

GRHC Awarded Emergency Safety and Security Grant

The GRHC is one of 55 housing authorities nationwide to receive a 2021 HUD Emergency Safety and Security Grant administered through the Capital Fund program. Details on page 3!

Homeownership Program Orientations Scheduled

The GRHC will host virtual Orientation Meetings to help HCV program participants learn how they can use their rental subsidy toward home mortgage payments. Details on page 3!

Units Available Soon at GRHC Senior Communities

The GRHC anticipates vacancies at several of our retirement communities within the next six months. Seniors seeking to move this spring or summer should apply now. Details on page 6!

GRAND RAPIDS HOUSING COMMISSION

Fall 2021/Winter 2022

NEWS



The GRHC celebrated the completion of Antoine Court Apartments with a mid-October ribbon cutting ceremony. Pictured from left: GRHC Director of Asset Management Felicia Clay, First Ward Grand Rapids City Commissioner Kurt Reppart, Triangle Associates Project Superintendent Cliff Dayton, Huntington Bank Commercial Real Estate Relationship Manager Ryan Goemmel, Triangle Construction Project Manager Alicia Pizano, MSHDA Financial Analyst Trenton Mitchell, GRHC President Bobbie Butler, retired GRHC Executive Director Carlos Sanchez, Mount Mercy Housing Corporation President Ellen James, GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames, Mount Mercy Housing Corporation Board Member Victor Vasquez Jr., GRHC Real Estate Development Coordinator Michael Weaver

GRHC Celebrates Completion of Antoine Court Apartments

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission (GRHC) and project general partner Mount Mercy Housing Corporation recently celebrated the completion of Antoine Court Apartments, a \$13.5 million affordable housing development that serves veterans, people experiencing chronic homelessness, adults ages 55 and older who have disabilities, and seniors ages 62 and older. The development opened in mid-October.

Located at 901 South Division Avenue (Division at Delaware Street SW), Antoine Court is adjacent to Campau Park and just a half block from a Silver Line bus stop. The LEED Gold Certified development includes fifty 690-square-foot one-bedroom apartments, including five barrier-free units; all units meet accessibility standards. The building also offers a 1,153-square-foot community room with

kitchen. Amenities include central air conditioning, in-unit washer/dryer, major appliances, free internet access and secured entry.

Supported by the Section 8 Project-Based Voucher program, Antoine Court provides a preference to veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces. Eighteen units are reserved for Grand Rapids residents who qualify for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). The PSH program combines housing assistance with supportive services to address the needs of individuals struggling to attain housing stability, and referrals to these units are made through the Kent County Continuum of Care. Supportive services are customized to meet the needs of each

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resident and are coordinated by GRHC Resident Services Coordinator Ziyah Dock in partnership with health care providers and social services agencies.

GRHC Executive Director Lindsey S. Reames noted that Antoine Court Apartments addresses a pressing community need for affordable housing. “The Housing Commission is pleased to bring new affordable housing to low-income households that have been particularly impacted by our area’s very low rental vacancy rate and skyrocketing rents,” Reames said. “To ensure that vulnerable households maintain stability in their new homes, our staff is partnering with HUD, Disability Advocates of Kent County, The Salvation Army, Network 180 and other organizations to provide not only housing assistance but also supportive services that promote independence and quality of life.”

Antoine Court Apartments was financed, in part, through \$1.4 million in federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) awarded to the Housing Commission by the Michigan State Housing Development Authority in 2019. LIHTC equity was provided by InSite Capital and construction financing was provided by TCF, now part of Huntington National Bank. The development was designed by Isaac V. Norris & Associates and Triangle Associates was the construction manager/general contractor.

Low-income households interested in applying to rent an apartment at Antoine Court can get on the development’s waiting list by filling out an application form that’s available on the Housing Commission website: www.grhousing.org.

Right, from top: The GRHC board and staff gather with guests prior to the ribbon cutting ceremony; Bobbie Butler and Kurt Reppart offer remarks; Community Room tour; views of an apartment interior



Homeownership Program Celebrates Closings, Hosts Orientation Meetings

During 2021 the GRHC celebrated the success of four Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Homeownership program participants who achieved their home ownership goals. Congratulations to these new home owners!

