Update from Our President & CEO

Every day I am inspired by the hard work and dedication our staff and partners around the country put into advancing the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative’s (GHHI) mission to create better access to healthy, safe and energy efficient homes for all families.

Together in 2014 we made great strides—from welcoming new sites in Lewiston Auburn, ME, and Lansing, MI, to hosting a Congressional briefing and Congressional visits in DC, to launching a $1.1M Pay for Success project funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Though we’re only a couple of months into 2015, it is already proving to be a year propelled by even greater momentum as support for our work increases across the country.

In 2015 we will focus on four main goals: continue scaling GHHI in cities and states nationwide; explore social impact financing and other innovative healthcare financing models; deepen our partnerships with philanthropic and public sector leaders to make strides toward our goal of influencing 300,000 GHHI units; and redefine the cost-benefit ratio of green & healthy homes interventions on the healthcare system and on education.

We will continue to improve GHHI’s quality of service, as well as document and share best practices regarding service quality for replication nationwide. Our strong policy and advocacy work will continue in 2015 as well. At the very top of our list is to achieve a payment/reimbursement from health care payers for healthy homes interventions that address the root causes. GHHI’s overarching, national policy objectives will continue to address adoption of a Green & Healthy Homes standard that includes removing toxic materials from housing rehabilitation and non-energy benefits (NEBs) of energy efficiency/weatherization work tracked by state and federal programs.

We are excited about several important national partnerships that are emerging to help enhance GHHI’s housing intervention and workforce training, standards and practices in cities, counties and states across America. Through all of our partnerships, we will ensure that our work encompasses best practices and lessons drawn from the great work of the Healthy Building Network (see article on page 6).

Last but certainly not least, we are pleased to have recently welcomed Austin, TX, Marin County, CA and Pittsburgh, PA as our newest partners. We are also excited to begin our Pay for Success feasibility projects, which you will hear more about in our next issue.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Healthy Homes, Happy Families, that you learn something new and that you are inspired to continue the important work of making it possible for every family to have access to a green and healthy home.

Ruth Ann Norton

GHHI Research Article Published in Environmental Justice

*Environmental Justice*, a peer-reviewed journal that explores equitable treatment of all people, published GHHI’s research on the innovation of using home-based environmental health services to address asthma in the December 2014 issue.

Authors of the article, GHHI President & CEO Ruth Ann Norton and Senior Program Evaluation and Data Management Associate Brendan Brown, MHS—Environmental Health, “Green & Healthy Homes Initiative: Improving Health, Economic and Social Outcomes through Integrated Housing Intervention” share data collected from GHHI interventions conducted in Baltimore, MD from 2010 to 2013. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development provided funding for this program, which supported low and very low income households with children ages 2-14 diagnosed with asthma.

The program utilized the standards and practices created by GHHI: a holistic housing assessment, environmental health education and an integrated environmental health and energy efficiency housing intervention. The article details the findings from the health surveys at intake and six months after the intervention, providing evidence that GHHI interventions reduced asthmatic episodes, emergency room visits and hospitalizations and improved school attendance and parents’ ability to work. The research also shows that upstream integrated housing interventions are highly effective to improving health, economic and social outcomes for children diagnosed with asthma.

Visit *Environmental Justice* online to read the full article at http://bit.ly/1ziuqA. For more GHHI news updates, visit our website at www.ghhi.org/media/ghhi-news.
Success Story: Fostering Collaboration in San Antonio

By GHHI San Antonio staff

Yolanda is a single mother with two children ages 5 and 13, working a full-time job in the medical field. She signed up for as many extra hours as possible to make ends meet and ensure bills were paid. Her family lives in a modest, two-bedroom single family home built in 1926, which was in major disrepair. Yolanda could simply not afford to complete any of the much-needed repairs or address the many lead hazards identified. Their utility bills were above average because of uninsulated exterior walls, drafty wooden sash windows, broken window panes and a leaky roof. The drafts combined with a rusty, leaky, gas-supplied water heater made it impossible to maintain a comfortable temperature. The heater also had no vent pipe to the exterior, presenting a major carbon monoxide hazard.

