



MEDIA RELEASE

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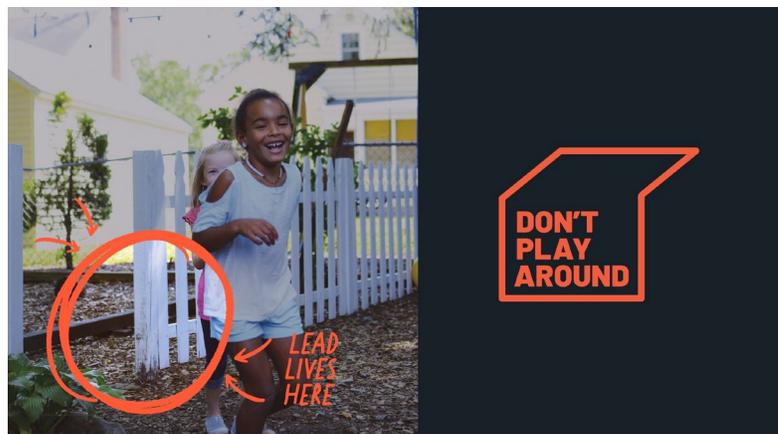
City of Grand Rapids, Kent County Health Department kick off lead awareness campaign

Efforts focus on hidden dangers – dust, paint chips and soil – that put children at risk of lead exposure

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. – The City of Grand Rapids and Kent County Health Department today are launching a joint awareness and educational campaign that's focused on the hazards of lead exposure for children.

The campaign's theme – Don't Play

Around – highlights the hidden dangers that put children at risk of lead exposure. These dangers include



dust, paint chips and soil and they're often found in older homes – those built before 1978. That's when lead-based paint was outlawed.

The campaign is funded by a Michigan Medicaid Lead Hazard Control Community Development grant and specifically targets those at greatest risk of lead exposure – Medicaid-enrolled families living in the 49507, 49504 and 49503 ZIP codes. Eighty percent of homes in 49507, 49504 and 49503 were built before 1960.

Lead is most harmful to children, especially those younger than 6, because their brains and nervous systems are developing rapidly. Elevated blood lead levels in children can cause issues with growth and development as well as health, learning and behavioral problems.

“We want to make sure Grand Rapids is a safe place for everyone to live, including our youngest residents,” said Connie Bohatch, the City’s managing director of community services. “These outreach efforts are intended to educate parents and others who care for children about lead risks and empower them to help keep their loved ones safe. We are grateful for our friends at the Kent County Health Department for their partnership in this important work.”

The campaign is centered on an interactive website – DontPlayAround.org – and self-assessment website app that allows users to identify possible lead risks in their home. The website and app – both in English and Spanish – provide resources for residents who think they or their loved ones may be at risk of lead exposure.

The campaign uses the children’s game hide-and-seek to highlight the hidden dangers of lead and warns against playing around with lead. It also urges residents who think they or their loved ones, especially children younger than 6, have been exposed to lead to get tested. Lead testing is available through a family doctor or by calling the Kent County Health Department at 616.632.7063 to schedule an appointment.

“The symptoms of lead poisoning can be silent and hard to recognize” said Dr. Adam London, administrative health officer at the Kent County Health Department. “We encourage people to contact the Kent County Health Department or their health care providers to make sure that their children are

properly tested for lead exposure by age 2. Preventing lead poisoning before it happens is the best way to reduce your family's risk."

The campaign also includes billboards, advertising on buses, radio, TV and social media, videos, posters and information at community events – all in English and Spanish. The campaign is expected to run through the end of December.

One billboard shows a child playing in the dirt and reads: Lead hides in the places you least expect. Protect your family. A poster shows a mom and her young son chipping paint off a wall in preparation for painting and reads: El polvo puede significar peligro – or dust can mean danger.

One video shows a young girl playing hide-and-seek as the camera pans to hidden dangers of lead in the home. Watch the video in English [HERE](#) and in Spanish [HERE](#). Another video shows a girl eating a sandwich as paint peels off the home's walls and windows and a fan blows the particles into the air. Watch the video in English [HERE](#) and in Spanish [HERE](#).

"The idea isn't to scare parents – it's to get their attention and educate them about the hidden dangers of lead," said Amy Snow-Buckner, the City's managing director of communications. "We want to cut through all the noise and inspire parents to take action."

The campaign aligns with the City's [strategic priorities](#) of health and environment and safe community. The City is committed to ensuring the health of all people and the environment are advocated for, protected and enhanced and that all people feel safe and are safe at all times throughout the community.

Well Design Studio was the marketing consultant on the campaign and Ingalls Pictures produced the videos. Both firms are based in Grand Rapids.

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