

## GRHC Hosts COVID-19 Vaccine Clinics

The GRHC partnered with the Kent County Health Department to offer COVID-19 vaccinations at five multi-unit housing developments serving families, seniors and people with disabilities. Details on page 2!

## GRHC Awarded Vouchers for At-Risk Families and Youth

The GRHC now administers Emergency Housing and Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers that assist vulnerable families and youth aging out of foster care. Details on page 3!

## NAHRO Poster Contest Winners Announced

Talented young GRHC residents once again participated in the NAHRO “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest for grades kindergarten through 12. View the winning posters on page 6!

# GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

Summer 2021

# NEWS



*Lindsey Reames weeds a Division Avenue median during a recent GRHC/GRPD Community Cleanup Day—Story on page 7!*

## Lindsey S. Reames Named GRHC Executive Director

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) is pleased to welcome Lindsey S. Reames as our agency’s new Executive Director. Lindsey has 30 years of experience in affordable, subsidized and public housing administration, including demonstrated leadership experience; prior to joining our team she was based in Michigan where she served as the Deputy to the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Field Operations, Public and Indian Housing, for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). In that role, she was the principal advisor to the Deputy Assistant Secretary on all matters involving program policy and implementation, human resources, contracting, management, administration and special initiatives. Lindsey’s ability to analyze complex programs and develop effective, results-oriented implementation plans have earned her several HUD awards, including an Exceptional Field Operations Award in 2020 and a Special Recognition Award in 2017.

During her decades in management positions with HUD, Lindsey gained hands-on expertise in the administration of public housing authorities; she

has provided oversight and technical assistance to help numerous housing authorities overcome challenges that impeded their ability to meet HUD program requirements. From 2005-2008 she was the Federal Receiver at the Detroit Housing Commission where she oversaw the development and implementation of policies and procedures that helped the agency resolve serious administrative, financial and management concerns. Lindsey’s educational achievements include a Master of Public Administration degree from Western Michigan University and a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from Davenport College of Business.

“Lindsey’s knowledge of HUD programs and housing authority operations, her community relations acumen, and her ability to plan, implement and evaluate innovative housing initiatives make her uniquely qualified to undertake the duties of Executive Director for our agency,” noted GRHC President Bobbie Butler. “The Housing Commission and our staff look forward to working with Lindsey to address the critical shortage of affordable housing in our community.”

## GRHC Partners with Health Department to Host Vaccine Clinics

About 300 residents and 20 GRHC staff received COVID-19 vaccinations during on-site clinics held at Adams Park, Campau Commons, Leonard Terrace, Mount Mercy and Ransom Tower Apartments. The vaccines were administered by Kent County Health Department (KCHD) nursing staff.

Many thanks to the KCHD and the other partners that supported these clinics:

- The Grand Valley State University Kirkhof College of Nursing hosted a clinic at the GVSU Family Health Center at Mount Mercy.
- GVSU and Calvin University students and staff provided resident education, helped optimize social distancing and sanitized vaccination stations.

The GRHC also thanks our Resident Services team for their work promoting the clinics and helping residents schedule appointments and complete paperwork. Working together, we will build a healthier future for our community!



### Carlos A. Sanchez Earns NAHRO Award



Congratulations to retired GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez who recently received the 2021 Terrence R. Duvernay Award from the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

The annual award is recognized as a pinnacle for any career in the affordable housing industry. Carlos received this honor in recognition of his dedication to the creation of affordable housing opportunity and his tireless advocacy for progressive housing policy at all levels of government.

Under Carlos' more than three decades of leadership, the number of GRHC affordable housing units grew from 818 to more than 3,600, and our agency greatly broadened program and service offerings. Over the years Carlos has also generously shared his expertise to help other housing authorities expand affordable housing inventory.