Yolanda found out about the City of San Antonio’s Green & Healthy Homes Program (GHHI San Antonio) through a neighborhood canvassing effort by Family Services Association (FSA), which employs the program’s Promotoras (Program Promoters). FSA is a subgrantee paid directly from HUD’s Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration grant and Healthy Homes Production grant. The Promotoras are hired to canvas target neighborhoods and assist homeowners with completing program applications. Without the Promotoras, Yolanda may not have heard about the program and would not have received assistance filling out and submitting her application.

San Antonio’s Green & Healthy Homes Program used HUD Lead Hazard Reduction Demonstration funds, Healthy Homes Production funds and CDBG matching funds through the Grants Monitoring Administration to address the home’s health and safety hazards. The funds provided for a full lead inspection and risk assessment to identify lead-based paint hazards and the Healthy Homes Rating System (HHRS) to identify health and safety issues. A scope of work was then compiled from these two assessments, and repairs from most to least importance were corrected. The repairs included replacement of the existing water heater, stabilization of lead-based paint hazards, replacement of leaded wooden sash windows and repairing the roof leak. In addition to this, the family was assisted by the Casa Verde Weatherization Program administered by the local utility company City Public Service Energy that provided exterior wall insulation, solar screens, attic insulation, weather-stripping and caulking.

By collaborating with Family Service Association, HUD’s Office of Healthy Homes and Lead Hazard Control, Grants Monitoring Administration (City of San Antonio) and Casa Verde, the program was able to eliminate all lead-based paint hazards, correct health and safety issues and make the home more energy efficient. Yolanda’s family now has a healthier, more comfortable and safe place to call home. The children are no longer at risk for lead poisoning.

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative Compact was signed in San Antonio in October 2012. Partners in this work include: Family Service Association, University of Texas Health Science Center, City Public Service’s Casa Verde, San Antonio Housing Authority, Theo Avenue Baptist Church, San Antonio Fire Department, Head Start and AVANCE.
Policymakers

Green & Healthy Homes Initiative’s Policy Focus in 2015

By Michael McKnight, Vice President of Policy and Innovation

Under the leadership of President & CEO Ruth Ann Norton, the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI) has a long history of advocating for and developing local, state and federal policy on lead poisoning prevention and healthy homes improvements.

Among its policy accomplishments, GHHI developed the nation’s first Housing Choice Voucher Program for lead poisoned children, helped develop policy priorities at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), worked with the U.S. Conference of Mayors on a resolution successfully requesting the federal government to make cities eligible for direct lead poisoning prevention funding from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and assisted in the passage of 27 pieces of lead poisoning prevention and healthy home legislation in Maryland.

GHHI continues to lead the healthy homes industry in policy development and advocacy thanks to its unique footprint in cities and counties around the country and its ability to draw upon on-the-ground work when directly engaging federal agencies and national partners. In 2015, GHHI is focusing on three central goals.

2015 Policy Goals

Payment/reimbursement from health care payers for healthy homes interventions: A growing body of evidence shows the impact and cost-effectiveness of healthy homes interventions, but traditionally, funding for healthy homes does not come from healthcare payment streams. GHHI will work with state Medicaid and Medicare programs, health plans and the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services on models to fund healthy homes through health-care funding streams, including hospital community benefits.

Adoption of Green & Healthy Homes standard that includes removing toxic materials from housing rehabilitation: Over the last several years, GHHI has provided technical assistance to partners around the country on models to deliver home interventions in an efficient and effective manner, as well as appropriate standards to qualify a home as green and healthy. GHHI will work with partners to further develop these standards by ensuring the exclusion of toxic building materials.

Non-energy benefits (NEBs) of energy efficiency/weatherization work tracked by state and federal programs: GHHI has seen the benefits on residents’ health, comfort and stability that can come from energy improvements, but not enough policymakers and stakeholders are aware of this impact. GHHI will gather research regarding those additional benefits of energy efficiency and weatherization work, and promote non-energy benefits to ensure those impacts are more commonly tracked and included in policy making decisions.

Continuing GHII’s Strong Legacy in Advocacy

Along with these three primary goals, GHHI will continue to advocate for funding related to green and healthy homes efforts, including HUD’s Office of Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes, the CDC’s Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program and Asthma Control Programs, the U.S. Department of Energy’s Weatherization Assistance Program, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s healthy homes related programs.

