

GRHC Earns Green Building Council Award

The GRHC was honored to receive a U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan award in recognition of the energy efficiency features at Antoine Court Apartments. Details on page 3!

Landlord Forums Provide Information and Support

The GRHC hosted several informational events to update our landlord partners regarding new HCV Program protocols and landlord incentives. Details on page 4!

Resident Services Staff Host Partner Appreciation Event

The GRHC Resident Services team hosted a mid-November “Thanks for Giving” partner recognition event in the Sheldon Apartments Community Room. Details on page 5!



GRAND RAPIDS
HOUSING COMMISSION

NEWS

Winter/Spring 2024



GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames (center) presents a Partner Appreciation Award to Mercantile Bank Senior Vice President/Chief Compliance & Community Development Officer Sonali Allen (left) and Chief Retail Banking Officer Tara Randall

Resident Asset-Building Program Launches with \$85,000 in Partner Support

During mid-September the GRHC welcomed residents and community partners to a special event celebrating the establishment of a new “Aim to Save” Program that’s helping some GRHC affordable housing program participants build a personal financial nest egg. The two-year program is authorized under the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development “Moving to Work” Demonstration Program and is part of a nationwide effort to assess the impact of personal savings on assisted families’ ability to maintain stable housing.

Held at the Grand Rapids EnVision Center at Campau Commons, the “Aim to Save” Launch Party included a welcome by Housing Commission President Monica Steimle-App, remarks by HUD Michigan Field Office Director Michael Polsinelli,

the unveiling of a Program Naming Contest winning entry, and recognition of the financial, educational and non-profit organizations that are supporting this exciting new program.

The Aim to Save Program invited 40 randomly selected GRHC Housing Choice Voucher rental subsidy program participants who have children ages 13-18 to open a savings account with a participating financial institution. Each participating household’s account is receiving a \$50 monthly cash deposit from the GRHC. Participants are encouraged to deposit additional amounts the GRHC will match up to \$1,000 per year for two years or until the account reaches \$5,000.

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The program also includes a youth component that encourages participating families' teen children to save. Up to three teen dependents of each participating head of household can open a savings account to receive a monthly GRHC deposit of \$25. Youth participants can deposit additional amounts that are matched by the GRHC on an annual basis of up to \$500 per year for two years or until the account reaches \$2,500.

GRHC Executive Director Lindsey S. Reames noted that with the help of banking partner donations totaling \$85,000, our agency was able to expand the Aim to Save Program from its original goal of assisting 25 households to 40 households. "The Housing Commission is truly grateful to the community partners who are supporting this innovative new resident asset-building program through their donations of funds, banking services and financial literacy training," Reames said. "With their generous support, we look forward to helping our Aim to Save participants build a more secure financial future for themselves and their families."



Lindsey Reames presents a Partner Appreciation Award to Lake Michigan Credit Union Vice President of Community Relations Matt Cook (center) and Vice President of Mortgage Strategy John Harpst

Many thanks to our Aim to Save Program donors:

Financial Support

- Mercantile Bank: \$50,000
- Lake Michigan Credit Union: \$15,000
- Huntington Bank: \$10,000
- Fifth Third Bank: \$5,000
- Horizon Bank: \$5,000



Banking Services

- Mercantile Bank
- Lake Michigan Credit Union

Financial Literacy Resources

- Mercantile Bank
- Lake Michigan Credit Union
- Huntington Bank
- Home Repair Services
- Independent Bank
- Michigan First Credit Union
- MSU Extension
- Northpointe Bank



Top: Lindsey Reames thanks Huntington Bank Community Development Relationship Manager Greg Rios
Bottom: Lindsey Reames presents a Partner Appreciation Award to Horizon Bank Community Lender Bonnie Potter



Participants in the GRHC's resident asset-building initiative were invited to enter a "Name the Program Contest" for a chance to win a \$100 gift card. Contest winner Lolita Brewer (above) was recognized during the Program Launch Party for her winning entry "Aim to Save"



HUD Michigan Field Office Director Michael Polsinelli offers remarks

Housing Choice Voucher Program Update

HCV Program Waiting List Adds 5,000 Households

The GRHC's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) rental subsidy program received more than 7,000 applications during its October 23–27 open enrollment period. The program is currently closed to new applicants.

