



## Getting a Jump on Home Energy Costs

With September's comfortable temperatures and cheery sunshine, it's hard to believe that autumn's chill and winter's cold are just a couple of calendar turns away.

But now is a great time to start winterizing your home and looking at ways to offset those colder months' home energy costs.

You can reduce the amount of energy you use with a few simple steps.

First, get into the habit now of lowering your furnace's thermostat to 55 when you are away from your home or while you are asleep, and keep it no higher than 68 degrees while awake and at home. A few degrees can make a lot of difference on your heating bill.

Make the most of daylight—whenever possible, let the sun shine in those windows rather than turning on a light. Turn lights off when leaving a room, and use task lights for activities such as reading—it costs less than lighting up an entire room.

Ask your property owner to wrap your furnace and the pipes near it with insulation to keep the heat in.

Turn off the faucet! Leaving water running while doing dishes, shaving, brushing your teeth, and so on makes your hot water heater work harder and use more energy.

Run your dishwasher and washing machine only when there's a full load; doing more frequent, smaller loads takes more energy. Whenever possible, wash clothes in cold water. And don't forget to clean your dryer's lint trap frequently.

Don't peek! Heat escapes the oven every time it is opened to check on that casserole or those cookies.

Unplug unused or seldom used appliances, electronic device chargers, televisions, radios, etc. when not in use. Many continue to use electricity even when not turned on.

Want more energy-efficient ideas? Check out [www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov). Or, call the MBHP Housing Consumer Education Center at (617) 425-6700.

## Energy Star and National Grid Offer Energy-saving Tips

By Myshayla Rhodes, MBHP Summer Intern



As the costs of electricity and fuel rise, many families struggle to pay their bills. Fall is approaching, and people can expect to pay even more due to the

increased price of oil. Many are left wondering how they are going to be able to afford to heat their homes without leaving themselves in debt.

For those looking to save a few dollars this winter, Energy Star has created a program to help consumers lower the cost of their heating and electricity bills. Energy Star has teamed up with National Grid, Massachusetts' leading electricity and natural gas provider, to help customers become more efficient in their energy usage.

For example, they suggest an easy alternative everyone can do to save money and reduce energy use: switch to compact fluorescent lamp (CFL) bulbs, which are more energy efficient. They work differently from regular light bulbs; when the CFL bulb is turned on, the chemicals inside the glass tube react to one another, which creates a bright glow. Because a CFL bulb doesn't need to heat a wire or a tungsten filament, like a regular light bulb, less energy is used.

There are many other methods to save money by using energy efficient items in your home. To find out more, visit the websites of both Energy Star ([www.energystar.gov](http://www.energystar.gov)) and National Grid ([www.nationalgridus.com](http://www.nationalgridus.com)). These excellent resources can help make your home more comfortable, more affordable, and more energy efficient this year.

Need additional information about energy savings, fuel assistance, and other energy cost options? Call the MBHP Housing Consumer Education Center at (617) 425-6700.

## MBHP Takes the Show on the Road

MBHP is almost half of the way to meeting our goal of visiting each of the towns and cities in our region this year by hosting a housing conversation in each to discuss current issues and resources related to housing.

MBHP began visiting each community in the region back in April when we loaded up the car and headed out to Winchester. MBHP learned a lot that day, not only about the elderly population wanting to age in place or move to a smaller but affordable home in the commu-

nity and about the families struggling to live in a high-income area, but also about how housing is handled in Winchester. Both Sen. Patricia Jehlen's and Rep. Paul Casey's offices also spoke about the types of calls they receive regarding housing.

Eleven meetings later, and MBHP is still learning new things about the cities and towns we serve. More than 50 people attended the housing conversation in Waltham, including Mayor Jeannette McCarthy and concerned property owners. Topics

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## Fun Facts

### Stoneham

- Stoneham's first settlers arrived in 1645. At that time, the settlement was a part of Charlestown. In 1725 residents of the area successfully petitioned for their own town and Stoneham was established.
- Stoneham saw a huge boost to its population and commerce during the Industrial Revolution. The town's primary industry became shoemaking. This prosperous era is memorialized on the town's seal.
- Stoneham's notable residents include two-time Olympic figure skating medalist Nancy Kerrigan and WWF Hall of Famer Killer Kowalski.

### Woburn

- Woburn is among the oldest and most historic communities in New England. The area was settled in 1640 and incorporated as a town in 1642.
- From its incorporation and well into the 20th century, Woburn was one of the largest leather producers in the area. This proud history is still recognized as Woburn High School is home to the Tanners and Tannerettes.
- One of the most beautiful structures in Woburn is its public library. It was designed by the Victorian-era architect H.H. Richardson (1838–1886), right after he finished his design of Trinity Church in Boston. His design style became known as "Richardsonian Romanesque."