### GVSU Family Health Center at Mount Mercy Offers Mental Health Services & Peer Support

*Nursing Case Manager  
Melissa Smith, RN, BSN,  
is one of the mental  
health professionals  
providing care at the  
GVSU Family Health  
Center at Mount Mercy.*



The GVSU Family Health Center at Mount Mercy recently added grant-funded mental health services to its offerings, including counseling services, help with mental health medications and coordination with primary care providers. The new mental health program includes funding for a resident Peer Support Advocate who will provide information and assistance to clinic clients; all services are spearheaded by nurse practitioners specializing in geriatrics and psychiatry and are overseen by a medical doctor.

For more information or to make an appointment, please contact the Health Center at (616) 331-9830.

## GRHC Awarded Emergency Housing & Foster Youth to Independence Vouchers



The GRHC is one of 625 housing authorities nationwide that have received awards through the Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program that's part of the American Rescue Plan Act President Biden signed in March. Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHVs) provide a tenant-based rental subsidy to families who are:

- Experiencing homelessness
- At risk of experiencing homelessness
- Recently experienced homelessness and/or have a high risk of housing instability
- Fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking

The GRHC will administer 42 EHVs, with households referred by the Kent County Continuum of Care or other partner organizations that work with vulnerable populations. These vouchers will be administered in conjunction with our Housing Choice Voucher program under rules specific to EHVs.

The EHV program requires PHAs to link families with housing search assistance during their initial housing search. GRHC staff will:

- Conduct owner outreach to identify potential rental units and provide directions to these as part of a client briefing packet.
- Proactively check in with clients searching for housing.
- Assign a dedicated landlord liaison for EHV families and expedite the EHV leasing process when possible.
- Work with other agencies to link clients with such resources as transportation, help finding accessible units and units in low-poverty neighborhoods, and help with completing rental housing applications and forms.

The EHV program is funded through 2022, with renewal funding provided on a calendar-year basis beginning in 2023.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that more than 20,000 young people age out of foster care each year. The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare estimates that about 25 percent of these young people experience homelessness within four years of leaving foster care; an even higher number are precariously housed.



The GRHC is partnering with the Kent County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the West Michigan Partnership for Children, the Grand Rapids Area Coalition to End Homelessness and the Continuum of Care initiative to administer a Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) program in Kent County. Funded by HUD, FYI is a collaborative effort to prevent and end homelessness among youth who have a current or prior history of involvement with child welfare agencies.

### FYI Program Services

A HUD FYI Voucher provides up to 36 months of rental housing subsidy. Optional supportive services include:

- Information/counseling on basic life skills such as money management, nutrition, and how to access health care and mental health support
- Job search preparation
- Educational and career counseling
- Counseling regarding finding and maintaining rental housing

### FYI Program Eligibility Criteria

- Program participants must be between the ages of 18 and 24.
- Youth must have left foster care or will leave foster care within 90 days in accordance with a transition plan described in Section 475(5)(H) of the Social Security Act.
- Youth must be experiencing homelessness or be at risk of experiencing homelessness.

The GRHC currently assists nine young adults through the FYI program. FYI Vouchers are administered by our Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program; Section 8 Coordinator Trenea Allen works with program participants, leveraging her Master of Social Work degree, extensive experience in social work and familiarity with available community resources to link assisted youth with needed supportive services. The Housing Commission receives referrals to this program through Kent County DHHS.

## Antoine Court Construction Update



*Antoine Court Apartments construction site, June 2021*

Construction of Antoine Court Apartments is on schedule, with a mid-October opening planned. Construction underway during mid-summer includes:

- Installation of heating and air conditioning hookups, exterior siding, building elevator
- First floor: plumbing fixtures, flooring, doors, appliances
- Second floor: balconies, flooring, sinks, interior paint
- Third floor: balconies, drywall

The 50-unit, \$13.5 million development will serve adults ages 55 and older who have a disability as well as seniors ages 62 and older; the development will have a preference for veterans.

The GRHC is currently accepting applications to this development for fall 2021 occupancy. Interested individuals will find more information and an online Housing Pre-Application form at [www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org).