The GRHC conducted a random selection process that added 5,000 of the recent applicants to our HCV waiting list; households on the list can check the status of their application and update contact information online at: <https://grhousing.myhousing.com/Account/Login>

HCV Homeownership Program Orientation Meetings

The HCV Homeownership Program offers Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher recipients the opportunity to use their Housing Assistance Payment toward a home mortgage payment rather than rental housing expenses.

The GRHC will offer several free HCV Homeownership Program Orientation Meetings this year. Complete meeting information and a link to our meeting registration form: www.grhousing.org/home-ownership-program.php

HCV Administrative Plan Revisions Proposed

The GRHC is updating the HCV Administrative Plan that governs our voucher programs. View proposed revisions here: www.grhousing.org/proposed-hcv-admin-plan.php

GRHC Earns Green Building Council Award for Antoine Court Apartments

The GRHC was honored to receive the U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan's 2023 Certified Green Building Award for Multifamily during a late-fall special event at CityFlatsHotel. The award was presented in recognition of the energy-efficient design and construction used in Antoine Court Apartments, a \$13.5 million affordable housing development that opened in 2021. The 50-unit LEED Gold-certified development serves Veterans, adults ages 55 and older who have a disability, seniors ages 62 and older, and adults experiencing chronic homelessness.

In addition to a federal rental subsidy and on-site supportive services, Antoine Court Apartments offers energy-efficiency features that include:

- Occupancy sensors for light control in community spaces, offices and apartments
- Low-flow bathroom fixtures, WaterSense labeled toilets
- ENERGY STAR appliances, washers and dryers
- Design/construction plan that would accommodate a future addition of solar panels

More information about Antoine Court Apartments:
www.grhousing.org/antoine-court-apartments.php



GRHC management accepts the U.S. Green Building Council of West Michigan's 2023 Certified Green Building Award for Multifamily. Pictured from left: Housing Commissioner Michael Bernier, GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames, Finance Manager Kris Endres, Real Estate Development Coordinator Michael Weaver, Rehabilitation and Maintenance Manager Ufoma Johnson, Director of Resident Services Felicia Clay, Policy and Program Planning and Implementation Manager José Capeles, Resident Services Manager Joyce Williams

PBV-Supported Development Breaks Ground



GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames, Deputy Executive Director Hattie Tinney and GRHC staff attended an early February groundbreaking for Samaritas of Spring Lake, a \$16.3 million affordable rental housing development located at 734 E. Savidge Street in Spring Lake Township. Serving families and seniors, the 53-unit Samaritas development will include eight units that are supported by Section 8 Project-Based Vouchers (PBVs) awarded last year by the GRHC. Families housed in the assisted units will typically pay 30 percent of monthly household income on rent, with the GRHC's PBV Program making up the difference between that amount and the market rent for the unit.

Samaritas of Spring Lake is scheduled to be completed by February 2025.

New Project-Based Voucher Awards

With the goal of supporting affordable housing development, during early fall the GRHC issued a Request for Proposals seeking applications from owners and/or developers interested in offering rental subsidies through our Project-Based Voucher (PBV) Program. PBVs are administered in conjunction with the Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, but differ from HCVs in that the rental subsidy is tied to a specific development. A PBV award gives a developer applying for federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits a significant advantage over applicants who do not have PBVs.

A summary of new PBV awards approved by the Housing Commission at its October meeting follows:

Harvest Hill Apartments, 100 Childsdale Avenue NE, Rockford, 7 vouchers awarded. Owner: Dwelling Place. This property offers 46 one- or two-bedroom units.

