

Scattered Sites Renovations Completed

The GRHC has completed a total of \$673,000 in improvements to 20 Scattered Sites units. The renovations were funded through HUD Capital Fund Program grants. Details on page 2!

Campau Commons Hosts HUD EnVision Center

HUD has designated the Campau Commons Community Center as the Grand Rapids EnVision Center, recognizing GRHC programs that help residents attain self-sufficiency. Details on page 3!

GVSU Expands Services at Mount Mercy Clinic

The GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing has received a grant to support the addition of behavioral health services at the GVSU Health Center at Mount Mercy. Details on page 7!

GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

Winter 2021

NEWS



Cares Act Funds 75 Additional Mainstream Vouchers

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) was recently awarded a \$495,593 HUD Mainstream Voucher program grant authorized under the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. The grant will fund an additional 75 Mainstream Vouchers to support the housing needs of non-elderly persons who have disabilities; HUD defines “non-elderly” as under age 62. This award brings the total number of Mainstream Vouchers the GRHC administers to 207.

The Mainstream Voucher program is targeted to people with disabilities who are transitioning out of institutional settings, at risk of institutionalization, experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness. The new vouchers are being awarded to eligible non-elderly disabled applicants who are currently on our Section 8 waiting list.

“Especially at a time when so many families are struggling, the Housing Commission is deeply

grateful to have expanded capacity to provide housing stability to some of our most vulnerable applicants,” noted GRHC Interim Executive Director Hattie Tinney Beenen.

In addition to a rental housing subsidy, the Mainstream program provides supportive services coordinated by the GRHC’s on-staff social work professionals in collaboration with The Salvation Army, Disability Advocates, the Area Agency on Aging of Western Michigan, Cherry Health, Care Resources, local hospitals and nursing homes, and other community partner organizations that serve people who have disabilities. These services are designed to promote independence and dignity and may include home modifications, case management, counseling services, chore workers, legal help, medication management, meal delivery, medical equipment and supplies, transportation, fall prevention services and emergency response services.

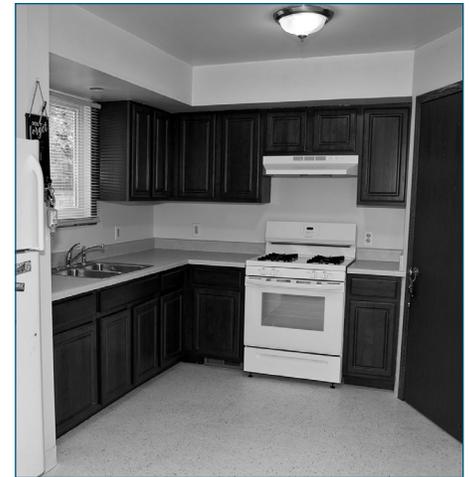
\$673,000 Scattered Sites Renovation Project Completed

The GRHC has completed a total of \$673,000 in improvements to 20 Scattered Sites units that are rented to low-income households through our Section 8 Project-Based program. The renovations have been funded through HUD Capital Fund program grants.

Improvements were completed in December and include...

- Sewer line and drainage renovations
- Concrete and driveway repairs
- Interior and exterior lighting improvements
- Landscaping improvements
- Kitchen improvements, including new flooring, cabinets, counter tops, appliances
- Energy- and water-saving improvements
- Exterior and storm door replacement
- New roofing
- New smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors

Residents affected by the improvement project were offered alternate housing while their unit was being renovated.



The kitchen at 929 Thomas St. SE before (left) and after renovation

Antoine Court Apartments Construction Update



Welcome, New Board Members!

Jay Connor has been appointed to the Ransom Avenue Development Corporation, the governing entity for Ransom Tower Apartments. Jay brings more than 25 years of information technology expertise to the board; he is currently the GRHC's Computer Network Systems Administrator.

Ellen Fitzgerald has been appointed to our Resident Advisory Board. Ellen represents the Mount Mercy Apartments community.

As of February, construction at Antoine Court Apartments is on schedule, with utilities installed and work progressing on the second and third floors of the three-story structure. Located on Division Avenue between Antoine Street SW and Delaware Street SW, Antoine Court will feature fifty 690-square-foot one-bedroom apartments and a community room.

Supported by the Section 8 Project-Based Voucher program, Antoine Court will provide a preference to

veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. The development is also open to adults who have a disability as well as seniors ages 62 and older.