GHHI will work with Congressional offices on updating the Title X Act from 1992—the act that authorized HUD to make grants to state and local jurisdictions to address lead hazards. GHHI will seek to amend the Act to allow greater flexibility to address health and safety hazards beyond lead, such as asthma triggers, mold and pests, allow nonprofits to be eligible to receive grants directly, and streamline the process for families to apply for HUD grant programs.

As part of its leadership in the social investment field, GHHI will work with Congressional offices to advance the bipartisan Social Impact Partnership Act and Pay for Success Act (in the House and Senate, respectively). The bills propose to help foster the creation of public-private partnerships that harness philanthropic and other private-sector investments to scale up evidenced-based social and public health programs.
Ask the Experts: Hidden Dangers of Carbon Monoxide and Radon

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative hires leading experts on lead safety, environmental health, home safety issues, energy efficiency, pest control and more. If you have a question for the experts, please visit www.ghhi.org and click on “Ask the Experts.”

What is carbon monoxide?
Carbon monoxide (CO) is an odorless, poisonous gas produced when fuels like natural gas, propane, oil, kerosene, coal, charcoal and wood do not obtain complete combustion. This is caused by a malfunctioning appliance, debris or dirt clogging the mechanism or when an appliance does not receive sufficient air. Anything that burns or appliances that use these fuels produce CO. It’s important to have your appliances inspected and cleaned twice a year to prevent incomplete combustion. To ensure your appliances receive enough air, do not place objects close to appliances like water heaters or furnaces, especially if these appliances are already enclosed in a small space.

Do I need a CO detector on every floor or just in the basement?
It’s ideal to have a CO detector on every floor of your home. Placement is very important—detectors should be installed near bedrooms so that sleeping occupants will hear the alarm. Do not install detectors near the bathroom or any other areas that produce moisture. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions to ensure proper placement. Test the alarm every six months and replace the batteries or unit as needed. The average life of a CO detector is seven years.

What levels of CO are dangerous?
The presence of CO means you are breathing in less oxygen. Health effects can be chronic or acute and depend on the individual’s age and health. Concentrations are measured in parts per million (ppm). A home with fuel burning appliances will often have regular levels below 8ppm. When these levels are higher, an appliance may be malfunctioning. Many will not experience symptoms at levels below 70ppm. Exposure up to 70ppm will not cause acute effects, but overtime may lead to chronic headaches, fatigue, chest pain and nausea. When levels are above 70ppm, these symptoms will become noticeable or more severe. Levels above 150ppm will cause acute CO poisoning, leading to disorientation, unconsciousness and death. Most store-bought alarms will sound after one hour of reading 70ppm. When a CO alarm sounds, leave the home immediately and dial 911 from outside.

What is radon?
The natural decay of uranium in soil produces this radioactive gas. Radon travels up through the ground and into the air, entering your home through cracks in the foundation. Your home poses the highest risk for radon exposure because the walls trap gas, building higher concentrations. Radon can be found anywhere, but there are certain parts of the U.S. that have higher levels (view the map at www.epa.gov/radon/zonemap.html).

How can I test for radon?
Radon is measured in picocuries per liter of air (pCi/L). Purchase a short term test that includes lab results to measure the levels in your home. If the lab results reveal a level of 4 pCi/L or higher, follow up with a long-term test. If the average results are 4 pCi/L or higher, you will need to hire a qualified contractor to install a radon mitigation system. Kits are available online or at your local hardware store. Because radon levels can fluctuate, test your home once a year, alternating the season in which you test.

Is radon in new homes?
Yes. Radon enters through cracks and holes in the foundation, floors and walls including construction joints, gaps in suspended floors and around service pipes, wall cavities and the water supply. According to the EPA, nearly one out of every 15 homes in the U.S. is estimated to have elevated radon levels.

Why is radon bad?
Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among nonsmokers. Radon decays into radioactive particles that can get trapped in your lungs, causing tissue damage that ultimately leads to lung cancer. Children are at greater risk for lung cancer from radon exposure because their lungs are smaller and still developing. Radon is also increases the risk of lung cancer in smokers because their lungs are already compromised.

