



*Nintendo Wii comes to GRHC senior housing developments—details inside!*

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## GRHC, Community Partners Collaborate on New Safety/Service Initiative at Adams Park Apartments



*GRHC staff were joined by City Commissioner Elias Lumpkins and representatives from local health, education, law enforcement and human service organizations for a brainstorming session designed to maximize safety measures and enhance the services available to residents at Adams Park Apartments. The meeting was facilitated by Betty Zylstra (second from left), Housing Commission Vice President and Director, The Salvation Army - Booth Family Services.*

The GRHC and more than a dozen community partners recently joined forces to develop building security and resident service improvements that will support the safety and well-being of residents at Adams Park Apartments, a GRHC development that serves low-income senior citizens and disabled persons. The new initiative was launched in mid-April with a brainstorming session followed by the formation of work groups that are targeting specific safety and service goals.

### Health Issues Work Group

Goals: Improve access to mental and physical preventive health care and health education; improve the health care and resources of residents who have inadequate or marginal opportunity and literacy; meet with residents to help

individuals and groups achieve healthy lifestyle goals; help residents to better control chronic disease.

Partners involved: Boston Square Christian Reformed Church; Valerie's Place; His Place Ministries; Network 180; New Community Church; Life Guidance Services; Calvin College Nursing Dept.

### Education Work Group

Goals: Help residents complete their GED classes on site; arrange ESL classes for Spanish-speaking residents; offer computer classes; offer a variety of training for all residents and staff.

Partners involved: Grand Rapids Community College (Job Training division); Adams Park tenant Holly Spengler.

*Continued on next page*

### Safety Work Group

Goals: Train residents regarding safety issues, including personal and fire safety; floor leadership training; monitoring of front entrance; incident reports.

Partners involved: Grand Rapids Police Department; Disability Advocates.

### Socialization Work Group

Goals: Increase opportunities for members of the Adams Park community to engage in healthy relationships within and across institutions, organizations and businesses; help residents overcome isolation, share with peers, build community, and enjoy health-promoting exercise, social and cultural events, and outings.

Partners involved: Oakdale Neighbors, Morning Star Church of God in Christ, His Place Ministries, Boston Square Christian Reformed Church, Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church.

We encourage Adams Park residents and any additional community agencies that would like to become involved in this effort to contact Adams Park Asset Manager Reuby Johnson or Resident Services Specialist Ruth Adelabi at 235-2865. Our board and staff are grateful for the efforts of all who are working to support the Adams Park community. ■

## Leonard Terrace Is Now Open to Ages 55 & Older

The GRHC recently amended the Leonard Terrace Apartments admissions policy to lower the minimum tenant age requirement from 62 to 55 years. To receive a federal rental subsidy, a tenant must be age 62 or older, or disabled. A rent of \$540 is available to income-eligible seniors ages 55-61 who are not disabled.

The policy change maximizes our ability to meet community housing needs and makes Leonard Terrace policy consistent with the policies of other GRHC senior housing developments that serve senior citizens and the disabled through our Section 8 Project-Based Program. ■

## GRHC Tests Wii Training at Senior Housing Sites



GRHC Resident Services staff are working with Community Home Care Services to bring Nintendo Wii interactive video gaming to residents of our senior housing sites. Wii training was recently tested at Leonard Terrace and Ransom Tower apartments, with seniors receiving the opportunity to try a variety of sports programs, including tennis and bowling. Our goal is to help residents tap into both the fitness and social benefits the popular motion-sensitive software provide.

Many thanks to Community Home Care Services for helping GRHC residents experience the health-enhancing fun of the latest trend in video gaming. ■

*Pictured: Community Home Care Services staffer Aaron Leestma shows GRHC residents how to operate Nintendo Wii gear.*



## Ransom Tower Health Fair Brings Residents Information, Food, Fun

GRHC Resident Services staff organized a spring Health Fair at Ransom Tower senior apartments. Six health care service providers participated in the event, which featured one-on-one health assessments. Residents completed a health information sheet they are posting in their apartments to assist emergency response teams in the event of a health crisis. Providers also offered diabetes screening, Wii interactive gaming, health information and a delicious lunch of pizza and sub sandwiches.

