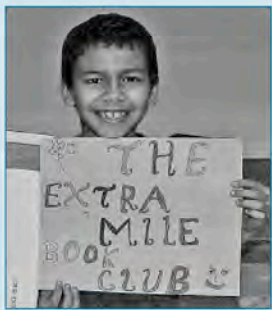




# QUARTERLY NEWS

Volume 6, Number 4

Winter 2011



*Children's Book Club Kicks Off at Campau Commons! Details inside!*



*GVSU intern Brittney Wright (left) and GRHC staffers Margi Barnsdale (right front) and Lisa Rogalski assist Section 8 applicants during the mid-November open application period.*

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Apply Online to Rent at GRHC Developments

## GRHC Opens Section 8 Waiting List

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) opened the waiting list for our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program November 15 through November 19. Given the high demand for the program, which provides a rental subsidy to low-income households, our staff anticipated a large number of applicants and designed the application process to be as streamlined and user friendly as possible.

Interested families were invited to apply online by completing a simple application form, with both English- and Spanish-language versions of the form available at the click of a mouse. Applicants could also phone a "call center" to have their application form completed by one of the 38 GRHC staffers who manned ten dedicated phone lines.

Prior to the application period, the GRHC worked with dozens of community organizations

to facilitate the application process for disabled persons in need of special accommodation, for those who lacked computer or phone equipment, and for households whose members speak a language other than English or Spanish. Details regarding the Section 8 open application period were announced on the GRHC web site and in local media two weeks in advance.

The GRHC received more than 5,000 Section 8 applications. In early January our staff drew 3,000 names by computerized random lottery, and these applicants have been added to our agency's Section 8 waiting list. Computerized random lottery also determined placement of new applicants on the waiting list.

The GRHC Section 8 Administrative Plan requires that we serve Kent County residents before we can serve families applying from

*(continued on next page)*

*(GRHC Opens Section 8 Waiting List, continued from page 1)*

outside of the area. Since the GRHC received more than 3,000 applications from Kent County residents, those applying from outside of the county were not included in the lottery. Households on the Section 8 waiting list prior to the application period have been “grandfathered” and will be served by application date regardless of county of residence. Applicants will receive a postcard via U.S. Mail to confirm whether their application was selected and added to the Section 8 waiting list by late January. Application status can also be checked online at [www.WaitListCheck.com](http://www.WaitListCheck.com).

“We want to stress that securing a place on the waiting list does not ultimately guarantee the applicant will receive Section 8,” noted GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez. He explained that when an applicant’s name reaches the top of the waiting list—which could take several years—the applicant must meet income and other eligibility requirements in order to receive a Section 8 rental subsidy.

“It’s unfortunate that demand for Section 8 vouchers far exceeds the number of vouchers we have available,” Sanchez said, “However, we are pleased that we have been able to open the Section 8 Program to 3,000 additional families. The Housing Commission is very grateful to all of the community organizations that helped us get the word out about our Section 8 application period and that helped families access the process.”

The five-day application period marks the first time in six years the GRHC has accepted new applicants to our Section 8 program. The waiting list was closed in 2004 when the list reached 7,700 families. The GRHC administers 2,966 Section 8 vouchers and is currently serving families that applied to the program in fall 2003.

## GRHC Administers Section 8 at Rolling Pines



*Housing units at Rolling Pines Apartments, 4650 Ramswood Drive NE.*

The Housing Commission has agreed to administer Section 8 “enhanced” vouchers at Rolling Pines Apartments, a 152-unit development on Grand Rapids’ northeast side. Rolling Pines was recently converted from HUD’s Section 8 Project-Based Program, which provides a federal rental subsidy tied to a specific building or units in a building, to a market-rate property; this means units are no longer rent-subsidized. The conversion process gave existing eligible low-income tenants the opportunity to receive a tenant-based Section 8 rental subsidy while they continue to live at Rolling Pines.

Twenty-seven tenants were eligible for a Section 8 rental subsidy. The remaining 125 vouchers will be used to assist families on our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program waiting list.

Kudos to Section 8 Manager Lynn Simone for coordinating the GRHC’s efforts to bring tenant-based vouchers to Rolling Pines families.