The HCV Homeownership program offers eligible Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher recipients the opportunity to use their Housing Assistance Payment toward a home mortgage payment rather than rental housing expenses. Working with West Michigan lenders and realtors, we have designed a flexible, supportive program that provides not only administrative assistance but also information families can use to plan and finance their home purchase.

2022 Orientation Meetings Scheduled

The GRHC will offer several free HCV Homeownership Program Orientation Meetings this year—choose the date that works for you! Meetings will be virtual and a meeting link will be provided to those who register to attend.

Meeting Dates/Time

March 15, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

June 21, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

September 20, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

December 13, 2022, 2:00 p.m.

For more information about the program and to register for the March 15 virtual Orientation Meeting:

www.grhousing.org/home-ownership-program.php

Housing Commissioner Angela Bunn Steps Down

Angela Bunn has stepped down as the resident representative on the Grand Rapids Housing Commission governing board after 17 years of service. In addition to being a valued member of the Housing Commission, Angela also provided leadership to the GRHC Resident Advisory Board and used her talents and experience to further our mission to provide housing assistance and affordable housing opportunities to lower-income families, senior citizens and people with disabilities.



As a member of our governing board, Angela was instrumental in the development and oversight of many major GRHC initiatives, including the redevelopment of Campau Commons Apartments and Creston Plaza Apartments, construction of a 55-unit addition at Mount Mercy Apartments, the conversion of Sheldon School to Sheldon Apartments and the construction of our new Antoine Court Apartments development for veterans, seniors and special-needs populations.

The Grand Rapids Housing Commission board and staff are grateful to Angela for her service on the board, for her valued counsel and for all that she has contributed to our agency over the years. We wish her well as she embarks on new ventures.

Thank you!



GRHC Awarded Emergency Safety and Security Grant

The GRHC is one of 55 housing authorities nationwide to receive a 2021 HUD Emergency Safety and Security Grant administered through the Capital Fund program. Our agency was awarded \$249,984 to fund such eligible security purchases as:

- The purchase, repair, replacement and installation of security systems, including cameras and digital video recorders
- Fencing, lighting systems, emergency alarm systems
- Window bars, deadbolt locks, doors to deter crime and drug-related activity

Capital Fund grants are awarded in support of developments funded under the Low-Income Public Housing (LIPH) program. Since 20 units of Scattered Sites housing and 188 units at Adams Park Apartments are the only housing we administer under that program, the GRHC will explore opportunities to use grant funding to enhance security at not only our LIPH units but also at other facilities as HUD allows.

Making a Difference: Emergency Housing Voucher Program

The GRHC's Emergency Housing Voucher (EHV) program assisted its first program participant this past August. GRHC Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program staff completed the unit inspection on a Friday morning and took the agency van to pick Mr. Jim Johnson up for his lease signing. Noting that Mr. Johnson needed some household essentials, the team made a shopping run, then delivered Mr. Johnson to his new home, helped him set up items in his unit and made sure he had a warm meal for the night.



Left: Jim Johnson arrives at his new apartment. Above: GRHC HCV Coordinators Xochitl Jaimes (left) and Trenessa Allen load the GRHC van with household essentials purchased for Mr. Johnson.

In addition to the assistance with purchasing needed household items, the GRHC also offered help with Mr. Johnson's security deposit, providing a total of \$424 in cash assistance. As the GRHC staff were leaving, Mr. Johnson said, "I am going to sleep good tonight!"

Kudos to HCV Coordinators Trenessa Allen and Xochitl Jaimes and HCV Program Manager Jose Capeles for going above and beyond to meet Mr. Johnson's needs; he was connected with wrap-around services to assist him going forward.

The GRHC currently administers a total of 42 Emergency Housing Vouchers, with ten households currently under lease through the program. The HUD-funded vouchers were awarded through the American Rescue Plan Act to provide a tenant-based rental subsidy that assists individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of experiencing housing instability, or who are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking or human trafficking. The GRHC works with the Kent County Continuum of Care to lease up these vouchers.