1309 Madison Avenue SE, 16 vouchers awarded. Developer: Amplify GR. Built in the 1940s as a supermarket and more recently used as a daycare center, this property will be redeveloped as affordable housing.

Kollen Park Housing Initiative, 13 vouchers awarded. Developer: Dwelling Place. Planned affordable housing development project in Holland.

Landlord Forums Provide Information and Support to Rental Property Owners/Managers



GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames updates landlord partners during a recent Landlord Forum at the Bobbie Butler Community Center

The GRHC partners with hundreds of rental property owners and managers to serve the families who participate in our Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program. To support the informational needs of these valued partners, our HCV team hosted fall and winter Landlord Forum events in the Bobbie Butler Community Center at Creston Plaza.

Informational highlights from these events:

- The GRHC has established 2024 Voucher Payment Standards (VPS) and utility allowances for Kent and Ottawa counties. The updated standards and allowances are available online here: www.grhousing.org/pdf/kent_county_vps.pdf www.grhousing.org/pdf/ottawa_county_vps.pdf
- Important note regarding 2024 VPS: During 2023 the GRHC had a HUD waiver that allowed us to set Voucher Payment Standards up to 120% of the HUD-established Fair Market Rents (FMRs) for our service area; this waiver has been extended to 12/31/24. Effective January 1, 2024, the VPS for GRHC voucher programs is set at 115% of FMR.
For any unit size for which the 2024 VPS is lower than the 2023 standard, the GRHC will not decrease the VPS for units currently under lease; the 2024 VPS will only be applied to newly leased units.
- Reminder: The HCV Administrative Plan that governs our voucher program was amended effective October 2023 to change a requirement that an adjustment in rent be limited to once per year on the tenant's HCV Program reexamination anniversary to once per year, preferably on (but not limited to) the tenant's reexamination anniversary.
- Two new incentives have been added to the GRHC's Landlord Incentive Program:
 1. Referral bonus of \$200 to current participating landlords for each new landlord who executes a HAP contract. Limited to five referrals.
 2. Vacancy loss payment worth one month of contract rent,* payable upon execution of a new HAP contract; available to landlords currently leasing to GRHC program participants and willing to lease to additional participants. **Payment prorated if the unit is vacant for less than a full month.*
- The compliance deadline for HUD-mandated National Standards for the Physical Inspection of Real Estate (NSPIRE)

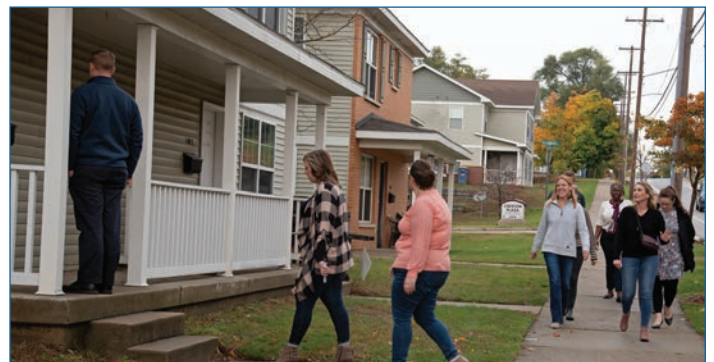
has been extended to October 1, 2024. Rental property owners must install carbon monoxide detectors in units that have fuel-burning appliances and/or an attached garage. Complete NSPIRE rules and implementation guidelines are available at: www.hud.gov

- HUD has aligned NSPIRE with the Housing Opportunity Through Modernization Act. For HCV Programs:
 1. Life-threatening deficiencies must be corrected within 24 hours of notice of a deficiency.
 2. Non-life-threatening deficiencies must be corrected within 30 days (or a PHA-approved extension) after notice of a deficiency.
- The GRHC will offer an NSPIRE-V training in late spring—details coming soon via U.S. Mail.
- The GRHC offers a new Landlord Portal that makes it easy for rental property owners and managers to create an online account for access to information about HAP payments, upcoming unit inspections and more. Access the portal at: <https://grhousing.myhousing.com/Account/Login>
- The GRHC administrative office at 1420 Fuller Avenue SE now offers an on-site “unit available” bulletin board landlords can use to advertise their properties directly to HCV Program clients—a form for rental listings will be available soon at: www.grhousing.org/rental-property-owners.php

