



mbhp@home

Information and resources for program participants and their families

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership **SPRING 2007**

Think Warm... Think Summer Camp!

It's that time of year again—summer camps are accepting applications! If you've never thought about summer camp or your child is hesitant, remember that going to camp offers many benefits. Children learn to become more self-reliant and develop greater self esteem.

Camp also gives kids a chance to try new activities, crafts, and sports. They learn to have fun, experience a new environment, and meet new people. For many children who live in the city, it is a treat just to spend time outdoors.

Campers also develop greater social skills. They learn to work together, participate in group activities, and share chores. Many make life-long friendships and meet kids from all over the country.

If you don't think you can afford summer camp, there are many options! All camps offer some kind of



financial aid, but remember to apply early. MBHP will also offer financial assistance through our Childhood Enrichment Fund. We have partnered with several summer camps that offer exceptional programs and are quite affordable: Crossroads for Kids, Brantwood, Agassiz Village, and the Salvation Army.

Childhood Enrichment Fund guidelines have changed slightly this year. Contact Elizabeth Metz at (617) 425-6767 or Elizabeth.Metz@mbhp.org for more information.

SPRING WORKSHOPS

MBHP's free workshops take place at our office at 125 Lincoln Street in Boston.

April 19 at 6:00 pm

Tenant Advisory Committee Meeting

May 8 at 5:30 pm

ESL Employment Training Workshop

May 22 at 5:00 pm

Meet the Author Event

May 29 at 5:30 pm

Credit Smart (Registration required)

This is a 4-week course that will meet every Tuesday.

June 5 at 5:30 pm

Stop Summer Shutoff:
Utilities Workshop

June 19 at 5:30 pm

Basic Budgeting I

June 26 at 5:30 pm

Basic Budgeting II

To attend a workshop, contact Kate Cunningham at 617-425-6703 or email kate.cunningham@mbhp.org.

Want a Bigger Tax Refund This Year?

Low- and moderate-income persons with employment-related income may qualify for up to \$4,536 in federal and state tax refunds through EITC—Earned Income Tax Credit Program!

In order to receive the EITC, taxpayers must file tax returns, even if they would not otherwise be required to do so. Persons applying for the EITC must also:

- supply a Social Security number
- have received earned income from employment (or self-employment)
- be a citizen or resident alien of the United States or married, filing

jointly with a person who meets this requirement

- not be a “qualifying child” of another taxpayer
- be between 25 and 65 years of age, if you have no “qualifying children” to claim

Other special rules may apply for taxpayers who lived in other countries during the filing year or earned income through military pay. For more information about the specific requirements and income guidelines for the EITC, please visit www.irs.gov/individuals.

Additional help with the EITC can be found through the Boston Earned Income Tax Credit Campaign. Last year, the City of Boston served over 8,000 eligible taxpayers who received more than \$13 million in tax refunds. More information and a list of community tax preparation sites can be found at www.bostontaxhelp.gov. The IRS sponsors additional free tax preparation sites statewide through the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program. To find a VITA site near you, call 1-800-829-1040.

Join the Tenant Advisory Committee!

Are you receiving assistance from MBHP?

Do you have suggestions for how MBHP can deliver services more effectively?

Would you like to meet with other tenants to devise strategies for preserving affordable housing?

If so, please join our Tenant Advisory Committee (TAC)!

TAC members meet monthly to socialize and discuss important issues. To join, please contact Nancy Sullivan at 617-425-6701 or email nancy.sullivan@mbhp.org.

Ask MBHP

Q: *I want to have someone new move in with me. What do I need to do, and how will this affect my rent share and voucher size?*

A: It is critical to your participation in Section 8 and other programs that you immediately inform MBHP of any changes to your household composition. Family composition can often change with members moving into or out of units. To add someone new to your lease, please contact your program representative and provide them with the necessary documentation. This includes the written approval from your property owner to add any person who is not being added because of birth, adoption, or court-ordered custody. Everyone over 18 must have a CORI check before they can be officially added to your lease.

Adding a new member to your household can increase your voucher size (depending on age/gender) or change your rent share (depending on income). Your program representative will let you know of any changes to your voucher. Again, you must inform your program representative any time someone moves into or out of your apartment.

Free Family Fun

A Sailor's Life for Me?

Meet members of the Constitution's War of 1812 Crew at the USS Constitution's Museum exhibit, A Sailor's Life for Me. Learn about their adventures on board the ship and what became of them after the war. While taking a sail, enjoy fun activities such as walking on a foot rope, swinging on a hammock, or trying on sailors' clothing. Find out how the ship earned the name Old Ironsides through a multimedia presentation of the ship's most famous battle.