The GRHC leveraged \$1.4 million in federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) to fund the \$13.5 million development project. The GRHC is the developer for Antoine Court; the project architect is Isaac V. Norris & Associates and Triangle Associates is the construction manager/general contractor. The building is scheduled to open in October 2021.

RAC Pilot Concludes

The Rental Assistance Center (RAC), a two-year pilot program the GRHC has administered since late 2018, concluded in October 2020. Funded by the City of Grand Rapids, the RAC provided rental readiness services to Grand Rapids residents who earn 80 percent or less of the Area Median Income and who have had a rental housing application denied by a landlord. The center also provided a clearinghouse for rental property owners seeking qualified tenants.

The RAC received more than 900 applications from prospective renters during its two years of operation; 593 eligible renters were referred to community resources. Fourteen percent of applicants were experiencing homelessness at the time of application and 48 percent were “doubled up” with relatives or friends.

Referral services provided included help with identifying prospective rental opportunities and accessing emergency housing as well as referrals to credit and financial counseling and employment, legal, educational and eviction prevention resources.

The primary barriers to successful housing rental were low income (51 percent), low credit score (28 percent) and prior eviction (10 percent).

The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports that in 2020 the fair market rent for a two-bedroom unit in the Grand Rapids area was \$962. In order to afford this rent without paying more than 30 percent of income on housing, a resident would need to earn an hourly wage of \$18.50 per hour assuming a 40-hour work week; the minimum wage in Michigan is \$9.65.

GRHC Opens HUD EnVision Center at Campau Commons



From left, Mrs. Candy Carson, former U.S. Department of HUD Secretary Ben Carson, HUD Midwest Regional Administrator Joseph Galvan and GRHC Executive Director Carlos A. Sanchez (retired August 2020) tour the Campau Commons Community Center, site of a new Grand Rapids EnVision Center.

During late summer 2020, the Housing Commission welcomed HUD Secretary Ben Carson, his wife Candy Carson, and HUD Midwest Regional Administrator Joseph Galvan to the Campau Commons Community Center; the visitors toured the facility in celebration of its designation as HUD’s Grand Rapids EnVision Center.

The EnVision Center Demonstration program seeks to help participants in HUD-assisted programs work toward self-sufficiency by establishing central hubs that offer support in the areas of economic empowerment, educational advancement, health and wellness, and character and leadership. The EnVision Center initiative is based on the idea that financial support alone is insufficient to solve the problem of poverty. Intentional and collective efforts across a diverse set of organizations are needed to empower households to self-sufficiency.

The GRHC is the host of the Grand Rapids EnVision Center in recognition of well-established Resident Services, Family Self-Sufficiency and

Homeownership programs that support GRHC residents on their journey toward economic independence. Services at the new center will support households that reside in the City of Grand Rapids and are at or below the federal poverty level.

The GRHC recently applied to the AmeriCorps VISTA program to recruit a full-time AmeriCorps-funded worker who will work with the GRHC Resident Services team and partner organizations to engage residents and community leaders in innovative activities that foster stable neighborhoods and workforce development.

The VISTA worker will help to shape service offerings through research on:

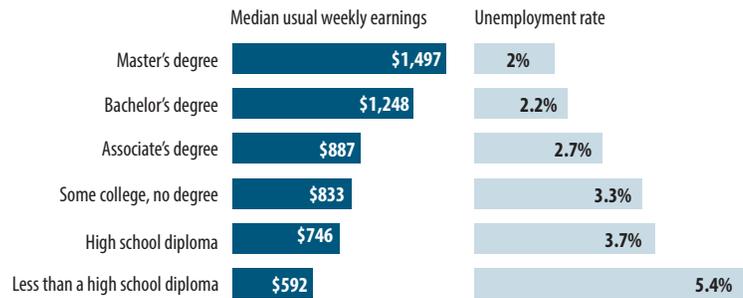
- Community neighborhood stabilization planning efforts
- Key issues impacting workforce development

Another focus will be identifying funding opportunities that would help the Grand Rapids EnVision Center grow capacity and service offerings.

COLLEGE PAYS.

FACTS FROM THE U.S. BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS

Earnings and unemployment rate by educational attainment, 2019



GRHC Offers \$2,000 Resident Scholarships—Apply by May 11

The 2021 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 \$40,000, helping 39 residents pursue higher education.