## Retirement Communities Offer “First Month Rent FREE!”



*Mount Mercy’s Senior Meals café offers lunch each weekday. Visit [grhousing.org](http://grhousing.org) to learn about amenities unique to our other retirement developments.*

***For a limited time, four GRHC retirement developments are offering new tenants their first month rent free!***

Designed especially to meet the needs of low-income older and disabled adults, Adams Park (Grand Rapids southeast), Leonard Terrace (northeast), Mount Mercy (northwest) and Ransom Tower Apartments (downtown) offer hassle-free apartment living along with the following features and amenities:

- Major appliances furnished
- Affordable rent includes utilities
- Smoke-free environment!
- Near shopping and transportation
- Laundry facilities on site
- Food pantry on site
- Community room, social events

Visit [www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org) to apply or to get more information about eligibility requirements and additional amenities specific to each development. Questions? Our knowledgeable staff is here to help! Just call us at 616/235-2600.

# 2010 Outstanding Community Partner Awardees

The GRHC has joined affordable housing industry partners across the country in support of the Housing America 2010 campaign, which kicked off in October and aims to educate decision makers and the general public about the importance of affordable housing and community development programs as well as the challenges facing these programs.

The Housing Commission launched its participation by presenting Outstanding Community Partner Awards to several organizations in recognition of their contributions to our agency's efforts to meet the housing needs of low-income families. The GRHC's 2010 Outstanding Community Partner Award winners are:

## **Calvin College Service-Learning Center, StreetFest**

Over the years, StreetFest student volunteers have logged hundreds of hours of service to our agency and residents, assisting with a wide variety of maintenance, cleaning and landscaping jobs. StreetFest has had a significant impact on the appearance and curb appeal of the GRHC administrative office and our housing developments.

## **Hurst Mechanical**

Hurst Mechanical has helped brighten the winter holidays for Mount Mercy Apartments residents since 2006, providing low-income seniors with wonderful holiday gift baskets, plus gift cards and handmade greeting cards crafted by area students. In 2010, Hurst Mechanical and its staff sponsored 34 holiday baskets that included a \$50 Meijer gift card. The company's 2010 donation was valued at more than \$3,000.

## **Macatawa Bank**

Macatawa Bank has provided exceptional support of our Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program, providing ten-week Financial Literacy courses to FSS clients in 2009 and 2010. Additionally, the bank provided a "match program" for clients opening savings accounts, as well as door prizes that encouraged class attendance. Macatawa Bank has also sponsored FSS "Family Fun Day" events the past two summers.

## **Senior Meals Program, Inc.**

Senior Meals Program has delivered meals to the GRHC's senior residents for years and in 2009 added a congregate meal site at Mount Mercy Apartments. Senior Meals provides a critical service to our older residents who need nutritional assistance in order to maintain their independence.

Congratulations to these winners, and many thanks to all of the community organizations and volunteers who support our residents and agency!



*Calvin College StreetFest student volunteers help with fall landscaping chores at Campau Commons Apartments.*



*Employees of Hurst Mechanical deliver groceries and holiday gifts to the residents of Mount Mercy Apartments.*



*Macatawa Bank Vice President/Community Development Officer Jorge Gonzalez leads a Financial Literacy Class at Creston Plaza.*



*Senior Meals Program, Inc., staff and resident volunteers make the Mount Mercy Apartments "Café on The Mount" a popular lunch spot.*

# Resource Fairs Offer a Wealth of Inform

## Adams Park Annual Autumn Resource Fair Features Grillmaster Cook-Off!

Adams Park Apartments hosted its second annual Autumn Resource Fair in late September, offering the development's disabled and senior tenants targeted resources ranging from flu shots and blood pressure checks to information about affordable medical equipment repair, mental health programs and home care services. The fair was preceded by a cook-off between resident grillmaster Eddie Robinson and Adams Park Asset Manager Jake Blakeney. Resident judges declared an official tie as both entrants served up BBQ bliss.

Many thanks to the community organizations that participated in the Resource Fair:

Access of West Michigan  
Calvin College Department  
of Nursing  
East Paris Pharmacy  
Fuller Avenue Christian  
Reformed Church

Fuller Avenue Neighbors  
Guardian Angel Home Care  
HME Repair Team  
Life Guidance Services  
Marquis Mobility



*Pictured clockwise from top: cook-off entrant Eddie Robinson is "frank" about his exceptional BBQ skills; Resource Fair vendors offer residents one-stop shopping for health care information; GRHC Asset Manager Jake Blakeney racks up style points by presenting his cook-off entry on a crystal platter; representatives from Marquis Mobility offer resources for the physically challenged; a Calvin College nursing student checks blood pressure.*



# ation, Health Screening Services and More!

## FSS “Passport to Success” Brings Communitywide Resource Fair to GRCC!

The “Passport to Success” initiative that is a joint effort of the GRHC and Wyoming Housing Commission Family Self-Sufficiency Programs partnered with Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) and many other organizations to bring a communitywide resource fair to Grand Rapids. Held on the GRCC campus, the fair offered information to meet a broad range of needs.