GRHC Hosts Chamber HR Roundtable

The GRHC was pleased to host the October meeting of the Grand Rapids Chamber Human Resources Roundtable. GRHC Human Resources Manager Mia Gutridge and other HR professionals from a wide range of industries met at the Bobbie Butler Community Center at Creston Plaza to discuss issues and share ideas. The event included a tour of an affordable housing unit at Creston Plaza Apartments.

Many thanks to the Grand Rapids Chamber for supporting this helpful business resource.



HR Roundtable members tour Creston Plaza Apartments

GRHC Resident Services Team Hosts “Thanks for Giving” Partner Appreciation Event

GRHC Resident Services staff hosted a mid-November “Thanks for Giving” luncheon event to recognize community organizations and individuals who have been particularly supportive of our residents and agency over the past year. Held in the Sheldon Apartments Community Room, the festive gathering featured a delicious buffet lunch as well as recognition awards presented by GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames.



Our staff appreciated the opportunity to personally thank representatives from some of the dozens of organizations that work with us to offer residents a variety of supportive programs and services. We are grateful for our “Thanks for Giving” honorees and all of our amazing community partners!



Above: GRHC community partners gather for lunch in the Sheldon Apartments Community Room; a few of many partner recognition award presentations

Right: The GRHC Resident Services team, from left: Eric Turkaleski, Rachel Siebert, Erin Shibley, GRHC Executive Director Lindsey Reames, Eulondon Reeves (kneeling), Latasha Maberry, Felicia Clay, Gregory Mason, Joyce Williams



- “Thanks for Giving” honorees included:
- ACSET: Chuck Bowers, Ron Cuson
 - Amplify GR: Latesha Lipscomb
 - Area Agency on Aging: Liz Barnett
 - Bankers Life: Theodore Vanderende
 - Black Impact Collaborative: Dollie Grant
 - Boston Square Christian Reformed Church: Margaret Jager, Kelly Malone, Paula Vander Hoven
 - Bridge Street Ministries: Devin Collier
 - 1428 Financial Wellness: Dondrea Brown
 - Grand Rapids Police Department: Julie Niemchick
 - Grand Rapids Public Library: Erin Antes
 - Humana: Amanda Allen, Derek Domin
 - Meals on Wheels Western Michigan: Melissa Ivy, Robert Jones, Tammy Mick
 - MSU Extension: Georgina Perry
 - Oak Street Health: Austin Clifton, Caleb Penning, Jarvis Rogers, Taylor Williamson
 - Project Green: Stephanie Pierce
 - Reliance Community Care Partners: Janae Lindeman
 - Renew Mobility: Mikayla Fankhauser
 - Senior Neighbors: Shelby Lake, Marcia Patrick, Catherine Tutt
 - Senior Sing A-Long: Jill Dover, Sarah Dwortz
 - The Rapid: Sarah Green
 - Volunteers in Service: David Lundberg, Kezia Phan
 - Women’s Resource Center: Gina Abbas, Julie Harper-Shears
 - Xfinity: Hugo Carmona, Tracy Sly

Grand Rapids Housing Commission Human Resources Update

Welcome, New Staff!

Teresa Cole-White is a new HCV Coordinator assigned to support our Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Prior to joining our team, Teresa was a Youth Specialist with Kent County Juvenile Detention. She has a master's degree in Criminal Justice Administration from Ferris State University.