Time: Tuesdays–Sundays 10:00 am–5:50 pm. Tours take place every 30 Minutes, ending at 3:30 pm.

Location: Charlestown Navy Yard, Charlestown.

Public Transportation: USS Constitution is accessible from the Orange and Green Line subways.

Visit www.usconstitution.navy.mil for directions.

Street Performer Auditions

Come and cheer on hundreds of clowns, magicians, contortionists, jugglers, and musical acts as they audition for a spot in the Faneuil Hall Marketplace Street Performer Program.

Dates: Saturday, April 21 and Sunday, April 22

Time: The Marketplace opens at 10:00 am Monday through Saturday and Sunday from noon to 6:00 pm.

Location: 75 State Street, Boston.

Public Transportation: Take the Green Line to Government Center or Haymarket, the Blue Line to the Aquarium, or the Orange Line to State Street.

ICA Play Dates

If you like drawing, making art, storytelling, and films come to the new Institute of Contemporary Art and join in on a variety of activities. Admission is free for adults accompanied by children under 12 on the last Saturday of each month. Admission for children 17 and under is always free.

Date: Last Saturday of each month

Time: 10:00 am to 4:00 pm

Location: 100 Northern Avenue, Boston

Public Transportation: Take the Red Line to South Station, then take the Silver Line to Courthouse stop. Once above ground, walk down Seaport Boulevard toward the World Trade Center (away from the city), turning left onto Northern Avenue at the light. The ICA is on the right side of the street immediately around the corner.

Become a Specialized Foster Parent!

Help a young person in need of a safe and nurturing environment.

Massachusetts Approach to Partnerships in Parenting (MAPP) offers exciting and insightful training to prepare for the challenging and rewarding world of specialized foster parenting.

Foster parents receive a reimbursement of \$50/day—tax free!

Training sessions are held at Dare Family Services,
504 Dudley Street, 3rd Floor, Roxbury.

**For information about upcoming sessions,
please call Keisha or Elizabeth at 617-427-6500.**

Hundreds of MBHP Families Celebrate the Holidays at Maggiano's Little Italy

On Saturday, December 9, participants of MBHP's Scattered Site Family Emergency Shelter Program, Childhood Enrichment Program, and rental assistance programs brought their children to Maggiano's Little Italy for a three-course meal, magic show, and visit with Santa.

Guests were greeted by Jingles the Elf and the Cat in the Hat and were encouraged to guess the number of M&Ms in a large jar before heading to their tables. Families enjoyed salad, appetizers, pasta, chicken, dessert, and were able to take the extra food home with them.

After lunch, children gathered to watch Malik the Magic Guy perform

a variety of tricks using volunteers from the audience. The afternoon concluded with the distribution of goodie bags and puzzles, photographs with Santa, and a raffle drawing.

The Kids' Holiday Party was made possible through the generosity of State Street Corporation, the Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation, Citizens Bank, Sleeparama Furnishings, William and Catherine Guiney, Maggiano's Little Italy, CVS Corporation, Eureka! Puzzles, Build-A-Bear Workshop, Brigham's Ice Cream, Jordan's Furniture, and Uno Chicago Grill.

Do You or Your Family Have a Favorite Free or Low-Cost Activity?

Share them with us and we'll print them in our next issue!

The entry with the most creative response will receive a \$50 gift card to Stop & Shop.

Send a neatly printed postcard or letter to:
MBHP Free Activities Contest
125 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111

The winner will be notified by mail. All material submitted becomes the property of MBHP and may be used in MBHP's printed and online publications, presentations, and display materials.

Meet the Author Series a Success!

Participants at our recent Meet the Author events shared good books, lively discussions, and tasty food with author Connie Biewald.

Connie read from her novels *Digging to Indochina* and *Roses Take Practice* and introduced the group to *Drinking Coffee Elsewhere* by Z.Z. Packer. Attendees strongly related to themes including parenting, race, class, and coming of age.

"I'm glad we can give tenants a place where they can talk honestly about the issues that affect them and about the power of writing," said Development Associate Elizabeth Metz.

The next Meet the Author workshop will be held on Tuesday, May 22 from 5:00 – 6:30 pm. If you would like to attend, please contact Elizabeth Metz at 617-425-6767.