Many thanks to these organizations for their participation in the Health Fair:

Airway Oxygen  
Community Home Care Services  
Guardian Medical Monitoring  
Life EMS  
Lynncore MedGroup, Inc.  
Visiting Physicians Association ■

*Pictured clockwise from top: Professionals from Community Home Care Services and Life EMS help residents complete an emergency health information sheet; Nola Norton, RN, counsels resident Florence Dukes; resident Patsy Amos visits an informational exhibit provided by the Visiting Physicians Association; Alison Horton from Guardian Medical Monitoring demonstrates a medical alarm for resident Marcia Chrzanowski.*



## Habitat for Humanity & ICCF Bring GRHC Residents Resources for Achieving Home Ownership



*Habitat for Humanity staffer Miriam Reyes (center, speaking) explains her agency's home ownership program requirements to a group of GRHC residents.*

The GRHC recently partnered with Habitat for Humanity and the Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF) to offer GRHC residents information and resources they can use as they move toward home ownership. Eight households attended the meetings, held in mid-May at New Hope Baptist Church near Campau Commons Apartments.

The program featured introductions to the home ownership programs Habitat for Humanity and ICCF offer and included:

- A look at some reasons to pursue home ownership, including building equity and personal wealth, improving credit, providing stability for family and gaining pride of ownership.
- Steps toward home ownership, including establishing credit, maintaining a stable income and savings, researching home ownership resources and mortgage loan products, and deciding where to look for a home.
- Specific program requirements and application procedures for families interested in purchasing a Habitat for Humanity home, including eligibility, home ownership education and "sweat equity" requirements.
- Requirements of the ICCF "Lease to Purchase" program.
- Home ownership classes offered by ICCF, which also support the home ownership programs of Habitat for Humanity and the GRHC's Section 8 Homeownership Program.

- Programs that can help families meet the financial demands of home ownership, including down payment assistance available through the City of Grand Rapids and the State of Michigan, mortgage products targeted to low-income families, and the GRHC's Section 8 Homeownership and Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) programs.

The Section 8 Homeownership Program enables participants to apply their Section 8 rental subsidy toward home mortgage payments. The FSS Program enables participants to accrue funds in an escrow account as they become employed and advance on the job. During 2007, 34 families graduated from the FSS program; total escrow disbursed to these graduates was \$346,643. Ten FSS program graduates purchased a home last year.

Thanks to Habitat for Humanity staffers Miriam Reyes and Leah Scholma and to Jody Lewis and Sireece Martin from ICCF for sharing their expertise with our residents. We are also grateful to New Hope Baptist Church for providing a meeting room for these presentations.

For more information about home ownership programs:  
[www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org)  
[www.habitatkent.org](http://www.habitatkent.org)  
[www.iccf.org](http://www.iccf.org) ■

## Donor & Volunteer Recognition

A few of the organizations and individuals who have made a difference at GRHC housing developments in recent months:

- **Urban Family Ministries.** Grounds clean-up and donations of furniture and kitchen necessities for residents.
- **Dr. Brian Kingshott,** GVSU Assistant Professor, provided leadership to the Creston Plaza Resident Association.
- **New Hope Baptist Church** donated space for community meetings.
- **Fifth Third Bank** provided a credit seminar for residents.
- **Freedom in Christ Ministries** donated computers and provided Bible study.
- **LaSalle Bank/Bank of America Midwest** donated food that supported resident potlucks and cookouts.
- **Friends of the Library, Grand Rapids Public Library,** donated large-print and audio books.
- **St. Mark's Episcopal Church,** regular monetary donations to the Ransom Tower Food Pantry.
- **Bethlehem Lutheran Church,** monthly donations of paper products to the Ransom Tower Food Pantry.
- **Roseanna Doornbos,** donation to the Ransom Tower Food Pantry.
- **Master gardener Roberta Rossi** improved the grounds at Ransom Tower.
- **Senior Sing-A-Long,** monthly concerts at GRHC senior developments.
- **Grand Valley State University (GVSU)** nursing students provided health screenings to senior residents.
- **GVSU Therapeutic Rec volunteers** provided resident activities.
- **Paul Mavima,** GVSU Assistant Professor, helped forge the plan for a mental health initiative at Adams Park.
- **Calvin College Sociology Department** conducted an Oral History Project at Ransom Tower.
- **Visiting Physicians, Community Home Care Services, Life EMS, the Grand Rapids Police Department, AirWay Oxygen, Lynncore MedGroup, Senior Neighbors and First Park Congregational Church,** ongoing support and involvement at GRHC housing developments. ■

# Creston Plaza Health Fair Offers Screenings, Wellness Tips, Prizes & More!

The GRHC's Creston Plaza family housing development hosted a spring Community Health Fair in the Creston Plaza Gymnasium. The four-hour event was visited by more than 200 people and featured free health screenings and blood type testing as well as a wide range of informational resources—nutrition, exercise, stress management and safety tips, asthma and smoking cessation program details, children's activities and more. The fair also offered donated refreshments and door prizes. After touring the screening stations and informational exhibits in the Gym, attendees received free groceries from the Second Harvest Gleaners of West Michigan mobile food pantry.