## Human Resources Update

### Staff Promotion

**Vickie LaGrone** has been promoted from part-time Office Assistant at Creston Plaza Apartments to part-time Section 8 Coordinator at the administrative office. Vickie has been with the GRHC for ten years and has extensive program and customer service experience.

### Sandra Colon Retires



Congratulations to Section 8 Coordinator **Sandra Colon** who retired in May after 23 years as a valued member of our team. Sandra plans to spend her retirement years in beautiful Puerto Rico. We wish her well as she begins her retirement adventures!

## GRHC Landlord Update

### New Fast Track to Answers!

The Housing Commission has hired a dedicated Landlord Liaison to handle all communications with the landlords who participate in our Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program. Our goal is to expedite onboarding and issue resolution. Please email the GRHC Landlord Liaison at [Landlord@grhousing.org](mailto:Landlord@grhousing.org) with any question or concern.

### Meet HQS to Avoid Rent Abatement

The GRHC Housing Choice Voucher program is proud to work with rental property owners to make safe, quality housing available to low-income families. A key component of our program is strict adherence to the Housing Quality Standards (HQS) set by the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD); adherence is monitored by our inspectors.

The HCV program will abate the rent on units that are in violation of HUD HQS; abatement will reduce or even eliminate a portion of the GRHC rental subsidy. Abatement only takes place after two consecutive HQS inspection failures. For example, if the GRHC inspects your property on August 15 and your unit fails, we will automatically reschedule your inspection. If your unit fails the second inspection with the same violations, the inspector will provide a date by which deficiencies must be repaired; the unit could be subject to abatement if you fail to meet this deadline.

### Important: Third inspection requirements

After a second failed inspection, it is the landlord's responsibility to schedule a third inspection by the first of the following month; the third inspection is not scheduled automatically.

- If the landlord does not schedule a third inspection, the unit will be placed in abatement until an inspection is scheduled and the unit passes.
- To schedule a reinspection or get answers to questions about inspections, please email [Landlord@grhousing.org](mailto:Landlord@grhousing.org) or [inspector@grhousing.org](mailto:inspector@grhousing.org).

### Preventing Evictions: Resources for Landlords

The July 31 expiration of the CDC Eviction Moratorium may threaten the housing stability of households hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. HUD has published a flier offering tips and resources to assist landlords as they work with HCV tenants struggling to pay their portion of the rent; the flier is available online at [www.grhousing.org/rental-property-owners.php](http://www.grhousing.org/rental-property-owners.php).

Another valuable resource is the MSHDA COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program; a link to information about this is available under "Quick Links" at [www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org).

## Units Available at Four GRHC Senior Communities—And First Month Is FREE!

The GRHC currently has attractive, comfortable one-bedroom units available at several apartment communities serving seniors ages 55 and older and people with disabilities. In addition, for a limited time we are offering a “First Month Free” promotion at these developments, which include Adams Park Apartments, Leonard Terrace Apartments, Mount Mercy Apartments and Ransom Tower Apartments.

A rental subsidy is available to eligible tenants, which means rent is generally no more than 30 percent of monthly income. All of our senior communities feature:

- Professionally maintained grounds
- Affordable rent includes utilities
- Major appliances furnished
- Smoke-free environment
- Community room, social events
- Laundry facilities on site
- On-site food pantry
- On-site supportive services
- On-site housing and maintenance staff
- 24-hour emergency maintenance

For more information, including photos and annual income limits, please visit: [grhousing.org/senior-apartments.php](http://grhousing.org/senior-apartments.php)

Interested seniors can apply to rent at any GRHC housing development online at: [grhc.apply4housing.com](http://grhc.apply4housing.com)



**Adams Park Apartments**  
1440 Fuller Avenue SE  
(616) 235-2865  
Serving seniors ages 62 and older as well as adults with disabilities



