact of the exercise interventions can be determined. All residents who were in the control group will have a post-study opportunity to receive an activity tracker, a personalized fitness plan and exercise instruction.

The GRHC is proud to partner with GVSU to support health education and to offer residents this unique opportunity to gain insights and information that will help them maintain or even improve their personal health and fitness.



Above: Dr. Chris Dondzila (left), Dr. Elaine Van Doren (right) and nursing students Anna Klaus and Melissa Collier explain fitness exercises to resident Michael Burns. Clockwise from right: Residents Michael Burns and Kim Raeburn practice resistance band routines; Dr. Dondzila explains the GVSU study to resident Hazel Evans.





GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION
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Mary Beattie Retires After 39 Years with the GRHC

Section 8 Coordinator Mary Beattie retired this past summer after almost four decades with the GRHC. Mary’s extensive knowledge of the Section 8 Program and her abundant “people skills” ensured that she was an invaluable resource to both our clients and staff over the years. Among her many accomplishments, Mary spearheaded GRHC participation in “Home at Last,” a pioneering program that brought the Housing Commission and the Network 180 StreetReach Program together to meet the housing and supportive needs of chronically homeless individuals.

Our staff and board wish Mary all the best as she enjoys her well-deserved retirement.



Top: Mary Beattie, left, and StreetReach staff assist a “Home at Last” client. Bottom, left to right: Mary attends a “Home at Last” planning meeting; assists a Morton House client; receives an “Outstanding Employee Award” from GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez.

Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:

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

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Published by the Grand Rapids Housing Commission to keep residents, community partners and other supporters informed of our affordable housing programs. Please send questions, comments or story ideas to: Grand Rapids Housing Commission, 1420 Fuller Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507; E-mail: jsmith@grhousing.org. Copyright 2017, all rights reserved.