### Winchester

- The area where Winchester is located was first settled in 1640. It was nicknamed Waterfield in reference to its many ponds and the river that ran through its center village.
- Winchester was so named in 1849 in recognition of Colonel William P. Winchester, a wealthy businessman in Boston, who pledged \$3,000 toward the construction of the first town hall. Due to his sudden death, he never actually visited the town of Winchester.
- Winchester boasts several notable residents including retired Bruin legend Cam Neely, WCVB-TV sports anchor Mike Lynch, and multiple Grammy-winning cellist Yo-Yo Ma.

## Free Family Fun

### Stoneham Library Children's Story Times

*Tuesdays at 10:30 a.m. (ages 0–3)  
Thursdays & Fridays at 10:30 a.m.  
(ages 4–5)*

Stoneham Public Library hosts free children's story times for Stoneham residents starting Tuesday, Sept. 23, and running throughout the Fall. Reservations are required; call (781) 438-1325.

### Family Action Network (FAN) of Winchester Playgroup

*Wednesdays from 10–11 a.m.*  
First Congregational Church, Tucker Room (2nd floor), 21 Church Street  
Join the Family Action Network of Winchester Playgroup on Wednesdays beginning Sept. 12. The playgroup is a great way for moms, dads, and caregivers to meet one another while the little ones play. FAN's playgroup is run by four warm members

of FAN who will be sure to make you feel welcome and introduce you to the other members of FAN's Winchester community. If you would like to get to know more people in town, this is the place to go! The playgroup is free for FAN members. For more information, please contact [playgroup@fanwinchester.org](mailto:playgroup@fanwinchester.org).

### Woburn Public Library Children's Story Time

*Thursday, Sept. 25*

The Woburn Public Library will host a Pink-a-licious Story Time for pre-school girls 2½ to 5 years of age at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Sept. 25. A boys' Pirate Story Time will be the same day at 11 a.m. Dress up is encouraged. Snacks will be provided along with the stories. Children need to be pre-registered; call the Woburn Library Children's Section at (781) 937-0405.

### Woburn Public Library Music and Movement Classes

*Fridays from 9:30 to 10 a.m.*

"Baby Songs" music and movement classes with performer James Leplor will begin Friday, Oct. 17. This free, 10-week class is for children ages 0–3. No registration is required. Call the library with questions at (781) 937-0405.

### Woburn Public Library Fall Scrabble League

*Mondays from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.*

The Woburn Public Library's Fall Scrabble League starts on Oct. 27. The league is free and runs from October to May for grades 3–8, with a separate teen league for grades 9–12. No registration is necessary and drop-ins are welcome. Participants will have the opportunity to compete in larger Scrabble tournaments twice a year. Call the library with questions at (781) 937-0405.

### Meet MBHP: A Day on the Job with Elizabeth Wilson

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

**Elizabeth:** My job responsibilities consist of assisting people who are seeking affordable housing and other services such as job training, food stamps, utility discounts, furniture referrals, and food resources. I also conduct the Housing Search and Utility Workshops. I'm currently working on the Stand Down Committee (to connect homeless veterans with a variety of local resources) and MBHP's new Speaker's Bureau, which will consist of MBHP tenants and will allow greater participation for them in the agency and help foster public speaking skills.

**Q:** *How long have you worked at MBHP?*

**Elizabeth:** I've been with the agency since January 2008, and I work in the Housing Consumer Education Center. We provide information, referrals, and counseling support to help tenants and property owners resolve various housing-related issues.

**Q:** *What previous work experiences led you to your position at MBHP?*

**Elizabeth:** I have long had a desire to work with and help homeless families; many of the positions I have held have been in the areas of housing and homelessness. Over the years I had referred a lot of individuals and families to different agencies and organizations for assistance, including MBHP. I heard a lot of wonderful things about MBHP and thought that it would be a really great place to work.

**Q:** *What advice would you give to someone who wants to work in the area of affordable housing? What skills are needed?*

**Elizabeth:** Anyone who is interested in working in the affordable housing field must have patience. I often work with people who are going through difficult times in their lives and are



*Elizabeth Wilson of the Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC)*

often feeling hopeless. People usually want someone who will actually take the time to listen. And if I can put a smile on someone's face in the process of doing my job, it's worth it. The agency may not be able to help every person who comes through the door, but showing compassion and giving respect goes a long way.

### Ask MBHP

**Q:** *What do I do if I have a mobile Section 8 voucher or MRVP voucher and one of my utilities is shut off?*

**A:** Don't procrastinate—there are options, and your prompt action is key to utility service reinstatement.

If your utility is shut off or you receive a shut off notice, contact the utility company right away. Utility companies often will accept half of what you owe to restore service, provided you set up a payment plan for the balance. Service can be restored quickly if you are prepared to make a commitment to the company with which you have the utility arrearage.

