



MBHP Welcomes New Executive Director

Chris Norris is MBHP's new Executive Director. He began his new role on August 13th.

Chris served as Assistant Director of Citizens' Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA) for the last ten years. Before that, he was the coordinator of the National Consumer Law Center's Foreclosure Prevention Program. He received his B.A. from University of the Pacific in 1988 and his J.D. in 1991 from the Massachusetts School of Law. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston and Homeowner Options for Massachusetts Elders.

"I am pleased that MBHP has found such a qualified new Executive Director as quickly as we have," says Lowell Richards, Co-chairman of MBHP's Board of Directors. "We are confident that Chris will continue our mission to ensure that the region's low- and moderate-income individuals and



families have choice and mobility in finding and retaining decent affordable housing."

"I am excited about this new opportunity," says Chris Norris. "For many years MBHP has been at the forefront of ensuring that consumers have the resources they need to obtain affordable and accessible housing throughout the region. I look forward to working with the dedicated professionals at MBHP to continue that tradition."

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program Accepting Applications

Help is on the way for families at risk of becoming homeless! MBHP will begin accepting applications for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (RAFT) on Monday, September 17.

RAFT is a state-funded program administered by the nine Massachusetts non-profit housing agencies. RAFT funds help families stay in their own homes through periods of

financial crisis. The program also helps families to move into more affordable homes or to move out of shelter.

To apply, call the RAFT Hotline at 617-425-6622 on or after September 17 to set up an appointment. Details about eligibility and other guidelines will be posted as they become available. Call the Hotline or visit www.mbhp.org for updates.

Summer Fun Party

Summer arrived at MBHP on June 5 when 113 children and adults attended the second annual Summer Fun Party. Children received books through the First Book Marketplace, made their own bookmarks, and enjoyed dinner and dessert. The New England Aquarium donated tickets as raffle prizes.

The highlight of the evening was a visit from a certain furry red friend, who was greeted with hugs, cheers and high fives. Elmo read stories, did the hokey-pokey, and led a conga line through the halls of MBHP.

At the same time, many parents attended a "Stop Summer Shut-Off" workshop to learn about saving energy and discounted utility rates.

"I'm so grateful for the event. I learned how to avoid losing my lights and now I'm on a payment plan with the electric company. And my kids had a great time. They can't stop talking about Elmo," said one parent. By combining an important workshop with a fun event for kids, MBHP was able to serve every member of the household.

For more information about this or other MBHP events, please contact Elizabeth Metz at 617-425-6767.



Elmo leads a conga line through MBHP

Fun Facts

Everett

by Ahmed Ali, MBHP Summer Intern, Age 17, Charlestown High School

- Everett public schools spend \$6,166 per student every year—more than the national average school expenditure of \$6,058.
- Everett was named after the statesman Edward Everett, Governor of Massachusetts from 1836–40 and President of Harvard University from 1846–49. During his tenure, Harvard admitted its first black student.

Malden

by Sha'Relle Tillery, MBHP Summer Intern, Age 17, English High School

- Malden originally included the adjacent cities of Melrose (until 1850) and Everett (until 1870) and was incorporated as a city in 1882.
- Malden is reputed to be the first town in the commonwealth to petition the colonial government to withdraw from the British Empire.
- Joseph Hills named Malden after Maldon, England.
- Malden High School and Medford High School have the second oldest continuous high school football rivalry in the U.S. The first Thanksgiving Day game between the two schools was played in 1889.

Free Family Fun

Medford Family Network

489 Winthrop Street, 781-393-2106

Located at Medford High School, The Medford Family Network offers structured and drop-in playgroups, nature walks, sing-a-longs, and specialty programs for dads. Fully equipped with activity areas, a lending library, parenting and family support resource center, and staff to answer questions.

Middlesex Fells Reservation

This 2,575-acre State Park located in Malden, Medford, Melrose, Stoneham,

Medford

by Jeasha Ford, MBHP Summer Intern, Age 15, South Boston High School

- The Christmas song “Jingle Bells” was written by Medford resident James Pierpont.
- Medford resident Lydia Maria Child wrote a poem about the trip across town to her grandparent’s house, “Over the River and Through the Woods.”
- The infamous Hollywood murder victim “The Black Dahlia” was born and raised in Medford until moving to the west coast in search of fame.