For more information about the EHV application process, please contact The Salvation Army at 2-1-1 or visit <https://centralusa.salvationarmy.org/kentcounty/provide-housing/>

Making a Difference: FSS Program



GRHC Resident Services/Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator Maria Lara (right) celebrates with FSS Program graduate Kari Mena-Cavasas.

The GRHC's Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program safely celebrated five fall program graduates with individually packaged cupcakes, celebratory balloons and certificates during a festive mid-October event at the Campau Commons Community Center. The grads were awarded a total of \$65,000, or an average individual award of \$13,000! Even more impressive is the fact that four of the five honorees were residents of Hope Community—so these enterprising women went from experiencing homelessness to employment success and a financial windfall that can help them make a fresh start and maintain stable housing.

The FSS Program offers GRHC residents an opportunity to accrue funds in an escrow account when a new job or promotion increases income and the resident's share of monthly rent. For details: grhousing.org/family-self-sufficiency-program.php

New Hope Baptist Church Donates Bikes, School Supplies to GRHC Residents



The generous congregation of New Hope Baptist Church revved up the summer fun at Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program and Campau Commons Apartments this past July, donating 61 bicycles and helmets to the children of those developments. Many thanks to New Hope Church, and kudos to GRHC Resident Services Coordinators Maria Lara and Alex Nix for coordinating the bike giveaway!



Back to school was a little easier for Campau Commons Apartments families thanks to the continuing generosity of their neighbors at New Hope Baptist Church. The congregation donated cash GRHC Resident Services staff used to purchase backpacks filled with school supplies. Campau Commons students were invited to stop by the Community Center on a sunny September afternoon to pick up a backpack and enjoy some tasty snacks.

The longstanding support of the New Hope Baptist Church congregation is greatly appreciated by our residents and staff!



This column, top, from left: GRHC Resident Services Coordinators Ziyah Dock, Eulondon Reeves, Rachel Siebert and (not pictured) Maria Lara hosted the backpack giveaway at the Campau Commons Community Center.

GRHC Human Resources Update

Staff Promotions



Trenessa Allen, LLMSW, has been promoted from HCV Coordinator to HCV Program Supervisor. Hired in 2016, Trenessa has also worked as a GRHC Resident Services/Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator.



Wanda Couch, LPC, has been promoted from Lead Resident & Family Self-Sufficiency Services Coordinator to HCV Program Manager. Wanda has been with us for five years and has extensive program experience.

Welcome, New Hires!



John Archie is the Custodian for Antoine Court and Creston Plaza. John has more than 15 years of custodial experience and comes to the GRHC from Calvin University.



Tyeshia Brown is the Office Assistant for Ransom Tower Apartments. Tyeshia was a temporary employee at Creston Plaza, and her work experience includes a Customer Service position with Fifth Third Bank.



Da'Niesha Diaz is a Section 8 Coordinator. Prior to joining our team Da'Niesha was an Assistant Payment Specialist for the State of Michigan.



Xochitl Jaimes is a Section 8 Coordinator. Xochitl comes to the GRHC from the Texas Workforce Commission where she was a Customer Service Representative.

(Welcome, New Hires continued)



Goldie Johnson is a Section 8 Coordinator. Prior to joining the GRHC team Goldie worked as an Unemployment Examiner for the State of Michigan.



Yvette Pinkley is a Waiting List Specialist at the Administrative Office where she started as a temporary Office Assistant. Yvette brings more than seven years of customer service experience to our team.



Rachel Siebert is a Family Self-Sufficiency Coordinator at Campau Commons. She comes to us from the Early Learning Neighborhood Collaborative where she was the Health, Nutrition and Disability Manager. Rachel holds an MSW degree from GVSU.



Jacob Varela is a Waiting List Specialist at the Administrative Office. He comes to the GRHC from Farmers Insurance where he worked as a Fulfillment Specialist.



Cindy Waddell is the new Custodian at Campau Commons and Creston Plaza Apartments. Prior to joining our team, Cindy worked as Janitorial Support at Enviro-Clean.



