



Imagine if you couldn't greet guests at your front door, carry your laundry up from the basement, or simply bring the mail in off the porch for fear of poisoning your children? That's what the Osenbach family experienced before having their home made lead-safe through the Lead-Safe Utica program at the HomeOwnershipCenter.

After discovering some peeling paint in their 1920 house, Kelsie and Ben Osenbach got their home tested for lead. As a result, they learned that they had a number of locations throughout their property containing lead. Several of these locations included areas where their two boys, Noah, 3, and Jayden, 1, played daily.

"Knowing how dangerous lead is to children, we knew it had to be addressed. We thought about doing it ourselves, but it was too much," shared Ben, father to the boys.

Lead poisoning causes serious threats to a child's developing brain, nervous system, speech, hearing, learning, and behavior. It takes less than a teaspoon of lead dust – the size of a sugar packet – to cause serious, long-term harm.

The Osenbach family contacted the HomeOwnershipCenter and filled out a Lead-Safe Utica program application and participated in a whole-home *Green & Healthy Homes Assessment*.

One of the unexpected benefits of enrolling in Lead-Safe Utica's program is the comprehensive approach to home safety. Beyond the lead-focused services, this program provides additional funding to address various health and safety concerns throughout the home. The process begins with HomeOwnershipCenter's health and safety inspection, where their experts carefully examine every corner of the house for a wide range of hazards including electrical, fire, structural, etc.

"The process was not difficult, and things progressed quite swiftly," Kelsie explained about the application and the different project phases.

Areas that were affected by lead and other safety hazards in the Osenbach home included the front porch, windows, doors, basement and attic stairs, trim throughout the house, and the garage structure and siding, basement drainage, and some electrical wiring. The family's contractor and the HomeOwnershipCenter worked with them to find the best solution to remedy each of their lead and safety hazards. All the work was covered by Lead-Safe Utica grant funds at no cost to the homeowners.

What once was a nervous parent's plea "Don't touch that door!" is no longer a concern. The kids can go anywhere in the house, touch any surface, and be safe. Both Kelsie and Ben are relieved and grateful to have a safe environment for their children to grow up and play in.

Lead-Safe Utica addresses lead hazards in privately-owned housing using funds awarded to the City of Utica by HUD. This program aims to prevent childhood lead poisoning by creating lead-safe housing and helps homeowners, landlords, and tenants control hazards from lead in paint, soil, and dust.

There is funding available to help identify and address lead and safety hazards that may be in your home and harming your family! Find out more about the Lead-Safe Utica program and how you may qualify: <http://unhs.org/lead-safe-utica>.