**Ransom Tower Apartments**  
50 Ransom Avenue NE  
(616) 235-2881  
Serving seniors ages 62 and older



**Leonard Terrace Apartments**  
1315 Leonard Street NE  
(616) 235-2890  
Serving seniors ages 55 and older; ages 55-61 must have a disability to receive a federal rental subsidy



**Mount Mercy Apartments**  
1425 Bridge Street NW  
(616) 235-2843  
Serving seniors ages 55 and older; ages 55-61 must have a disability to receive a federal rental subsidy

## Partners Support Food Security at Adams Park and Ransom Tower



This spring dozens of volunteers facilitated the quarterly food distribution the USDA offers at Adams Park Apartments through The Emergency Food Assistance (TEFAP) program. Many thanks to the volunteers from Amplify GR, Boston Square Christian Reformed Church, Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church, Samaritas and the GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing for assisting residents during this event. Thanks also to Two Men and a Truck for transporting more than

7,700 pounds of food from the TEFAP distribution center.

We are also grateful to Heartside Gleaning for offering its “Good Food Box” program at Ransom Tower Apartments. The program provided 52 residents with bi-weekly fresh produce boxes from May 2020 through May 2021.

Both Adams Park and Ransom Tower serve seniors and people with disabilities.

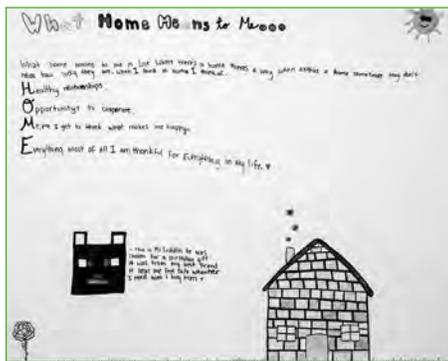
## NAHRO “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest Winners

This past March the GRHC invited young residents in grades kindergarten through 12 to participate in the 2021 “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest sponsored by the National Association of Housing & Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO). NAHRO is a professional membership organization that represents more than 19,000 housing and community development agencies nationwide.

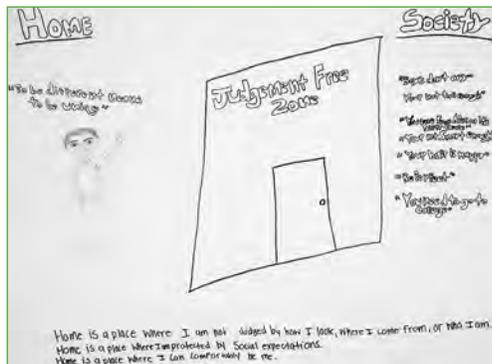
The GRHC sponsored a local poster contest that awarded \$25 to one winner in each of three age categories. Congratulations to:  
 Jeremiah Samukai, winner, grades K-5  
 Antonio Benton, winner, grades 6-8  
 Said Abdi, winner, grades 9-12

All eligible entries received were sent on to the state “What Home Means to Me” poster contest, and the Housing Commission recently received the exciting news that GRHC resident Kylee Pierce won the state competition in the grades 6-8 division! Kylee received a \$50 gift card and a letter from Michigan NAHRO President Zachary Fosler, and her poster was sent on to the regional poster competition.

Many thanks to all of the children who shared their artwork and thoughts about home with us!



Above, winner of the Michigan NAHRO “What Home Means to Me” Poster Contest: Kylee Pierce, Grades 6-8



Clockwise from top left, GRHC poster contest winners:  
 Jeremiah Samukai, Grades K-5;  
 Antonio Benton, Grades 6-8;  
 Said Abdi, Grades 9-12

## GRHC Hosts Children’s Summer Meal Program



Two GRHC family developments are serving as distribution sites for the USDA-funded “Meet Up & Eat Up” summer meal program spearheaded in our area by the Grand Rapids Public Schools (GRPS) Nutrition Services Department. The program works to ensure that children who rely on school meal programs during the school year don’t go hungry in the summer months.