Kim Cross is the new Asset Manager for Mount Mercy Apartments. Kim brings more than 30 years of affordable housing operational and management experience to our team. She comes to the GRHC from Dwelling Place of Grand Rapids where she has served as Chief Operating Officer, Director of Asset Management and Property Manager. She is an Institute of Real Estate Management Certified Property Manager and has a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from the University of Michigan.

Viviana Farfán is a new Office Assistant at the Administrative Office. Viviana comes to the GRHC from Grand Rapids Public Library where she has served as an Acting Librarian I for the Ottawa Hills Branch and as Library Assistant II and Library Clerical Aide II for the Madison Square Branch. She has also worked in customer service and graphic design for Ambrose at WMCAT.

Saquoya Hudnell is a new HCV Coordinator at the Administrative Office. Prior to joining the HCV team, Saquoya was a Services Specialist with the State of Michigan where she served socially and economically disadvantaged individuals in programs administered by DHHS. Saquoya has a B.A. in Criminal Justice from Ferris State University.

Robbin James is a new HCV Coordinator at the administrative office. Robbin comes to the GRHC from Legacy LLC where she was a Property Office Manager, and she has also worked with Dwelling Place of Grand Rapids as an Assistant Property Manager.

Gabriel Kinne is the new Asset Manager for Campau Commons Apartments, Creston Plaza Apartments and 20 Scattered Sites units. Gabriel comes to the GRHC from The Sterling Group in Grand Rapids where he was a Senior Property Manager managing multiple sites. He has also worked as a Leasing Manager for several Kent County apartment complexes.

Michelle MacNall is a new HCV Coordinator at the Administrative Office. Michelle comes to the GRHC from Habitat for Humanity of Kent County where she was a Homeowner Services Specialist. She has also worked as a Family Services Manager for Habitat for Humanity of Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Michelle's educational credentials include certification as a Habitat Qualified Loan Originator from the American Bankers Association, and she has also completed a HUD Housing Counselor training course.

Gregory Mason is a new Resident Services Specialist serving Campau Commons, Creston Plaza and the Scattered Sites Program. Gregory comes to the GRHC from Grand Valley State University (GVSU) where he was a Financial Aid Counselor. He has also worked as a Mental Health Provider and as a Student & Family Support Specialist for Grand Rapids Public Schools. Gregory has a Master of Social Work degree from GVSU.

Taylor Peterman is a new Office Assistant for Antoine Court Apartments, Sheldon Apartments and Hope Community Rapid Re-Housing Program. Prior to joining our team Taylor was a Part-Time Manager for Beauty Store Liquidation in Grand Rapids. She has also worked as a Stock Supervisor, Assistant Manager, Co-Manager and Manager for local Windsor stores. Taylor has BA degrees in Environmental Studies and International Studies from the University of Michigan.

Yvette Price is a new HCV Coordinator assigned to support our Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Yvette comes to the GRHC from Trinity Health where she was a Cash Applications-Payment Posting Rep. She has also held customer service positions with Spectrum Health and DFCU Financial and has an associate's degree in Human Services from Cornerstone University.

Cristian Quintero is the Maintenance Technician for Adams Park Apartments. Cristian comes to the GRHC from Chicano Crew Home Remodeling and brings three years of residential construction experience to our team.

David Sweet is the GRHC's IT Systems Administrator. David comes to the GRHC from an IT position at Ellucian where he provided systems administration support at Muskegon Community College. He has also held technical support positions with Kenona Industries and CompuCom, and has several technology certifications.

Juwan Tett is the new Maintenance Technician for Campau Commons and Scattered Sites units. Juwan comes to the GRHC from Reliable Relamping in Saranac where he worked as an Electrician. He has seven years of electrical maintenance experience.

Evelyn Thomas is an Office Assistant at the Administrative Office. Evelyn had been working as a temporary Office Assistant with us and is now full-time permanent staff. She brings seven years of clerical and customer service experience to our team.

