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GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION LUNCHEON RAISES FUNDS FOR RESIDENT SCHOLARSHIP AND SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAMS

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN, June 6, 2024—The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) “Raising Hope, Building Futures” Luncheon raised more than \$32,000 in support of the affordable housing agency’s Jean McKee Resident Scholarship and resident self-sufficiency programs. Held in mid-May at CityFlatsHotel in downtown Grand Rapids, the event was attended by more than 140 community partners, GRHC board members and staff. Major event sponsors included Fifth Third Bank and Lake Michigan Credit Union (LMCU).

The GRHC administers HUD-funded subsidized housing programs, including 927 units of agency-owned housing and a Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program that serves more than 9,000 people. GRHC Executive Director Lindsey S. Reames noted that many people in the Greater Grand Rapids community don’t realize that in addition to providing housing assistance the GRHC offers a variety of initiatives that help client households work toward long-term housing stability and self-sufficiency, including:

- Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Program that provides academic scholarships of up to \$2,000 to GRHC residents pursuing higher education or vocational studies; in partnership with the YMCA, the program also offers Summer Camp Scholarships to school-age residents of GRHC family housing developments.
- Family Self-Sufficiency Program that helps participating GRHC residents build an escrow account based on increases in earned income. During 2023, 17 families graduated from the program, with an average escrow award of \$8,900.
- “Aim to Save” Program that encourages a cohort of low-income households to build and maintain personal savings, including a youth component that helps participants’ teen children experience the benefits of saving.

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- Housing Barrier Fund that helps the GRHC’s HCV Program clients compete in our very challenging rental marketplace, providing funds for those struggling to pay such costs as security deposits and utility charges.

To illustrate the need for innovative self-sufficiency programs that support the Housing Commission’s low-income clients, Reames noted that the Housing Barrier Fund was developed to address marketplace conditions in which only about 35 percent of participants in the GRHC’s HCV Program were able to rent suitable housing. “The Housing Commission has invested about \$38,000 in the program since last November and has seen a 15 percent increase in client success in securing a rental unit within just a few months,” she said. “This is huge for low-income working families struggling to find affordable housing.”

Reames said many of the community organizations that supported the “Raising Hope, Building Futures” Luncheon—including major sponsors Fifth Third Bank and LMCU—have also supported GRHC initiatives through grants to such programs as “Aim to Save” or the GRHC Family Self-Sufficiency Program.

“The Housing Commission board and staff are very grateful to the community partners, donors and volunteers who continue to step up to help us address the needs of the families we serve,” Reames said. “We look forward to continuing to work with these organizations and individuals to ensure equal access to housing opportunity and housing stability for all West Michigan families.”

A Direct Donation Form that makes it easy for organizations and individuals to support Grand Rapids Housing Commission resident scholarship and self-sufficiency initiatives is available on the agency’s website at www.grhousing.org.

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