

# Unique anti-lead plan starts

Child-care providers to live in house while theirs are fixed.

Lara Becker Liu  
*Staff Writer*

(February 21, 2004) — The house at 708 Garson Ave. gleams. It has been rid of lead hazards, totally renovated and generally readied for the day care providers and children who will inhabit the place through April 2005.

The providers' homes, in the meantime, will be made lead-free, as well — potentially sparing the children from further exposure to the poisonous substance.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development last year awarded a \$930,789 grant to the National Center for Healthy Housing to eliminate lead hazards in more than 25 home-based child care programs in Syracuse and Rochester. NHCC and its parent organization, The Enterprise Foundation, have so far leveraged an additional \$349,000 using the grant.

NCHH estimates that as many as 200 children will benefit from the hazard controls.

Twelve in-home day care providers will be selected to participate in the program here. They will receive grants of up to \$15,000 for lead hazard reduction in their homes.

The lead hazard control measures will include window replacement, paint stabilization, the creation of smooth and cleanable surfaces and specialized cleaning. In addition to lead hazard control, safety-related improvements will be made, including installation of hardwire smoke detectors, upgrading of electrical systems and fencing of child play areas.

That work will be done by Neighborhood Housing Services of Rochester Inc. And all of it is expected to be completed with minimal disruption to the providers and the children they care for — by moving them for a month at a time into 708 Garson.

North East Area Development Inc., which was hired to rehabilitate the house, is just putting the finishing touches on it. Rolls of linoleum, which will be used throughout the house for the benefit of children with allergies, sit ready for installation. The kitchen awaits appliances.

The New York State Office of Children and Family Services will inspect the house for child-care licensing purposes as early as next week.

A former rental property, the house was donated to NEAD — after the pipes had burst and the agency paid the \$5,000 in back taxes owed on it, said NEAD Executive Director John Page. The house, he said, "was in rough shape."

NEAD has spent approximately \$40,000 renovating it; an additional \$15,000 from the HUD grant was used to make it lead-safe. The agency hopes to sell the house to a home-based child care provider who is currently not a homeowner.

Few cities have dealt with lead problems in properties in which home-based day care is provided, said Rebecca Morley, executive director of the National Center for Healthy Housing. Fewer still have come up with temporary housing for those whose properties are being worked on; in fact, Rochester may be the only one.

"This is unique," Morley said.

Tania Miller, program director for The Enterprise Foundation, said it became possible for NCHH to institute the program in Rochester after her group and others, including Neighborhood Housing Services and the Family Child Care Satellite Network, received a \$25,000 grant from the Rochester Area Community Foundation to form a team.

The lead-safety program "makes sense," Miller said, "because you can impact so many more children than if you just walked into a traditional home, and also because you can educate so many more parents."

So far, only one day care provider, Annette Hylton, has been selected to participate in the program, but she had no plans to move into the house on Garson. Work on her home, in the 19th Ward, was minimal enough that she needed to close her business for only two days. She and her family, including three children, ages 4, 7 and 17, planned to stay at a hotel from Friday through Monday night.

"Not only is it good for the day care children, the ones I take care of, but my own children," said Hylton, 39, whose Hylton Family Day Care serves five children, ranging in age from 10 months to 10 years. "Not only that, but new windows — or new whatever — looks good, right?"

Hylton said she qualified for \$7,000 in lead-reduction grant money, which will pay for the replacement of 17 windows and a section of her doorjamb.

"When I think about the actual cost of having (to get) new windows," she said, "I can do without the business for a few days."

**[LBECKER@DemocratandChronicle.com](mailto:LBECKER@DemocratandChronicle.com)**