

500 Housing Units Cleared of Lead Via Lewiston-Auburn Lead Program



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LEWISTON: A total of 500 housing units have been cleared of lead through the Lewiston-Auburn Lead Program. This was made possible due to the renewal of a HUD grant designed to assist property owners with funding for Lead Paint Hazard control work.

“Community Clinical Services, Lewiston/Auburn’s group of federally qualified health centers is thrilled that there are 500 fewer lead-unsafe rentals in downtown Lewiston. Too many children have high lead levels simply because they live in or near apartments that have old lead paint. These children are at risk for long-term negative effects to their health, and the City can be proud of its achievement in ensuring many less children are exposed,” says Joan Churchill, CFO/CEO of Community Clinical Services.

Lewiston’s Mayor Shane Bouchard concurred, *“This is wonderful news! I applaud all those involved in our multi-partner approach to lead safety. We are fortunate to have the HUD grant and people on board who are dedicated to area families.”*

The Lewiston-Auburn Lead Program (LALP) is a collaborative effort between the City of Lewiston, City of Auburn, Community Concepts Inc., and Healthy Androscoggin. It is a dynamic program model for integrating green and healthy housing interventions with strategies to create lead safe, healthy, and affordable homes for low-income families in Lewiston and Auburn. The LALP has been funded by three HUD grants in 2009, 2014, and 2017. From 2009 to 2016, the LALP cleared 481 units of identified Lead Paint Hazards, an average of just over four units per month. In the first three quarters of 2017, the program cleared 35 units to break the 500 mark and has already contracted enough work to meet the targets for June 30, 2019. The current grant target is 220 units cleared by January 1, 2021, a goal which Travis Mills, Lead Program Manager at the City of Lewiston, is confident will be exceeded.

“Lead inspection and hazard control is an important first step for a property. The real key to keep housing safe is for owners to use this paint data to maintain the property. Lead paint is safe when it’s in good condition. Abatement of hazards does not mean all lead paint is removed. If the remaining paint is maintained (between tenants, or yearly) the housing will stay safer at a much lower cost.”

The achievement lines up with the timing of **National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week which is October 21-27, 2018**. Each year, National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (NLPPW) is a call to bring together individuals, organizations, industry, and state and local governments to help increase lead awareness by using their efforts and collaborations to reduce childhood exposure to lead. This year the theme is **“Lead Free Kids for a Healthy Future.”**

Healthy Androscoggin has planned several Lead Poisoning Prevention Week events throughout the community. They will provide lead dust kit signups at various agencies throughout the community, as well as distribute materials to elementary students in Lewiston and Auburn. They will also be filming a Public Service Announcement on lead in partnership with Central Maine Medical Center.

On **Thursday, October 25th**, Healthy Androscoggin will offer two events: a Healthy Homes Healthy Families class at Trinity Jubilee from 8 AM – 1 PM (as supplies last), and a “Lights On” event will be held at Kennedy Park from 3 PM – 6 PM. Katie Boss, Health Promotion Manager at Healthy Androscoggin, states

“Healthy Androscoggin is proud to serve our community in reducing the burden of childhood lead poisoning and is thrilled to see investment and progress on this critical issue. We are committed to continued partnership to protect the well-being and the bright futures of the children in our community.”

For more information on “Lights On”, contact Fowsia Musse at mussefo@cmhc.org or (207) 786-1617.

For more information about National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week activities, please contact Tracey Crane at cranetr@cmhc.org or (207) 786-1617.

For more information about the Lewiston-Auburn Lead Program, please contact Travis Mills, Lead Program Manager, at tmills@lewistonmaine.gov or (207) 513-3126 ext. 3251.

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