Eligibility Requirements:

- Must have been a resident of a GRHC housing program for the past year.
- Household must be in good standing with the GRHC in accordance with our Housing Choice Voucher Administrative Plan and 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, FSS Program participants and undergraduate students will receive priority status.
- Graduating high school seniors and those currently attending college must have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.5 (C+ letter grade). Complete application requirements follow.

- 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. Complete application requirements follow.
- 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:
 - Maintain a cumulative 2.5 GPA.
 - Maintain full-time enrollment.

Application Requirements by Applicant Status:

ALL APPLICANTS:

- Completed Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Application Form.
- Short essay (300 words) on the topic "My career goals and how the educational program I am pursuing will help me reach these goals."

GRADUATING HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR:

- High school transcript that shows graduation and minimum GPA of 2.5.
- Letter or email of recommendation from a teacher or administrator at the applicant's high school; email recommendation must be from the teacher's school email account.

- Copy of letter of acceptance from an accredited vocational school, college or university.

CURRENT COLLEGE OR VOCATIONAL SCHOOL STUDENT:

- Letter or email of recommendation from an instructor or counselor at applicant's school; email must be from the instructor's school email account.
- Official school transcript that shows:
 - A cumulative GPA of at least 2.5.
 - Enrolled full-time 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.
- Copy of letter of acceptance from an accredited vocational school, 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 11, 2021

To Our Community Partners and Volunteers: Thank You!

The GRHC board and staff are sincerely grateful to all of the community organizations, donors and volunteers who have stepped up throughout the year to help the families we serve maintain housing stability, food security and access to health care and educational opportunities during uniquely challenging times. While our staff could not host our annual “Thanks for Giving” partner recognition event this year, we salute all of the wonderful organizations and individuals who support our residents and agency, including:

Alpha Women’s Center
 Alternatives in Motion
 Area Agency on Aging of Western Mich.
 Assoc. for the Blind & Visually Impaired
 Aimee Baskovic
 Baxter Community Center
 Baxter Neighborhood Association
 Boston Square Christian Reformed Church
 Bridge Street House of Prayer
 Brookside SERVE
 Calvin University
 Campus Elementary
 Care Resources
 The Care Team
 Catherine’s Health Center
 Central Reformed Church
 Change at the Edges
 City of Grand Rapids Crime Prevention
 City of Grand Rapids Mobile GR &
 Parking Services
 Clancy Street Ministries
 Comcast, Hugo Carmona
 Covenant House Academy
 CQI Coverage Quest Insurance Group
 Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services
 Mara Deckinga
 Delaware Manor, Susan Liden
 Disability Advocates of Kent County
 Dwelling Place
 Easterseals
 Effex Management Solutions
 Family Outreach Center
 Feed My People Ministry
 Feeding America West MI Food Bank
 Fifth Third Bank



First Park Church
 First United Methodist Church
 Forest Hills Presbyterian Church
 Kurt and Margaret Freund
 Friends of Grand Rapids Parks
 Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church
 Garfield Park Neighborhood Association
 Genesis Non-Profit Housing Corporation
 Grace Hill Church
 Dr. Meridell Gracias
 Grand Rapids Fire Department
 Grand Rapids Police Department (GRPD)
 GRPD Community Officer Tony Leonard
 GRPD Community Officer Tyler Smith
 Grand Rapids Public Library
 Grand Rapids Public Schools
 Lunch Program
 Grand Rapids Symphony
 Grand River Aseptic Manufacturing
 Griffin Pest Solutions
 Guardian Angel Home Health Care
 Grand Valley State University (GVSU)
 Family Health Clinic at Mount Mercy
 GVSU Kirkhof College of Nursing
 Head Start for Kent County
 Heartside Gleaning Initiative
 Hispanic Center of West Michigan
 Holland Home
 Home Repair Services
 Hurst Mechanical
 Inner City Christian Federation (ICCF)
 Kathleen Jackson
 Kent County Community Action
 Kent County Health Department
 Kent School Services Network
 Keystone Retirement Services
 LaGrave Ave. Christian Reformed Church