So, what can you do if one or more of your utilities are shut off and you don't have the money to restore service? You can call MBHP's Housing Consumer Education Center at (617) 425-6700 for helpful information. Then, attend a Utility Work-

**Q:** *What are some of the challenges that you face in your work?*

**Elizabeth:** The toughest challenges include the shortage of affordable housing and lack of adequate flexible funding. The waiting list for a housing voucher is quite long, and it doesn't feel good to tell customers that they may have to wait many years before obtaining affordable housing. The lack of funding is also a challenge because there are so many people who just need a little help to get back on track, but too often the money isn't there. But I do work to help people access resources that are available.

**Q:** *What do you enjoy most about working at MBHP?*

**Elizabeth:** I like the diversity (of customers and responsibilities) at MBHP. I am a people person and I enjoy helping people. It makes me happy when I can give a customer a great referral.

shop. This fall, two Utility Workshops will be scheduled each month, and they provide tips on how to manage your utilities and bills, get discounted rates, and keep your utilities on.

Even if your utilities are not turned off yet but you are worried about losing your service, the workshops provide valuable information and resources to help avoid a shut-off.

If your utilities are in the name of the property owner and service is shut off, the property owner has 24 hours to restore service. You should notify your property owner if this happens and encourage prompt reinstatement of the utility so his/her payments are not jeopardized.

Remember, it is important for you to ensure the continuation of your voucher by being proactive regarding your utilities and making sure they are not shut off.



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**IT'S A WINNER!**

Congratulations to Gabrielle, winner of our Kids Corner contest! The 10-year-old Quincy youth submitted the winning picture entitled "Going 2 the beach is much fun!" and will receive four AMC movie theater tickets.

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## Show on the Road

*continued from page 1*

ranged from the gentrification of Waltham to problems associated with absentee landlords.

Each meeting has provided the opportunity for MBHP to re-establish old relationships and create new ones. Our outreach coordinator, Noreen Kearney, has collaborated with housing authorities to provide property owner workshops, and one of our case managers, Jesse Edsell Vetter, has provided trainings on the topic of hoarding to other housing case managers.

When MBHP has completed our conversations in each community, we will summarize the topics learned and distribute the information to people who attended.

## Veterans Helped at Stand Down

Each year, service and resource organizations come together as a community to help veterans in need of a hand.

On Aug. 8 and 9, MBHP once again participated in Stand Down, an annual two-day event to help homeless veterans. The event is staffed by volunteers from various organizations that provide free services and resources such as food, clothing, haircuts, regular medical services, legal assistance, registry ID cards or driver's licenses, voter registration, counseling, social work services, and housing services.

This year's event was sponsored by the Veterans Administration and

the Veteran Benefits Clearinghouse. Accommodations were provided for veterans on Friday night, and they were able to shower at a nearby school.

MBHP has been at Stand Down for the past several years, offering housing services. This year MBHP had 10 volunteers participating in Stand Down, where they provided services to 40-plus veterans.

MBHP also offered a housing workshop after the event to provide the veterans with additional assistance and guidance in applying for subsidized housing and to teach them how to recognize discrimination and protect their rights.



# FSS Update

FALL 2008

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

## CAREER SPOTLIGHT: Physical Therapist Assistants (PTA)

### What do they do?

A physical therapist assistant helps physical therapists provide treatment to patients with physical disabilities. A PTA's tasks depend on the size and location of the facility where they work. Typically a PTA will be responsible for aiding in the administration of a patient's treatment plan by assisting with patient exercises and providing massages, electrical stimulation, ultrasounds, and other therapy measures as prescribed by the physical therapist. The PTA records and reports to the physical therapist regarding the patient's progress. Oftentimes PTAs also will be responsible for maintenance of the facility, ordering supplies, answering the phones, and processing paperwork as needed.

### How Does Someone Become a PTA?

To become a PTA in the state of Massachusetts, you must first obtain

an associate degree in physical therapy, then pass the National Physical Therapy licensing examination, and finally you must apply to become registered as a PTA in the state of Massachusetts. Not all states have the same requirements because most of the training takes place on the job; some states do not require licensure.

### What is The Earnings Potential?

Employment as a PTA is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations due to the increasing demands for physical therapy services. The national median annual earnings of a PTA in 2006 was \$41,360.

### Other Considerations

PTAs need a moderate degree of strength because of the physical exertion required in assisting patients

with their treatment. The demand for PTAs is increasing, as is the number of individuals seeking this as a career (thanks to advertising, schools' outreach efforts, career counseling referrals, and so on). It is expected that there will be an increase in the number of qualified candidates as a result, so competition for available positions also is expected to increase.