Meals will be distributed Mondays and Thursdays, 1:30-2:00 p.m., through July 29 at these locations:

- Campau Commons Community Center, 821 South Division Avenue (Division at Franklin Street)
- Creston Plaza Community Center, 1080 Creston Plaza Drive NE

The Meet Up & Eat Up program serves children ages 18 and under and is open to all Grand Rapids families. Families receive three breakfasts, three lunches, and half a gallon of milk per child at each visit. All meals are “grab and go.”

This is the fourth summer the GRHC has hosted “Meet Up & Eat Up.” We are grateful to the GRPS for partnering with us to serve our residents and their neighbors!

## GRPD Officers Join GRHC Staff for Community Clean-Up Day



Housing Commission staff and officers from the Grand Rapids Police Department Community Engagement unit teamed up for an early June Community Cleanup Day at Campau Commons Apartments, Sheldon Apartments and the Hope Community Service Center.

“The Housing Commission is dedicated to providing our residents with affordable homes that are well maintained and attractive both inside and out,” said GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames. “We are grateful to our GRPD Community Engagement officers for stepping up to lend a hand as we spruce up our southeast and southwest side properties. When we work together, small changes have a big impact.” Reames noted that having GRPD officers visit GRHC developments builds trust and positive, collaborative relationships with residents.

In addition to the GRPD Community Engagement officers, Housing Commissioners Bobbie Butler, Angela Bunn and Monica Steimle-App stopped by to support activities that included maintaining plantings in the median strip near Campau Commons, weeding and planting flowers, trash pickup, window washing and painting porch railings and doors.





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## Book Exchange Box!



Many thanks to Amplify GR for partnering with the GRHC to offer a book exchange box at Adams Park Apartments! Beautifully painted by Grand Rapids artist E'lla Luster Weber, the much-appreciated box offers books focused on issues surrounding racism, inequality and social justice.

## Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Application Deadline Extended

The Jean McKee Resident Scholarship program provides awards of up to \$2,000 to GRHC residents who are attending college or vocational school full time.

Information and application form:

[www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org)

**Application deadline: 8/11/2021**

## COVID-19 Operational Update and Resources

GRHC offices continue to be open by appointment only. Masks and social distancing are required at all GRHC facilities.

- Administrative Office phone: (616) 235-2600 | FAX: (616) 235-2660
- Email contact for Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program participants or questions about an existing HCV program application: [ic@grhousing.org](mailto:ic@grhousing.org)
- Email contact for applicants to GRHC-owned developments: [wl@grhousing.org](mailto:wl@grhousing.org)
- Email contact for HCV program landlords: [Landlord@grhousing.org](mailto:Landlord@grhousing.org).

## FCC Emergency Broadband Benefit

The Federal Communications Commission has created an Emergency Broadband Benefit to help low-income households connect during the pandemic. The program will cover up to \$50 in monthly internet service costs (up to \$75 for tribal areas). For complete information about the program and the application process:

[www.getemergencybroadband.org](http://www.getemergencybroadband.org)

## Eviction Prevention Information

The CDC Eviction Moratorium expires on July 31. The GRHC is working with our residents and landlords to help families maintain stable housing. Housing Choice Voucher program clients and residents of GRHC developments are encouraged to report any change in income or circumstance that may necessitate income recertification.

## MSHDA COVID Emergency Rental Assistance

The Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) is administering a COVID Emergency Rental Assistance (CERA) program through its network of local nonprofit agencies. CERA provides rental and utility assistance to eligible renters so that they retain their housing stability. A link to the MSHDA website for this program is available under "Quick Links" at [www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org).

## HUD Eviction Prevention Tips

The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) has published a flier that offers tenants tips and resources for maintaining housing stability. A link to a PDF of this flier is available under "Quick Links" at [www.grhousing.org](http://www.grhousing.org).

Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:

Bobbie Butler, President; Monica Steimle-App, Vice President; Angela Bunn, Patrick Miles Sr., Betty Zylstra; Executive Director: Lindsey S. Reames

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