For more information:
Safe Kids Worldwide: www.safekids.org
National Safety Council/EPA Radon Hotline: 1-800-557-2366
Radon Fix-It Hotline 1-800-644-6999
National Health Imperative: Choosing Healthier Building Materials

By Bill Walsh, Executive Director of Healthy Building Network

Fewer than 100 years ago, you could tell what a building was made from just by looking at it: wood, brick, plaster, metal. Following World War II the building supply chain underwent a material revolution, introducing an uncountable array of chemicals into our homes, schools offices and construction sites. The benefits were obvious—higher performance and durability. Overlooked were the corresponding hazards to building occupants and construction workers from exposure to chemicals capable of causing asthma, brain damage and cancer. Formaldehyde was not determined to cause cancer in humans until decades after it became a common household air contaminant released from particleboard furniture.

Initial uses of toxic materials were often small scale, but then became ubiquitous. Consider pressure-treated wood, ordinary pine infused with an arsenic-based compound to resist pests and moisture. It originally came with label warnings for children and avoiding contact with food. Few could have foreseen that this product would become ubiquitous on household decks, playgrounds, even picnic tables and ultimately grow to be the largest source of arsenic exposure to American children until the formula was phased out in 2003.

Most people assume that the EPA has approved chemicals in our building products as safe, but the opposite is true. Of the 80,000 chemicals thought to be in commercial use, fewer than 200 have been tested for human health impacts. There are no labeling laws, such as those on food products that require manufacturers to disclose the chemicals in a product. Regulating chemical exposures after the fact is notoriously difficult. Lead, for instance, was prohibited in paint decades after the health impacts on children were first documented.

Green Building Materials Not Always Healthy

Choosing healthy building materials can difficult. Research at the Healthy Building Network (HBN) has revealed that green does not always equal healthy. For example:

- Certified “low-emitting” building products advertised as asthma-friendly may still contain chemicals known or suspected to cause asthma.

- Red-listed chemicals in some products have been replaced with chemicals that are not on the red list, but that may be no less toxic. The product complies with the “letter of the law,” but is no healthier for building occupants or construction workers.

- Low VOC products can have varying area coverage rates. A lower-VOC product with a lower coverage rate could actually result in higher VOC emissions than a slightly higher VOC product that has a better coverage rate.

- Recycled content can introduce toxics into products that are not found in non-recycled counterparts.

- Bio-based products can be just as toxic as fully synthetic products, especially when the bio-based content is low. In some cases bio-based content can be less than 10%.

Certified green products explain what is not in a product. To be confident that building materials meet your health criteria, you have to know what is in the products you are considering. That can be surprisingly hard to do since there are no legally mandated product labeling requirements.

That’s why HBN launched the product transparency movement in 2006 with the Pharos Project, an online system for evaluating building products based upon full disclosure of their ingredients. In 2012, we led the effort to create the Health Product Declaration (HPD), the first standard format for reporting building product content and chemical health hazards. These efforts and others are gradually bringing need-to-know information about building products in accessible data formats that will make it easier to find healthier building products to meet your needs.

CONTINUE ON PAGE 7

GHII is in the process of working with its sites nationally to educate healthy housing practitioners about the dangers of hazardous building materials, methods and tools available for use in their identification, and potential paths forward to phasing out their use.
Partner Spotlight: Merge Benefits Healthy Housing Industry

By Stephanie Rex, Marketing and Communications Manager at Home Performance Coalition

The Home Performance Coalition (HPC) recently formed as a result of the merger of Affordable Comfort, Inc. (ACI), the leading education resource for the home performance industry, and the National Home Performance Council (NHPC), a group working to advance the whole-home energy efficiency industry. This new coalition unites the many voices of the home performance and weatherization industries and has the potential to serve as a new vehicle in advancing healthy housing standards through education, training, advocacy and outreach.

HPC analyzes industry trends and issues to provide education to advance the standards and practices of the home performance industry. It also supports collaboration and business development throughout all sectors.