Property Owners Honored at Annual Event

The fifth annual Property Owner Appreciation Evening—an event created to honor the landlords who provide affordable housing to more than 7,200 families, elders, and people with disabilities in Boston—was held last November. Featuring keynote speaker Congressman Barney Frank, hors d'oeuvres, a jazz trio, and awards for five outstanding property owners, the event was attended by nearly 100 property owners, staff, members of our board of directors, service providers, and friends of the agency.

Representative Frank received the Community Leadership Award. "Every time they tried to cut Section 8, we got nationwide support to preserve the program," said Frank. "We should put the preservation of every single affordable unit at the top of our agenda."

Five landlords—Curtis and Sonia Bailey, Banita Burgess, Carl Daniel, Errol and Princess Lloyd, and Boyd Robinson—received the Property Owner Appreciation Award. Whether they made financial sacrifices, did rehabilitation work, or faced difficult issues, they each demonstrated unparalleled dedication to their tenants.



Property owners Errol and Princess Lloyd are congratulated by Lowell Richards and Julia Keboe.

This event was made possible by Sovereign Bank of New England, Appleby & Wyman Insurance Agency, Boston Private Bank & Trust Company, the Hearthstone Corporation, Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation, Pine Street Inn, Adams & Sammon Counsellors at Law, Automatic Temperature Control Corporation, Krokidas & Bluestein LLP, M.D. Guappone Insurance Agency, Meredith & Grew Inc., New Chelsea Realty Group, W.B. Mason Company, 31 Boston LLC/Regan Management LLC, St. Francis House, Delta Dental, and Boston Building Materials Co-op.



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DON'T GET LEFT IN THE DARK!

MBHP NOW OFFERS FREE UTILITIES WORKSHOPS!

Are you worried about losing your heat, hot water, or electricity?

Do you have a big bill and aren't sure how to pay it?

LEARN HOW TO SAVE ENERGY AND AVOID BEING SHUTOFF.

We can't pay your bills, but we can help you:

- Create a budget and save money
- Apply for weatherization and fuel assistance
- Get discounted rates from your utility companies
 - Find options for paying your overdue bills
- Learn your rights and your responsibilities as a consumer

Workshops are held every Wednesday at 11:30 am
at MBHP, 125 Lincoln Street, Boston.

Bring your bills with you for one-on-one counseling!

Call our Housing Consumer Education Center at 617-425-6700 if you'd like to attend, or to schedule a one-on-one meeting at another time.

RECIPE

Chili Casserole

*By Louise Bowler,
Tenant Advisory Committee*

- 1 package spiced tofu, mashed
- 1 tablespoon oil
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tablespoon onions, sliced
- 1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 15-ounce can of kidney beans, drained
- 1 25-ounce can of tomatoes
- ½ pound of grated cheddar cheese
- ¼ pound of elbow macaroni, undercooked
- Salt and pepper

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large frying pan, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add garlic and onion; sauté until translucent. Add seasonings and tofu. Continue cooking and stir until tofu stops steaming. Add kidney beans, tomatoes, and macaroni.

Place in a 4 quart casserole dish and top with grated cheese. Bake uncovered until cheese melts and sauce bubbles.

Serves four people.



FSS Update

SPRING 2007

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR METROPOLITAN BOSTON HOUSING PARTNERSHIP'S FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM

CAREER SPOTLIGHT: Correctional Officers

Correctional Officers maintain security and inmate accountability in jails and prisons. They enforce rules and regulations, monitor activities of inmates, and supervise inmate work assignments.

If you are interested in working in the field of Criminal Justice but don't have a degree and haven't attended the Police Academy, becoming a Correctional Officer is a good place to start. Ambition, experience, education, and training can lead to advancement.

How Does One Become a Correctional Officer?

Requirements and qualifications vary from state to state. Most institutions require Correctional Officers to be U.S. Citizens of at least 18 to 21 years

of age with a high school education or GED. You should also be able to demonstrate job stability and have no felony convictions.

Candidates for employment are generally required to meet formal standards of physical fitness, eyesight, and hearing. Applicants are typically screened for drug use, subject to background checks, and are required to pass a written examination.

What is the Earning Potential?

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, job opportunities for Correctional Officers are expected to be excellent. The mean annual wage for Correctional Officers in 2005 was \$36,000. Massachusetts is ranked as one of the highest paying states for this occupation. The mean annual

wage for 2005 in Massachusetts was \$50,760.

Other Considerations

A career as a Correctional Officer can be stressful and hazardous. Officers work all hours of the day and night, weekends, and holidays, and typically are required to work overtime.