Participating organizations included:

Angel Food Ministries  
 Arbor Circle  
 Blue Heron Academy  
 Bright Beginnings,  
 Kent Intermediate  
 School District  
 Chemical Bank  
 Child and Family Resource  
 Center  
 Davenport University  
 Dean Transportation  
 Dispute Resolution Center  
 Empire Beauty Schools  
 Fair Housing Center  
 Fifth Third Bank  
 Girls Inc. of the YWCA  
 Goodwill Industries  
 Grand Rapids Community  
 College  
 GRCC Learning Corner  
 at Wealthy  
 GRCC Learning Corner,  
 West Side  
 Grand Rapids Public  
 Library  
 Grand Rapids Public  
 Schools  
 Grand Valley Health Plan  
 Great Lakes Health Plan  
 Habitat for Humanity  
 of Kent County



Home Repair Services  
 Hope Network  
 Inner City Christian  
 Federation  
 Jubilee Jobs  
 Kent County Health Dept.  
 Kent County Tax Credit  
 Coalition  
 Legal Aid of Western  
 Michigan  
 Legal Assistance Center  
 Literacy Center of West  
 Michigan  
 Lutheran Child and Family  
 Services  
 Macatawa Bank  
 Michigan Works  
 MICHild  
 New Horizons  
 Planned Parenthood  
 Spectrum Health Core  
 Health  
 Spectrum Health MOMS

Strong Beginnings  
 The Rapid  
 U.S. Social Security  
 Administration  
 University of Detroit Mercy  
 United Way  
 Women’s Resource Center  
 YWCA

Special thanks to GRCC for hosting the Resource Fair, to Dean Transportation for providing shuttle service between the fair and GRHC family housing developments, and to Chemical Bank for its financial support. Thanks also to GRCC Director of Career Development Services Paul Phifer for presenting two interesting and informative seminars.

*Pictured clockwise from top right: Dozens of organizations man information tables in the GRCC Applied Technology Center; GRPS educator Otto Brannum and Terri Price from Spectrum Health share a laugh; a representative of Planned Parenthood discusses that agency’s services; Macatawa Bank Vice President/Community Development Officer Jorge Gonzalez provides financial services resources; Bethany Schalow of Empire Beauty School offers information about cosmetology training.*



## Thank You to GRHC Interns, Donors and Volunteers!

In addition to the volunteers and donors recognized elsewhere in this newsletter, the GRHC salutes the following organizations and individuals for their support of our residents and agency in recent months:

Access of West Michigan  
 Anonymous donors for support of Mount Mercy  
 Anonymous Mount Mercy resident who pays for a fellow resident's lunch  
 Anonymous donors, Adams Park Thanksgiving dinner  
 Baxter Neighborhood Assn.  
 Boston Square Christian Reformed Church  
 Carol Capek  
 Celebration Cinema  
 Daybreak Church  
 East Paris Pharmacy  
 Elders' Helpers  
 Feeding America West Michigan Food Bank  
 Chef Tommy Fitzgerald

Forest Hills Presbyterian Church  
 Fulton Pharmacy  
 Grand Rapids Police Dept.  
 Guardian Angel Home Care  
 GVSU "Make a Difference Day" student volunteers  
 GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing  
 Hearts in Step Christian Dance Academy  
 His Place Ministries  
 Home Instead Senior Care  
 Interurban Transit Partnership  
 Kent District Library  
 Kopper Top Restaurant



*North End Community Ministry sponsored a Thanksgiving luncheon at Leonard Terrace Apartments. Carving with GRHC Resident Services Manager Felicia Clay are resident volunteers Eddie Thompson (left) and Clarence Heard. In addition to traditional roast turkey with all the trimmings, Leonard Terrace tenants and their guests enjoyed music provided by Mona and Kristie Sallie.*



*Residents of Campau Commons select footwear during a boot giveaway sponsored by the congregation of New Hope Baptist Church. Special thanks to New Hope member Dorothy Jo Butler for administering the boot giveaway!*



*Welcome and many thanks to the new GVSU School of Social Work students who served our residents through Resident Services internships at our housing sites this fall. Pictured from left: Amanda Hentschel, Jessica Marshall, Brandy Haan, Barb Fransen-Kelly and Brittney Wright. Not pictured (but very much appreciated!): Laura Mosley and Nikki Tigchelaar, and "veteran" interns Patient Baraka, Genevieve Sabala and Andrew Davenport.*