Sponsored by an array of industry leaders, HPC is committed to a robust industry that makes homes more resource efficient, healthy, durable, resilient and affordable.

HPC’s regional and national conferences continue in the proud tradition of ACI events, convening professionals from all sectors and welcoming contractors, HVAC professionals, remodelers, builders, utilities, manufacturers, local, state and federal government agencies, nonprofits and everyone working to create healthy, comfortable, resource-efficient homes. HPC’s educational agendas present essential information for industry professionals at every stage of their careers—from the fundamentals of building science to strategies for marketplace transformation. At HPC events, individuals come together to discuss technical problems, exchange new techniques, source new tools and materials, debate business development strategies and examine residential energy efficiency’s role in creating strong, healthy communities, the development of green jobs and environmental stewardship.

GHHI has attended and presented at several ACI conferences since 2008. This year’s ACI National Home Performance Conference & Trade Show will be held in New Orleans, May 4-7. GHHI President & CEO Ruth Ann Norton is a member of the conference program committee and will present sessions titled “Resident Health Improvements through Enhanced Weatherization” and “Identifying Funding Partnerships.” To register for this conference or to learn more about the Home Performance Coalition, visit www.homeperformance.org.

National Health Imperative: Choosing Healthier Building Materials

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

In the meantime, here are some rules of thumb that can help you select healthier products today:

• Favor companies that disclose ingredients, e.g. products with HPDs, Declare Label or in the Pharos Project database.

• Choose low-VOC products. Check those coverage areas!

• Use products with no added formaldehyde.

• Be selective about certifications. Know the difference between industry generated labels and independent, third-party standards. Insist upon the highest level of certification.

• Avoid products with antimicrobial pesticides such as triclosan (Microban). These may have long-term negative health and environmental consequences. Limit antimicrobial products to areas that are subject to mold and mildew.

• Avoid synthetic gypsum products such as wallboard unless the product has been tested to ensure low heavy metal content. Synthetic gypsum comes from power plant smokestacks and can contain high concentrations of heavy metals that will very from plant to plant.

Making Real Progress

There is increasing momentum behind efforts to promote the use of less toxic building materials in the green building movement generally and affordable housing in particular. Last October, the US Green Building Council hosted the second annual summit on Materials and Human Health at Greenbuild, featuring a joint plenary session with the concurrent Affordable Housing Summit. In November, the Living Building Challenge published its Framework for Affordable Housing, featuring a chapter on implementing its toxic materials Red List. The soon-to-be-released 2015 Enterprise Green Communities Criteria revisions have been updated with more rigorous standards to reduce exposure to VOCs and asthma causing chemicals.

The Healthy Building Network has enjoyed a long collaboration with these efforts, and we are pleased to announce a new initiative to support affordable housing providers in addressing the specific challenges they face when trying to identify and specify healthy building materials for their projects. The Healthy Building Roundtable for Affordable Housing Providers, a pilot program supported by the Kresge Foundation and New York Community Trust, launched in March.

Resources:
HBN’s reports on asthmagens in building products and toxic emissions from recycled rubber flooring products are available at: http://healthybuilding.net/content/research-and-reports

www.ghhi.org 7
About the Green & Healthy Homes Initiative

The Green & Healthy Homes Initiative (GHHI), formerly known as the Coalition to End Childhood Lead Poisoning, replaces stand-alone programs with a comprehensive strategy to improve health, economic and social outcomes for children, families and seniors through a proven integrated housing intervention framework. GHHI is supported by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Energy, and national and local philanthropies.

Currently, GHHI is working in 21 locations: Atlanta, Austin, Baltimore, Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, Detroit, Dubuque, Flint, Jackson, Lansing, Lewiston Auburn, Marin County, New Haven, Newark, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Rhode Island, Salt Lake and San Antonio. GHHI’s goal is to engage 60 sites by 2017.

Healthy Homes, Happy Families
Ruth Ann Norton, President & CEO
Editor: Sarah Kinling, Marketing & Communications Specialist

For more information about GHHI, including how to bring the Initiative your community, please call 800-370-5323, or send an e-mail to info@ghhi.org. Become a fan of GHHI on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GHHINational, follow us on Twitter @HealthyHousing or follow us on LinkedIn.