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Grand Rapids Mayor Rosalynn Bliss proclaims June “Healthy Homes Month” in Grand Rapids

City of Grand Rapids and other community partners aim to make 50 homes lead-safe in 12 months

GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN – June 16, 2017 – City of Grand Rapids Mayor Rosalynn Bliss has issued a Mayoral Proclamation declaring June 2017 as “Healthy Homes Month.”

Nationally, June also has been designated “Healthy Homes Month” by U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

Home health and safety hazards – including physical safety hazards, lead-based paint, radon, mold, pests and allergens – cause or contribute to a wide range of illnesses and diseases such as lead poisoning, asthma, cancer and injuries.

These conditions and their health outcomes are known to especially harm children and the elderly.

In Grand Rapids alone, 465 lead-poisoned children were living in the city in 2015 and hundreds more are exposed each year. The lead is typically from paint found in homes built before 1978 – and more than 80 percent of Grand Rapids’ housing stock was built before that year.

Lead poisoning can cause permanent brain damage and even death.

“When the City and its partners invest in housing, there is a significant return on investment for the community in terms of healthcare savings and improved quality of life. Fixing housing saves money and it saves lives,” says Paul Haan, executive director of the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan and gubernatorial appointee to the State of Michigan’s Child Lead Exposure Elimination Commission.

The City of Grand Rapids, the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, the Kent County Health Department, LINC UP, and the Rental Property Owners Association have banded

together through the [Get the Lead out! program](#) to build awareness about the dangers of lead and the funding available to remediate lead from homes.

Get the Lead Out! team members wearing bright red t-shirts are canvassing some of the neighborhoods and festivals in Grand Rapids this summer with free lead-testing kits and brochures, and letting people know about federal funds available to make lead abatement possible.

“Lead is usually in the paint of homes built before 1978 – and most houses in the City of Grand Rapids were built before that year. Paint flakes and peels, and when improperly scraped or sanded off, dangerous lead dust can be kicked up,” says Connie Bohatch, managing director of community services at the City of Grand Rapids.

That flaking, peeling lead paint and dust – ingested or breathed in – can be dangerous to anyone. But lead is especially toxic to babies, children and pregnant women. Lead poisoning can cause permanent brain damage and other health issues. ([See FACT SHEETS for more information on the dangers of lead and the prevalence of lead-based paint in Grand Rapids.](#))

It doesn't take much lead to create a toxic situation. One gram of lead dust is enough to make 25,000 square feet of flooring hazardous for young children, according to Haan.

“We're talking an amount as small as the equivalent of a packet of Sweet'N Low – just that small amount is enough to contaminate a dozen homes in Grand Rapids,” says Haan. “The good news is that lead poisoning can be prevented, and there's funding to help people get the lead out safely with professionals trained in lead abatement.”

The funding is through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The City of Grand Rapids administers the grant locally and partners with the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, the Kent County Health Department, LINC, and the Rental Property Owners Association to facilitate the *Get the Lead out!* program.

Team members will be encouraging applications as long as funding lasts. The most common types of work done to remove lead hazards from homes are repairing or replacing windows, and re-painting or replacing siding.

Funding is available for eligible homeowners and landlords. Anyone living in the City of Grand Rapids in a home built before 1978 is encouraged to contact the Healthy Homes Coalition to learn about eligibility. For more information, please call the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan at 616-241-3300 or visit www.GetTheLeadOutGR.org. Or, contact the City of Grand Rapids Community Development Department at [616-456-3030](tel:616-456-3030) or Doug Stek, Housing Rehabilitation Supervisor, [616-456-3672](tel:616-456-3672).

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About the *Get the Lead Out!* Program

The *Get the Lead Out!* lead-hazard control program is a targeted effort to fix homes. It is part of the larger efforts of the *Get the Lead Out!* Collaborative, which also focuses on getting children tested and connected to health care services, educating the public and advocating for common-sense laws and policies to protect children. *Get the Lead Out!* is a program led by the City of Grand Rapids in collaboration with the Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan, the Kent County Health Department, LINC UP, and the Rental Property Owners Association. More at <http://gettheleadoutgr.org/>.

Get the Lead Out! partners:



About Healthy Homes Coalition of West Michigan

The Healthy Homes Coalition is an independent, local non-profit organization that seeks to ensure that all children have the opportunity to grow up in a healthy home that is free from environmental hazards. More at <http://www.healthyhomescoalition.org/>.

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