Melrose

by Joel Acosta, MBHP Summer Intern, Age 18, English High School

- The city of Melrose was named after Melrose, Scotland. King Arthur is supposedly buried in the hills that overlook the Scottish town.
- Melrose is home to the Melrose Symphony Orchestra, the oldest continuing volunteer orchestra in the nation.
- One of Melrose’s public schools was once named after long-term resident Mary Livermore. Mary was an abolitionist and a promoter of women’s suffrage.

and Winchester is used for mountain biking, hiking, horseback riding, rock climbing, and skiing and it is free to the public. Visitor Center located at 4 Woodland Road, Stoneham

The Stone Zoo

149 Pond Street, Stoneham
781-438-5100

Visit bald eagles, reindeer, jaguars, cougars, snow leopards, and more! Admission is free all day on the Friday after Thanksgiving (10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.).

Services for Residents

Tri-City Community Action

Program—Fuel Assistance

341A Forest Street, Malden
Administers LIHEAP Fuel Assistance and energy conservation programs for those who meet income eligibility guidelines. Also offers energy conservation improvements and utility bill payment assistance. 781-322-6284

Catholic Charities of Greater Boston

185 Columbia Road, Boston
Services include camps; child care; ESL instruction; food pantries; immigration/naturalization legal services; payment assistance for mortgages, rents, and utility bills; outpatient mental health care; parenting/family support groups; pregnancy counseling, teen parent/pregnant teen education programs; and more. 617-506-6600

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)—Malden Office

200 Pleasant Street, Malden
DTA is the state agency responsible for administering public assistance programs including emergency housing for families, Food Stamps, TAFDC, and EAEDC. Residents of Everett, Malden, Medford, and Melrose should contact the Malden office for assistance. 781-388-7300.

Housing Families, Inc.

354 Cross Street, Malden
Services include family shelter, housing assistance, a stabilization program, a children and family program, and the One Family scholars program. 781-322-9119

MASS 211 (www.mass211help.org)

No matter where you live, you can dial 211 for information about essential health and human services or community services such as after school programs, food pantries, or care for an aging parent. Trained specialists are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Meet MBHP: A Day on the Job with Stefan House *by MBHP's 2007 Summer Interns*

Q: What do you do at MBHP? What are your responsibilities?

Stefan: I'm a Program Representative for the Rental Assistance Department. Unlike most Program Reps, I sit in the lobby area of MBHP and assist walk-in clients. I do not have my own caseload of clients but instead handle walk-ins, phone requests, and fill in for other Reps who may be out sick or on vacation.

My main responsibilities are to assist tenants and landlords in all aspects of the Section 8 Program. Most of the requests are regarding the relocation process, but I also help people apply for housing, who are signing leases, and who have questions about their rights and responsibilities.

Q: How long have you been working here?

Stefan: I have been working at MBHP for 19 years!

Q: How did you get your job?

Stefan: Throughout my career here I have worked in several different departments. Originally, I worked as a temp to help the agency transition from a paper system to a computer system. I then worked in the accounting department.

After that, I worked for the Intake Department and I was responsible for determining eligibility for our programs and maintaining the waiting list.

For the past several years I worked as a regular Program Representative. I have been in my new position for the past year.

Q: What advice would you give to someone who wants to be a Program Representative at MBHP? What skills do you need to work at MBHP?



Stefan House helps with a variety of housing issues from his post in the Housing Consumer Education Center.

Stefan: In my opinion, you need a lot of patience, understanding, and to be very enthusiastic to work at MBHP. You also need good organizational skills and the ability to handle a lot of requests at one time. If you have good people skills and can provide excellent customer service, then I would encourage people to apply to MBHP.

Ask MBHP

Q: My share of the rent increases every time I recertify. Why does my rent share go up if my income hasn't changed?

A: There are many things that are taken into consideration when calculating a tenant's rent share, such as changes in the family composition, child care expenses, utility allowance, or the gross rent. These factors may change your rent share even if your income has not changed.

One of the most common reasons for a rent share increase is a change in the payment standard. A payment standard is the amount of

Q: Do you enjoy working at MBHP? What do you like best about working here?

Stefan: I really enjoy working at MBHP! One of the best things about working here is when everyone—tenants, landlords, and staff—works together to solve a problem. I enjoy working with people over time and helping them solve their housing problems and make positive headway in their lives. It's nice to see how my work helps someone to achieve their goals.

Q: What are some of the challenges you face at MBHP?

