In less than nine months, a program to improve the health of children by improving their homes has taken root and has been expanded citywide in Des Moines. Mercy Children’s Hospital & Clinics’ providers and staff have played a major role in the program.

Healthy Homes Des Moines (previously named Healthy Homes East Bank) was one of seven programs chosen nationally from a pool of more than 1,550 proposals for funding. The program is designed to identify children with chronic respiratory issues such as asthma, who require repeat medical visits and sometimes hospitalization. Mercy, other medical providers and school nurses meet with these families and ask if they would like to have their homes reviewed to see if they might be a cause of the repeat illness.

Since July 1, 41 qualified referrals have been received. Home inspections found mold, leaky roofs and heating and cooling needs. Work crews corrected the problems and improved the homes. In cases where the repairs were performed, the children have not needed as many visits to the doctor.

“Our providers are committed to the overall health of children and the community,” said Jolene Vos, Mercy Children’s Hospital & Clinics outreach coordinator. “This program takes a child’s care beyond the clinic and hospital walls, impacting their home environment for long-lasting health benefits. We are also fulfilling Mercy’s Mission of creating healthier communities,” she added.

Program managers believe further improvement can be made in identifying families and speeding up the referral process by educating providers to spot the potential need for a home review. “If you continually treat a respiratory condition that doesn’t go away, it could be the environment,” said Vos.

Healthy Homes Des Moines is supported in part by the national health program Building Health Challenge. This group includes The Advisory Board Company, Kresge Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and others. Mercy and the Des Moines hospitals contributed both services and funding for the local initiative. Additional support comes from nonprofit organizations, Polk County government and the Des Moines Public Schools.

For more information, contact Jolene Vos at jovos@mercydesmoines.org.
Kyla Moffitt, speech-language pathologist
Ruan 5 Rehab

Kyla has been with the Mercy Family for three years, working with patients of all ages throughout the hospital. Much of her workload, however, involves working with pre-term infants in the NICU who are at risk for feeding and swallowing difficulties.

“Feeding is such a basic act of care that can be complicated by the nature of pre-term birth,” Kyla said. “Helping parents feel more skillful in caring for their child is a wonderful feeling!”

Kyla credits her team for their great patient outcomes, and enjoys collaborating with and learning from her colleagues. Clear and open communication is the most important way to provide a Remarkable Mercy Experience for everyone involved, Kyla said. “The best results occur when patients and family understand the impairment and treatment options and when they play a primary role in identifying the goals of care.”

It’s all part of Living Up at Mercy – consistently doing that one extra thing that will help your patient or co-worker have a better day. Congratulations, Kyla, for living the Spirit of Mercy and carrying on the traditions and core values of our organization!