

October 2007



# OUR CITY'S CHILDREN

Office of Children, Youth & Families  
Growing Forward...

Our children are our greatest assets. Investing in their future secures our community's future. The Office of Children, Youth & Families is dedicated to building our community by supporting our children. We've met many of our goals, but there's much more to do – and we are setting the bar higher. We'll soon have a dynamic new look, a more clearly defined structure, and an even tighter emphasis for our city's children and youth.

Our children come first. Here are our 2007 - 2010 goals:

- 1. Increase the number of youth in afterschool & summer activities and civic & community leadership**
- 2. Convene community partners to address the needs of our city's youth to prevent violence & generate hope**
- 3. Advocate for children, ages 5-18 to have the support and resources to be successful in life**
- 4. Generate new investments for city youth**
- 5. Promote city & school partnerships for mutual benefit & understanding**

We want to thank the many donors and organizations who have contributed their expertise and resources to OCYF over the past year. As a result of community partnerships, OCYF generated \$27 for every \$1 of taxpayers investment. These dollars went to fund children's programs and public education campaigns. It truly takes a village and together we can provide a better future for our children.

Lynn Heemstra, Administrator  
Office of Children, Youth & Families

## Lights n

On October 18, the Grand Rapids Expanded Learning Opportunities Network, Office of Extended Learning and The LOOP after school program will celebrate *Lights On Afterschool!* at the newly renovated Harrison Park Elementary and Middle School from 3 to 6 p.m.

Kids, parents, community leaders and school staff are invited to observe various after school activities, tour the new school and hear presentations from city, state and school officials.

*Lights On Afterschool!* is a national celebration supported by the Afterschool Alliance that raises awareness of the importance of after school programs.

Also during the event, the 3TO6 media campaign will be launched to raise awareness among parents and community leaders about the importance of after school programs and to raise funds to ensure that every child has access to quality after school programs.

For more information about the *Lights On Afterschool!* celebration, please contact the Office of Extended Learning at 616-819-2165.



Students enjoying a science class at MLK Leadership Academy during Lights On 2006

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## SCHIP - Stakes are High

In 1997, the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) was created to provide 5 million of the nation's uninsured children with health insurance whose parents earn too much money to qualify for Medicaid but don't earn enough to afford private health insurance. This program is funded by federal and state governments with the states acting as the fiduciary. Locally it's estimated that 15% of families in Grand Rapids that are ineligible for Medicaid receive these benefits.

SCHIP is now up for reauthorization and the United States Congress has come to a compromise that will add \$7 billion a year to the SCHIP budget for a total of \$60 billion dollars over five years. This will mean that 10 million of uninsured children around the country will be able to receive health care.

President Bush has threatened to veto this legislation citing that it would unfairly offer health insurance to families that earn over the poverty level; families that would switch from private health insurance to insurance paid by the government.

**General Election**  
 **Vote**  
**Tuesday,**  
**November 6, 2007**

## NCLB Report Card

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act is legislation that was introduced in 2001 under the Bush Administration to provide a framework for academic standards and accountability for public schools. One of its main goals is for children to be proficient in reading and math. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress 2007 bench mark exam, also known as the Nation's Report Card, 48 states and the District of Columbia either improved academically or remained the same in all categories. Further-more, the report states that improvements have been made in 4th and 8th-grade reading and math with African-American and Hispanic students showing gains in a number of categories.

The NCLB Act is up for reauthorization this year and although the National Education Association (NEA) supports the general goals of the NCLB Act, they believe that it should be fully funded and that this law in its current form isn't working for children. The NEA is asking Congress to change the law so that it uses more than test scores to measure student learning, reduces class sizes and increases the number of highly qualified teachers in schools.

For complete report card results log onto [www.nationsreportcard.gov](http://www.nationsreportcard.gov).

### Mission:

The Office of Children, Youth & Families evaluates public policy and promotes caring partnerships to ensure our children, youth and families thrive within the Grand Rapids community and hold promising futures.

The Office of Children, Youth & Families is a partnership program of the Grand Rapids Public Schools and the City of Grand Rapids.

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### Safety Tips for Trick-or-Treaters



- Costumes should be bright and flame retardant
- Children should only go to well known, well lit neighborhoods and always carry a flashlight
- Children should follow all traffic signals and rules of the road
- Only candy that is commercially wrapped should be accepted and brought home to be inspected

[www.keepkidshealthy.com](http://www.keepkidshealthy.com)