Stefan: Some of the biggest challenges that I face are when people do not understand the rules of the program. The Section 8 Program can be complicated and I always try to explain the rules and regulations. I'm here to help our clients—both tenants and landlords—and I enjoy explaining our programs to everyone who comes to my desk.

money needed to rent a moderately-priced apartment in the local housing market. Payment standards are set by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and are subject to change annually. Unless there are special circumstances, the payment standard only changes at your annual recertification or when you move out. Your rent share may increase or decrease depending on the change in the payment standard. If you have questions about payment standards, please contact your Program Representative or call Stefan House at 617-425-6655.



metropolitan boston housing partnership

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Fall Workshops at MBHP

MBHP offers free workshops for tenants twice each month on Tuesday evenings. All workshops take place at our office. Every Tuesday, MBHP is open until 7:00 p.m. to answer housing questions. Stop by and visit us at 125 Lincoln Street in Boston.

TUESDAY WORKSHOPS:

September 25, 5:30 p.m.

Applying for College and Financial Aid Info Session

Presented by Dana Cole of TERI College Access

October 16, 5:30 p.m.

Basic Budgeting Workshop I

Presented by MBHP

October 23, 5:30 p.m.

Basic Budgeting Workshop II

Presented by MBHP

November 27 through December 18, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m.

The Boston Home Center presents Homebuying 101

Join us for 4 consecutive Tuesdays (8 hours) to prepare for buying a home. Registration is required.

ADDITIONAL WORKSHOPS:

Free apartment search and relocation workshops are held at MBHP every Wednesday at 10:00 a.m. and the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m.

To RSVP for workshops and events, please call our Housing Consumer Education Center at 617-425-6700 or email info@mbhp.org.

To stay up to date with everything that's happening at MBHP, visit us online at www.mbhp.org.

Pencil Us In Draws More Than 400

Every member of the household had something to do at Pencil Us In, a banking and back-to-school resource fair at MBHP. Featuring information tables, workshops, crafts, and school supplies, 177 adults and 256 children attended the event on Saturday, August 18.

Adults visited with representatives from financial institutions and community organizations and attended workshops on credit and banking while children enjoyed face painting and a make-your-own-piggy-bank craft room. Pizza was served to all.

Participating vendors included Boston Private Bank & Trust Company, City of Boston Credit Union, Eastern Bank, Rockland Trust, Wainwright Bank, Winthrop Federal Credit Union, Dorchester Cares,



Franklin Park Zoo, Madison Park Development Corporation IDA Program, SERVE New England, W.B. Mason, Geiger Gibson Community Health Center, Massachusetts State Treasury, Neighborhood Health Plan, and South Cove WIC.

MBHP distributed 300 back-to-school packages, featuring notebooks, folders, pens, crayons, and more. Throughout the day, additional items were given as raffle prizes: MBHP provided household budgeting kits; Franklin Park Zoo donated four tickets to the zoo; Winthrop Federal Credit Union supplied two \$50 gift certificates to the Museum of Science; and City of Boston Credit Union provided a gift card to Target. Each organization also brought literature and other goodies for everyone who visited their tables.

If you missed the event but would like to attend an upcoming workshop on budgeting or home buying, please call our Housing Consumer Education Center at 617-425-6700.

Get Ahead in Life with the FSS Program

If you have a Section 8 voucher through MBHP, you are eligible to participate in the Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS)! FSS links Section 8 rental assistance with case management to assist tenants working toward financial independence and the possibility of homeownership.

Program participants work with an advisor to develop a plan to achieve long-term goals and self-sufficiency. To participate, you will come in and sign a contract with MBHP to outline your roles and responsibilities, including your personalized plan of action. This plan can be adjusted by mutual agreement during your participation in the program.

Depending upon each participant's situation, FSS can connect tenants with job training, resource planning, credit repair resources, basic skills education, high school equivalency (GED) programs, post-secondary education, and assistance with securing meaningful employ-

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

Are There Other Benefits?

As your earnings increase, an escrow amount is calculated based on the changes in your rent share amount. This amount is deposited into an 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 homeownership or higher education. You do not need to leave the Section 8 Program to complete your FSS contract.

For more information about the FSS Program, please contact Eliza Sparkes at 617-425-6646. *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.*

Library Resources

Did you know that every branch of the Boston Public Library offers free homework help? Starting in October, tutors will be available to assist with homework on weekdays from 3:00–5:00 p.m. No pre-registration is required—just stop by your local branch and ask about the Homework Assistance Program (HAP).

High school students with good grades are eligible to become mentors through HAP. Mentors work with middle school students to help them learn new skills and excel in school. You'll earn a stipend, meet new friends, and make a difference in your community!

Visit your local library branch or call 617-536-5400 to learn more about HAP.