Participating organizations included:

- Airway Oxygen
- American Red Cross
- Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired
- Calvin College Nursing Program
- Catherine's Care Center
- Cherry Street Health Services
- Clancy Street Ministries
- Grand Rapids Clinical Oncology Program
- Grand Rapids Community College Nursing Program
- Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Dept.
- Grand Rapids Police Department
- Grand Valley State University Nursing Program
- Kent Health Plan Medication Assistance Program (MAP)
- Michigan Blood Bank
- Neighbors of Belknap Lookout
- Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services
- Spectrum Health Urban Health Program
- YWCA



Above: A Michigan Blood Bank nurse offers a blood type test. Left: A Clancy Street Ministries representative explains that agency's services. Below, top to bottom: An attendee enters the door prize drawing; the Grand Rapids Parks & Recreation Department offers smiles and information about healthy leisure-time activities. Below, far left: Second Harvest Gleaners staff distribute free groceries.



# Budget, Efficiency Goals Spur Housing Management Staff Reorganization

The GRHC's Housing Management division recently conducted an operational audit that has resulted in a reorganization of staff at our family and senior housing sites. Our goal is to maintain an optimal level of service to residents in the face of chronic shortfalls in federal program funding. Effective June 1, the following teams are in place:

## Adams Park Apartments

Asset Manager: Reuby Johnson  
Housing Assistant: Jill Brailey  
Receptionist: Carrie Brooks  
Maintenance Tech: Stev Lewis  
Custodian: Mary Szarowicz

## Campau Commons Apartments

Asset Manager: Cindy Marrell  
Housing Assistant: Kimberly Sleet  
Receptionist: Florence Coleman  
Maintenance Tech: Vacant position  
Custodian: Will Blackmon

## Creston Plaza Apartments

Asset Manager: Cindy Marrell  
Housing Assistant: Kimberly Sleet

Receptionist: Florence Coleman  
Maintenance Tech: Vacant position  
Custodian: Leonard Brand

## Hope Community

Asset Manager: Toni Coristine  
Housing Assistant: Tenisia Moore  
Maintenance Tech: Roman Mays  
Custodian: Will Blackmon

## Leonard Terrace Apartments

Asset Manager: Toni Coristine  
Housing Assistant: Tenisia Moore  
Receptionist: Carrie Brooks  
Maintenance Tech: Roman Mays  
Custodian: Patrick Messinger

## Mount Mercy Apartments

Asset Manager: Toni Coristine  
Housing Assistant: Tenisia Moore  
Receptionist: Margi Barnsdale  
Maintenance Tech: John Abram  
Custodian: Bob Gilbert

## Ransom Tower Apartments

Asset Manager: Reuby Johnson  
Housing Assistant: Jill Brailey



**Toni Coristine  
Manager**  
Hope Community  
Leonard Terrace  
Mount Mercy



**Cindy Marrell  
Manager**  
Campau Commons  
Creston Plaza  
Sheldon Apts.  
Scattered Sites



**Reuby Johnson  
Manager**  
Adams Park  
Ransom Tower

Maintenance Tech: Todd Heyboer  
Custodian: Mike Heller

## Sheldon Apartments

Asset Manager: Cindy Marrell  
Housing Assistant: Kimberly Sleet  
Maintenance Tech: Todd Heyboer  
Custodian: Mike Heller

## Scattered Sites Program

Asset Manager: Cindy Marrell  
Housing Assistant: Kimberly Sleet  
Receptionist: Florence Coleman  
Maintenance Tech: Roman Mays  
Custodian: Patrick Messinger

## Staff, Residents and Partners Bid a Fond Farewell to Retiring Resident Services Manager Jan King Duncan



*Pictured at a recent Leonard Terrace event: Retiring Resident Services Manager Jan King Duncan (left) with Campau Commons resident Nancy Winkler (center) and GVSU Social Work intern Molly Jacobsma.*

Social work dynamo Jan King Duncan, MSW, retired from her position as GRHC Resident Services Manager in May. Jan had been with the Housing Commission since 1999. She built the department from one person offering supportive services at Adams Park Apartments to a staff of seven full-

time social work professionals who collaborate with community partner organizations, social work interns and volunteers to provide such programs and services as case management, on-site food pantries, health fairs, educational programs and social events at eight GRHC housing developments.

Under Jan's leadership, the GRHC has been awarded several HUD grants that support resident services, and her team also earned the Housing Commission HUD "Wall of Fame" Award recognition in 2003. Additionally, Jan has been the recipient of several GRHC "Outstanding Employee" Awards in appreciation of her exceptional job performance.