### How to Learn More

Visit the following links to learn more about becoming a physical therapist assistant:

#### U.S. Department of Labor

[www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)

#### Federation of State Boards of Physical Therapy

[www.fsbpt.org](http://www.fsbpt.org)

#### Commonwealth of Massachusetts

[www.mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov)

#### The Pulse

[www.masspulse.org](http://www.masspulse.org)

## Inspection Appointment Reminder Calls Are a Hit!

Dentist offices do them. So do doctor's offices. The appointment reminder phone call has become a staple in many offices, and it's a concept that now is helping our tenants with their inspections.

MBHP recently partnered with a calling service to remind tenants—and their property owners—of upcoming inspections. The inspections are required by HUD as part of tenants' obligations for participation in the Section 8 voucher program, and it is each tenant's responsibility to make sure the inspector has access to the property.

Two days before a scheduled inspection, the service will call the tenant with a recorded message that reminds the tenant:

- of the date of the inspection.
- that the inspector will be there between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- that the tenant or his/her designee (an adult 18 years or older or the property owner if he/she has a letter from the tenant in hand that authorizes the owner to allow access to the apartment) must be present.

A similar call is made to the property owner, making him/her aware of the upcoming inspection.

"Early results are positive," said MBHP Director of Property Owner and Inspectional Services Kevin Donaher. "Our tenants tell us it's helpful getting the calls."

Donaher added that the reminder call system makes it even more important for tenants to provide their program representative with updated contact numbers so they don't miss their reminder calls.

In addition to helping our tenants by reminding them of the inspection appointment, the reminder calls are providing an added benefit: fewer missed inspections that need to be rescheduled.

## FFS and the Career Collaborative

The Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program can help you set a new course for your future!

The goal of FSS is to help you achieve financial independence and possibly home ownership or a college degree—you decide! FSS links Section 8 rental assistance with case management for five years. The program is available to all MBHP Section 8 voucher holders, regardless of education level, work experience, or current employment status.

The success of the program is thanks to a multi-faceted approach of personalized plan development, one-on-one coaching and encouragement from a FSS staff member, job training, resource planning, credit repair resources, basic skills education and high school equivalency (GED) programs, post-secondary education, and employment assistance.

As you progress through the program and your earnings increase, the amount of money between your rent share when you start the program and your increased rent share over time is put aside in a special escrow account. Of the 50-plus FSS graduates in fiscal year 2008, their average income increased by almost \$16,000 over the program's five-year period, and their average escrow savings topped \$11,000!

Upon graduation from the FSS program, the money is the participants' to use toward opportunities for themselves or their children: a college degree, paying off loans, the down payment on a home, and so on.

### The Career Collaborative

One of the program's valuable resources is its partnership with the Career Collaborative, another non-profit organization within the city of Boston. Similar to FSS, Career Collaborative aims to assist people in reaching self-sufficiency. Through job search courses, career counseling, pro-active mentoring and extended support, this free program helps people with employment challenges obtain the skills they need to build a career.

The two-year program aids chronically low-income people in identifying career goals, and it equips them with job search and job retention skills necessary for today's competitive labor market.

From résumé writing to workplace etiquette, Career Collaborative provides program participants with valuable tools for working toward economic self-sufficiency.

FSS program participants who have directly benefited from Career Collaborative have found full-time

employment in entry-level jobs with a targeted salary range of \$20,000 to \$30,000 plus benefits! Approximately 70 percent of the people who accept jobs through Career Collaborative referrals are continuously employed for a minimum of two years.

Sound good? To learn more about the FSS program here at MBHP—including how the Career Collaborative can help you achieve your goals—contact Thomas Graham at (617) 425-6701 or e-mail [Thomas.graham@mbhp.org](mailto:Thomas.graham@mbhp.org).

*Si usted habla español y le gustaria aprender mas sobre FSS, por favor llame a Justine Cabrera (617) 425-6616, email [justine.cabrera@mbhp.org](mailto:justine.cabrera@mbhp.org).*

**It was so successful last year, we're doing it again —**

### **the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus Family Value Pass program!**

Certificates for reduced-price tickets for Oct. 8 (\$8/person) and Oct. 9 & 10 (\$5/person/night)—limit six tickets per family—are available at our Housing Consumer Education Center.

### **BACK-TO-SCHOOL BACKPACKS ARE A HIT**

Thanks to MBHP partners Ropes & Gray and Pegasystems, 151 children in the MBHP Scattered Site program went back to school loaded with needed school supplies. Volunteers at Ropes & Gray and Pegasystems collected the backpacks, loaded them up with paper, pencils and pens, lunchbox supplies and more, then donated them to MBHP for distribution.



*Shown at top left is the Baker family with MBHP Executive Director Chris Norris (back left) and MBHP Case Manager Raquel Ojeda with their Ropes & Gray-donated backpacks. At top right is Jose Rodriguez with his Pegasystems-donated backpack.*