Life EMS  
 Lynncore MedGroup  
 Mel Trotter Ministries  
 MSU Extension  
 New Hope Baptist Church  
 New Horizons Music Ensemble (pictured at the top of this page)  
 New St. Mark Baptist Church  
 New York Fried Chicken  
 North End Community Ministry  
 Oakdale Park Christian Reformed Church  
 Orbit Medical  
 Oxygen Plus  
 Plymouth Heights Christian Reformed Church  
 Porter Hills Home Care  
 Denise Price  
 Ruff Ryders, Grand Rapids  
 Mona and Kristie Sallie  
 Caroline Schnarrs  
 SECOM: Our Key Pantry  
 Senior Neighbors  
 Senior Singalong  
 St. Alphonsus Church  
 St. John's United Church of Christ  
 The Rapid  
 Treasure Depot  
 United Way  
 Unity Christian High School  
 WZZM Food for Families

## Spooktacular Celebration at Mount Mercy Café!

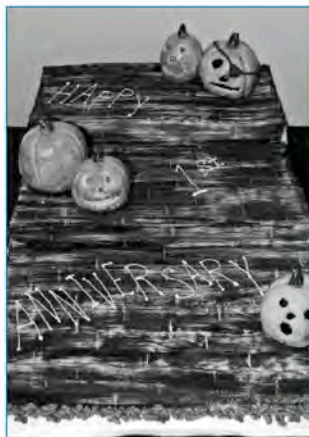
October marked the first anniversary of the Senior Meals, Inc., service at Mount Mercy's "Café on The Mount," and residents, GRHC staff and guests celebrated with a Halloween-themed lunchtime feast. In addition to the delicious salad and chicken parmigiana prepared by Senior Meals Café Coordinator Amy Prins and her crew, revelers enjoyed a scrumptious cake decorated by Senior Meals pastry chef Kelly Loughrige and live music provided by Mount Mercy resident Ric Castleman.

The celebration included a Halloween costume contest for residents. While there were many impressive entries, Thomas Olfield won top honors and a \$15 Meijer gift card for his "scary bride" ensemble. Thanks to Grand Rapids Home Health Care for donating the gift card as well as the lovely table centerpieces for the event.

Housed in Mount Mercy's west wing, Café on The Mount serves lunch each weekday at a nominal cost. The café is very popular with our residents, and the Housing Commission is grateful to Senior Meals for providing this wonderful service.



*Pictured clockwise from top: Resident Gloria Geesey and GVSU intern Amanda Hentschel in costume; resident volunteer Hazel Evans greets diners; contestants line up for costume judging; spooky cake; resident Nancy Ruiz strikes a pose; Senior Meals Executive Director Paul Beebe offers remarks.*





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## New Children's Book Club Gets Underway at Campau Commons

The GRHC's Extra Mile Book Club kicked off this fall with weekly meetings in the Campau Commons Community Room. In addition to the pleasure of discovering great new books, the club offers GRHC residents in grades 3-12 opportunities to create their own short stories, have fun with crafts and enjoy time with new friends.



*Extra Mile Book Club members (children, left to right) Eingel Rivera, Elizabeth Rodriguez and Angel Rodriguez flanked by the GRHC Resident Services interns who coordinate the club: Brittney Wright (left) and Genevieve Sabala.*

The Extra Mile Book Club meets Wednesdays from 4:00-5:00 p.m. in the Campau Commons Community Room.

To learn more about the club, please call GRHC

Resident Services Manager Felicia Clay at 235-2644.

## Housing Application Is Now Online!

The GRHC now offers online application to rent units at our agency-administered low-income housing developments.

The application process is easy:

- Log on to [www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org) to get information about GRHC programs and housing developments.
- Click the "Apply for Housing" link on the [grhousing.org](http://grhousing.org) home page to access our Preliminary Application form.
- Select the name of the desired housing development(s) from the Waiting List\* drop-down menu. \*Some retirement developments have no waiting list, or a very short list.
- Type the required information into the Preliminary Application form and click "submit."

Online application is available 24 hours a day, every day, and applicants can check the status of an application online at [www.WaitListCheck.com](http://www.WaitListCheck.com).

As always, our Waiting List Specialists will be happy to answer any questions about a housing application. Simply call our administrative office weekdays at 235-2600.

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