Best wishes to Jan as she begins her retirement, and heartfelt thanks for all of her efforts on behalf of our residents, staff and agency. ■

## Welcome to Our New Resident Services Manager!



The GRHC board and staff are pleased to introduce our new Resident Services Manager, Felicia Shabazz, LMSW.

Felicia brings ten years of social work experience to our team. She comes to our agency from Ottawa County Community Mental Health, where she was employed as a Lead Clinician. Felicia holds a Master of Social Work degree from Western Michigan University, is state licensed and is a graduate of United Way's "Project Blueprint," a career development program that works to increase the number of professionals of color who provide leadership in health care, government and human services organizations. ■

## Grand Rapids Housing Commission 2008 Annual Luncheon Highlights



Representatives of GRHC partner agencies, volunteers, friends and staff gathered at GVSU's Eberhard Center in mid-May for the Housing Commission's Annual Luncheon event. Hosted by Housing Commission President Bobbie Butler, the event featured an informative talk by Mayor George Heartwell as well as Community Partner Award presentations and the announcement of the 2008 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship winners.

Recipients of Community Partner Awards this year include two organizations that provide extensive support to our residents and staff.

The 2008 GRHC Outstanding Community Partner Award winners are:

**AARP Senior Employment**, which has placed Title V employees at our main office and housing sites since 2000. AARP employees have provided clerical support and janitorial assistance, enhancing the services, operational efficiency and attractiveness of our facilities. We currently have 13 AARP employees working 15 hours per week—this represents at least \$72,501 per year in services provided through AARP!

**The Grand Valley State University Social Work Department**, which has placed social work field study interns at GRHC housing sites since 2000. We currently have three Grand Valley State University BSW candidates and one MSW candidate providing services to residents under the direction of their professors and our Resident Services staff. The yearly total in hours worked by GVSU interns is 3,420; staff estimates the value of hours worked at \$15 per hour or \$51,300 this year!

Many thanks to Mayor Heartwell and to all of the community partners who joined us at this year's Annual Luncheon, and congratulations to our 2008 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship winners—see scholarship competition details on the back page of this newsletter! ■



*Pictured from top: GVSU Social Work Department Assistant Director of Field Placement Dave Lehker (left) and Director of Field Placement Jim Edwards (center) accept the Outstanding Community Partner Award from GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez; (left photo) AARP Senior Employment Specialist George Correll accepts the Outstanding Community Partner Award; Mayor Heartwell and Housing Commission President Bobbie Butler; Housing Commission Vice President Betty Zylstra (right) with Kathy Freberg (left) and Ruth Sprague from Network 180; GRHC Director of Housing Management Hattie Tinney Beenen greets HUD Grand Rapids Field Office Director Louis Berra.*





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## Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Winners

Congratulations to the GRHC's 2008 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship winners:

**Aaron Price**, an East Kentwood High School graduate who will major in Environmental Science at Aquinas College.

**Jafar Mussa**, a Creston High School graduate who will major in Health Sciences at Oakland University.

The scholarship was established in 2000 in memory of Jean McKee, an attorney and champion of education who served on the GRHC Board from 1985 until her death in 1999. Scholarships are awarded each year to college-bound high school seniors who are residents of a GRHC housing program. Winners receive \$500 annually for up to four years for a total award of \$2,000.

Special thanks to this year's scholarship program donors, including:  
 M.C. Smith Associates  
 F. William McKee  
 James Childs Architects  
 Lifetime Eyecare, Dr. Gordon Schultze

## GRHC Participates in "Project Homeless Connect"



*GRHC staffer Erin Blaisdell helps an attendee apply for a MSHDA housing voucher.*

The GRHC was one of a dozen community agencies that helped plan and implement a January "Project Homeless Connect" event at the Van Andel Arena. Sponsored and organized by The Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness, Project Homeless Connect is modeled after a national best-practice program that brings service providers together to offer homeless persons a central location where they can access resources that will help them move toward obtaining permanent housing and stability. This is the second year the event was offered in Grand Rapids.

The GRHC also participated in this year's Project Homeless Connect as a service provider, joining 66 other participating and donor organizations and more than 450 volunteers to offer the homeless a wide range of free services, including housing and employment assistance, health, dental and vision care, legal assistance, public services, personal care, meals and more. The one-day event served 1,019 households; 516 families received services through the housing area, where GRHC staff and other housing industry volunteers helped attendees apply for MSHDA housing vouchers. ■

**Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:** Bobbie Butler, President; Betty Zylstra, Vice President; Angela Bunn, Robert Cooper, Patrick Miles, Sr.  
**Executive Director:** Carlos A. Sanchez

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