Sarah Weed is a new HCV Customer Service and Intake Coordinator at the Administrative Office. Sarah has held varied client services positions with such community partners as the YWCA, The Salvation Army and Catholic Charities. She has a BA in Social Work from GVSU.

GRHC Staff Promotions

Margo Gatling has been promoted from Acting Lead HCV Coordinator to Asset Manager for Ransom Tower Apartments. Margo has been with the GRHC since 2009 and has held prior positions as a Quality Assurance/Quality Control Specialist, HCV Coordinator, Housing Assistant and housing site Receptionist.

Ufoma Johnson has been promoted from Asset Manager to Rehabilitation and Maintenance Manager. Ufoma has been with the GRHC since 2022. In his new role he will work with GRHC staff and our contracted Architectural and Engineering firm to undertake site improvement projects, manage relevant procurement and contract administration activities, administer Capital Fund responsibilities and manage Adams Park redevelopment activities.

Adams Park Apartments Redevelopment Update

GRHC staff were joined by Adams Park Apartments redevelopment partner AmplifyGR and the Adams Park Advisory Council for a mid-January meeting in the Adams Park Community Room. The gathering gave community stakeholders and residents an opportunity to discuss facility and service expectations for the 188-unit development, which is slated for total redevelopment within the next several years.

Organizations and individuals included in the Adams Park Advisory Council:
Adams Park resident Jackie Moore
Amplify GR Neighborhood Advisory Committee member Maxine Adams
Boston Square Neighborhood Association
City of Grand Rapids
Disability Advocates
Friends of Grand Rapids Parks
Fuller Avenue Christian Reformed Church
MLK Park Neighborhood Association
Oakdale Neighbors
Plaster Creek Stewards

Partners Offer Holiday Events at GRHC Housing Communities

Many thanks to all of the partner organizations, donors and volunteers who worked with the GRHC Resident Services team to brighten the winter holidays for residents of our agency-owned housing developments. Holiday parties and meals, gift donations and decorating events were all greatly appreciated by our residents and staff. Photos from a few of the many events residents enjoyed follow!



Above: Amplify GR Executive Director Jon Ippel serves Thanksgiving favorites to an Adams Park resident during a mid-November gathering in the development's Community Room; the event was co-hosted by Amplify GR and Brinshore Development

Right: A young Hope Community resident enjoys cookies provided by Calvin University nursing students as part of a holiday decorating party

Below, left: Kathy from Baxter Community Center shows a few of the dozens of holiday gifts she donated to residents of Sheldon Apartments

Below, right: A holiday brunch at Sheldon Apartments is served by GRHC Resident Services Specialists Rachel Siebert (left) and Gregory Mason (right)





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2024 Jean McKee Resident Scholarship Competition Offers \$2,000 Awards!



Last year's Jean McKee Resident Scholarship winners Michelle Johnson (left) and Sarah Dorris; Michelle is studying to become a pastry chef and Sarah is working on a degree in Paralegal Studies

The 2024 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.

The Jean McKee academic scholarship is 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 and GRHC Family Self-Sufficiency Program participants receive priority status for scholarship awards.

Complete information about the Jean McKee Resident Scholarship program and application requirements is available at www.grhousing.org

Application deadline: May 14, 2024



HEALTHY
to the **CORE**

HEALTH & RESOURCE FAIR FAMILY FUN FAIR

JUNE 21 | 12:00 - 3:00 P.M.
CAMPAU PARK
51 Delaware St SW

The "Health & Unity in the Community" initiative that is a joint effort of the GRHC and the Black Impact Collaborative will host a summer health, resource and family fun fair event for the Campau Commons neighborhood!

This very special event will offer a wealth of information provided by community organizations as well as music, games, refreshments, children's activities, prizes and more.

FREE AND OPEN TO ALL!

Grand Rapids Housing Commissioners:

Monica Steimle-App, President; Betty Zylstra, Vice President; Jamon Alexander, Michael Bernier, Patrick Miles Sr.; Executive Director: Lindsey S. Reames

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