Life EMS
 LINC UP, Shaquille Anthony
 Mainstreet Association, Leonard Leek
 Manpower
 Meals on Wheels of Western Michigan
 Meijer
 Michigan Department of Health
 and Human Services (DHHS)
 Michigan Rehabilitation Services
 MSU Extension
 Multitude Ministries
 National Heritage Academies
 Neighbors of Belknap Lookout
 New Hope Baptist Church
 North End Community Ministry (NECM)
 Nonprofit Innovations, Inc.
 Notions Marketing
 Oakdale Neighbors
 Oakdale Park Church
 Pastor Ron Marckini
 Patriot Agency, Charlie Batizy
 Podiatry West Senior Foot Care Services
 Reliance Community Care Partners
 The Salvation Army
 Samaritas
 Senior Neighbors
 Senior Sing A-Long
 Simply a Loving Touch (SALT)
 Emily Sluiter
 SOAR (SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access &
 Recovery)
 St. Alphonsus Parish
 St. John’s United Church of Christ
 St. Luke A.M.E. Zion Church
 St. Robert of Newminster Parish
 Gary Stowie
 Temple Emanuel
 The Rapid
 James Trimble
 Two Men and a Truck
 United Health Care
 United Way 2-1-1
 Unity Christian High School
 University of Detroit Mercy
 Village of Heather Hills
 Visiting Physicians Association
 Volunteers in Service
 West Michigan Works
 Women’s Resource Center
 Wyoming Housing Commission
 YMCA • YWCA

Human Resources Update

Staff Promotions

Deshario Collins has been promoted from Part-Time Custodian at Hope Community and Sheldon Apartments to Full-Time Custodian at Ransom Tower Apartments.

Shakerah McRae has been promoted from Section 8 Coordinator to Admissions and Leasing Supervisor. In her new role, Shakerah will administer the admissions process for GRHC housing programs, ensuring that admissions activities are in compliance with HUD regulations and agency policies.

Vickie Nystrom has been promoted from Section 8 Coordinator to Housing Choice Voucher Compliance Coordinator. In her new role, Vickie will implement the GRHC's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program's leasing and occupancy policies and procedures in accordance with HUD regulations and agency policies.

Welcome, New Staff

Kimberly Brown is a new Section 8 Coordinator at the GRHC main office. Kimberly comes to the GRHC from an FSS/Section 8 Coordinator position with Wyoming Housing Commission.

Ziyah Dock is the new Resident & Family Self-Sufficiency Services Specialist serving the residents of Sheldon Apartments. Ziyah has 22 years of social work experience, most recently with Forest View Hospital in Grand Rapids.

Elisabeth Gladyness is the new Office Assistant at Mount Mercy Apartments. Elisabeth has more than ten years of office and customer service experience and comes to the GRHC from Network 180.

Erica Kurban is a new Section 8 Coordinator at the GRHC main office. Erica comes to the GRHC from Professional Property Management where she was a Property Manager.

Bradley Moore is the new Custodian at Campau Commons and Creston Plaza. Bradley comes to the GRHC from a custodial position at Metro Health Hospital.

Jesston Whitley is the new Financial Analyst at the GRHC main office. Jesston has more than three years of accounting experience and comes to the GRHC from Applied Imaging.

Section 8 Homeownership Program Orientation Meetings Scheduled

The GRHC offers eligible Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher recipients the opportunity to use their Section 8 Housing Assistance Payment toward a home mortgage payment rather than rental housing expenses. Our staff works with West Michigan lenders and realtors to bring prospective home owners a flexible, supportive program that provides not only administrative assistance but also information families can use to plan and finance a home purchase.

The GRHC is offering four Section 8 Homeownership program orientation meetings this year; all will be held at 2:00 p.m. Meeting dates:

3/16/21 6/15/21 9/21/21 12/14/21

The March meeting will be virtual, and a link to the online meeting will be provided to those who register to attend. The format for the June, September and December meetings has not yet been finalized.

For more information about the program and to register for the March orientation meeting:
www.grhousing.org/home-ownership-program.php

In Memoriam, Shelley Wisdom

Shelley chats with a neighbor while showing off a holiday craft during a 2018 Leonard Terrace Art Fest event.



The GRHC board and staff are saddened to report the December passing of Shelley Wisdom, a longtime GRHC resident and, since 2007, a valued member of the Leonard Terrace Housing Corporation board.

Shelley was a beloved resident of Leonard Terrace Apartments where she served as Resident Assistant for many years. The staff who had the pleasure to know Shelley as well as her neighbors will remember her friendly, cheerful demeanor and unflinching kindness.

Eviction Prevention Tips & Resources

GRHC Residents: Report Income Changes

The GRHC is working with our residents and landlords to help families maintain stable housing during these challenging times. Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program clients and residents of our housing developments are encouraged to promptly report any change in income or circumstance that may necessitate income recertification.

Residents of GRHC developments should contact their GRHC Housing Management staff. GRHC Housing Choice Voucher program participants should email ic@grhousing.org to report their situation.