Learn More on the Web

U.S. Department of Labor:
www.bls.gov

Commonwealth of Massachusetts:
www.mass.gov

The American Jail Association:
www.corrections.com

Federal Bureau of Prisons:
www.bop.gov

Do You Think You Have the Skills You Need to Earn Money?

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) combines Section 8 rental assistance with case management to assist tenants working toward financial independence and the possibility of home ownership.

As a participant you work with an advisor to develop a plan to achieve long-term goals for self-sufficiency. Once your personalized plan of action is established, you sign a contract that outlines your roles and responsibilities.

The FSS program can connect you with job training, resource planning, credit repair resources, basic skills education, high school equivalency (GED) programs, post-secondary education, and assistance with securing

meaningful employment. Your advisor will provide emotional support, case management, and personalized assistance as you work toward your long-term goals.

As your earnings increase, an escrow amount—calculated from the difference between your starting and your increased income—is deposited into your FSS escrow account. When you successfully complete the program, you will receive the money in your escrow account. These funds are often used toward future home ownership or higher education.

For more information about the FSS Program, please contact Nancy Sullivan, Assistance Director of Client Services at 617-425-6701.



Meet the FSS Staff (left to right): Marshall James, Self-Sufficiency Advisor; Jamie DeLude, Self-Sufficiency Vocational Advisor; Eliza Sparkes, Self-Sufficiency Advisor; Thomas Graham, Housing Mobility Advisor.

Si usted habla español y le gustaria aprender mas sobre FSS, por favor llame a Eliza Sparkes 617-425-6646; email eliza.sparkes@mbhp.org.

Commonwealth Care

Commonwealth Care, Massachusetts' new health insurance program, provides free or reduced cost health insurance to residents. This program should not be confused with the Commonwealth Choice Health Insurance Plan.

You are Eligible for Commonwealth Care if:

- You do not have health insurance and have not been able to get health coverage through your employer for the past six months.
- You are citizen or legal resident of the United States
- You are age 19 or older
- Your family's income before taxes is at or below 300% of the federal poverty level (see chart)

When you join Commonwealth Care, you can choose from a variety of health plans.

The cost of your premium (your monthly bill for the insurance) and your co-payment amount will be determined by your income and the health plan you choose. Coverage is free for people at or below 100% of the federal poverty level.

Services in Commonwealth Care

- Preventive and primary care (check-ups and physicals)
- Medical care from a specialist in a doctor's office, community health center or hospital
- Emergency care (visits to the emergency room)
- Hospital stays
- Prescriptions
- Inpatient and outpatient treatment for alcohol, drug abuse and mental health issues
- Vision care

To find out more about Commonwealth Care or to enroll, please call

1-877-623-6765 (TTY: 1-877-623-7773), or visit macommonwealthcare.com. For information about low-cost and free health care programs call Health Care for All's Health Care Helpline 1-800-272-4232, or visit hcfa.org.

Family Income Eligibility Chart

FAMILY SIZE	FAMILY INCOME*	
	Monthly	Annually
1	\$2,451	\$29,412
2	\$3,300	\$39,600
3	\$4,150	\$49,800
4	\$5,001	\$60,012
5	\$5,850	\$70,200
6	\$6,700	\$80,400
7	\$7,551	\$90,612
8	\$8,400	\$100,800

** must be at or below 300% of federal poverty level.*

Technology Goes Home

Technology Goes Home is a technology training program serving inner-city families through neighborhood collaboratives and the Boston Public Schools. The program fosters collaboration in communities, improves academic performance for children, enhances employment opportunities for adults, and improves the relationships between parents, children, and teachers.

There are two educational tracks for Technology Goes Home: one is conducted at the child's school and the other is held at a community location. Participants in either track are eligible to purchase low-cost computers, printers, and Internet access through a special guaranteed loan program.

Technology Goes Home @ School

Technology Goes Home @ School is offered to children in grades four through ten. Families attend an initial informational meeting at their child's school and complete an application. Parents and the child will receive 25 hours of technology training, after school or on Saturdays, relating to the child's class work. The child's teacher conducts the training, creating an opportunity for parents and



teachers to communicate regularly and to get to know each other.

Technology Goes Home @ Community

Technology Goes Home @ Community focuses on family technology education. Parents and students work together with the guidance of a Program Coordinator, meeting in their local community twice a week for 10 weeks. Families will learn an introduction to computers, Microsoft Word, PowerPoint, internet, and email.

More than 2,000 families have been trained through Technology Goes Home. For more information, visit www.cityofboston.gov/bra/digitalbridge/programs.html or call (617) 201-6316.