Joyce Williams, LMSW, is our new Resident Services Manager. Joyce has more than 11 years of social work experience and comes to the GRHC from Pine Rest where she was a Social Worker/Case Manager II.

Units Available Soon at Senior Communities



Mount Mercy Apartments

The GRHC anticipates vacancies at several of our retirement communities within the next six months. Comfortable, affordable one-bedroom units will soon be available to low-income seniors ages 55 and older as well as people with disabilities.

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

Interested seniors can apply to rent at any GRHC housing development online at: grhc.apply4housing.com

StreetFest Volunteers Lend a Hand at Mount Mercy and Adams Park

Many thanks to the students and staff from Calvin University who helped spruce up Mount Mercy Apartments and Adams Park Apartments this past August! As part of the university's StreetFest service learning program, the students painted curbs at Mount Mercy and cleaned the Adams Park kitchen, community room, library and computer room.

Calvin University StreetFest students have lent a hand at GRHC developments for years and we truly appreciate the program's longstanding support!



Above: Mount Mercy's resident flock of wild turkeys checks out the StreetFest activities.



The curbs at Mount Mercy have never looked better thanks to the Calvin University StreetFest crew! Calvin University students also spruced up Adams Park!

Apply Now for a 2022 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Award!

Each year the Housing Commission awards college scholarships to deserving residents of our affordable housing programs. Winners receive \$500 each year for up to four years, for a total scholarship award of up to \$2,000. Graduating high school seniors, residents currently attending college or vocational school and residents seeking to return to school are all eligible to apply. Students must have a grade point average of at least 2.5 (C letter grade) and must be planning to attend school full time in fall 2022.

Complete information about the 2022 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship and a Scholarship application form is available on the GRHC website, www.grhousing.org/pdf/scholarship.pdf

Customer Service Improvement Initiative

The GRHC has identified customer service improvement as a primary organizational focus and is adjusting processes and procedures to meet service goals. To measure our progress toward improving the experiences of the households, rental property owners and community partners who work with us, we are conducting periodic resident, landlord and partner satisfaction surveys. Please respond when you receive your survey—your input is greatly appreciated!



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Community Partners Brighten the Holidays for GRHC Residents



Many thanks to all of the generous community partners who donated their time, talents and funds to make the winter holidays special for our residents, including:

- The New Hope Baptist Church congregation gifted each family that lives at Campau Commons Apartments or Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing program with \$100 toward rent!
- Multitude Ministries donated wonderful holiday meal boxes to residents at all of the GRHC's housing developments!
- The "Be a Santa to a Senior" (BASTAS) program offered by Home Instead provided holiday gifts to residents of all GRHC senior housing communities!
- North End Community Ministry (NECM) donated a \$25 Meijer or Family Fare gift card to every Leonard Terrace Apartments resident who requested one!
- The employees of Hurst Mechanical continued their tradition of delivering catered holiday feasts to the 180 residents of Mount Mercy Apartments, stopping by with meal boxes that included three different meats, potatoes and gravy, apple crisp and more!



Clockwise from top right: GRHC Resident Services (RSS) Coordinator Ziyah Dock (left) distributes holiday meal boxes provided by Multitude Ministries; a grateful resident with gifts donated by BASTAS; GRHC RSS Coordinators Erin Shibley and Rachel Siebert, the Home Instead BASTAS team and GRHC RSS Coordinator Eulondon Reeves load a van with donated gifts; Hurst Mechanical HVAC Technician Tommy Beenen delivers holiday meals to Mount Mercy residents; the catering truck loaded with Hurst Mechanical meal donations

Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:

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

Editor: Joyce Smith; Staff Contributors: Trenessa Allen, Hattie Tinney Beenen, Judy Cannon-Groce, Jose Capeles, Felicia Clay, Wanda Couch, Ziyah Dock, Mia Gutridge, Maria Lara, Eulondon Reeves, Rachel Siebert, Erin Shibley, Eric Turkaleski, Michael Weaver, Joyce Williams, Siobhan Williams-Moore

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