Grand Rapids Eviction Prevention Program

The City offers an Eviction Prevention Program in collaboration with the state Department of Health & Human Services and other partners. For information, phone 2-1-1 or 459-6281.

Support Hope Community

SpartanNash is offering a “Direct Your Dollars” charitable donation drive that is helping the GRHC raise funds for our Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing program.

When you shop at Family Fare, D&W Fresh Market or Forest Hills Foods, please save your receipts. Once we’ve collected \$150,000 in original receipts, the GRHC can exchange those to receive a \$1,000 check in support of Hope Community! For details about how to donate your receipts: www.grhousing.org/hope-community.php

GVSU Receives Grant to Provide Behavioral Health Services at Mount Mercy Clinic



Mount Mercy Apartments hosts the GVSU Health Clinic at Mount Mercy; the development serves seniors ages 55 and older.

The Grand Valley State University (GVSU) Kirkhof College of Nursing recently received a two-year, \$500,000 grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to establish “Project Thrive,” an initiative that expands service at the GVSU Health Center at Mount Mercy to include not only primary care but also behavioral health support.

Since spring 2019 the GRHC has partnered with Kirkhof College of Nursing (KCON) to host the GVSU Health Center at Mount Mercy, a dedicated on-site clinic that serves the senior residents of Mount Mercy Apartments as well as other seniors in the community. Like Project Thrive, the Health Center is funded by a Michigan Health Endowment Fund grant. By adding a behavioral health component to the Health Center, KCON seeks to enhance the center’s comprehensive, integrated care approach.

Project Thrive gets underway this winter, adding the services of a

psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner, a nurse case manager and two part-time peer support advocates who will work with the primary care team. Telehealth and in-person services are available.

Services at the GVSU Health Center at Mount Mercy are overseen by Doctor of Nursing Practice-level faculty and a medical doctor. The goals of the center are to improve access to early preventive services, address safety in the home and ultimately optimize patients’ ability to successfully age in place. The Health Center also provides valuable clinical experience to GVSU students who are pursuing medical careers.

During 2020 the Health Center logged 244 visits, with care that included health screenings, nutritional counseling and a flu vaccine clinic.

Seniors interested in learning more about services available at the GVSU Health Center at Mount Mercy can contact the center at (616) 331-9830.



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2021 Agency Plan Public Hearing on March 16

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission has drafted our 2021 Annual Agency Plan, a document that summarizes the Housing Commission's recent activities and outlines our goals and objectives for the year ahead. The draft GRHC Agency Plan is available for review online at www.grhousing.org.

The GRHC will hold a Housing Commission meeting and a virtual public hearing regarding the 2021 Annual Agency Plan on Tuesday, March 16, at 6:00 p.m. A link to the virtual meeting will be available March 16 at www.grhousing.org.

Submission of public comments: During the meeting the Housing Commission will use technology to facilitate typed comments that may be read or shared with the Housing Commissioners and other attendees. Alternatively, email your comment or question in advance to: BoardMeeting-QA@grhousing.org.



Hurst Mechanical Employees Bring Safe Holiday Cheer to Mount Mercy Residents



Mount Mercy Resident Services Specialist Erin Shibley (left) and Asset Manager Toni Coristine prepare to deliver the holiday meal boxes donated by Hurst Mechanical employees.

The kind and generous employees of Hurst Mechanical once again stepped up to brighten the holidays for residents of Mount Mercy Apartments, a 180-unit senior development that serves ages 55 and older.

The Hurst Mechanical staff has made hosting a wonderful holiday buffet an annual tradition at Mount Mercy; this year called for a new twist on that festive event, so the company got creative and replaced the buffet with delicious catered boxed feasts featuring roast beef, chicken, brats, sauerkraut, potatoes and gravy, apple pie and more. The boxes were delivered to our very grateful residents by GRHC staff.

Many thanks to all of the Hurst Mechanical employees who made the holidays special for our residents with this thoughtful gift, and kudos to Hurst Mechanical's Sherrill Morgan and GRHC Resident Services Specialist Erin Shibley for coordinating the holiday meal event!

Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:

Bobbie Butler, President; Betty Zylstra, Vice President; Angela Bunn, Patrick Miles Sr., Monica Steimle-App; GRHC Interim Executive Director: Hattie Tinney Beenen

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Please send questions, comments or story ideas to: Grand Rapids Housing Commission, 1420 Fuller Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49507;

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