



mbhp@home

Information and resources for program participants and their families

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership SUMMER 2008

MBHP Celebrates 25 Years and Visits Local Communities

It started with a dream of a better Boston—a dream rooted in a nuts-and-bolts assessment of neighborhood needs in an era of social fragmentation and rising housing costs. In the summer of 1982, several hundred people including neighborhood activists, public officials, corporate executives, academicians, pastors, and others confronted the challenges facing the city under an initiative called “Goals for Boston.” The dearth of decent, affordable rental housing was an urgent concern, these leaders declared.

From summertime brainstorming was born the Boston Housing Partnership (BHP). Incorporated in early 1983, BHP set for itself a goal of developing thousands of affordable housing units across the city in conjunction with neighborhood-based nonprofit developers. It worked closely with city and state agencies as well as with banks that had been engaged to serve as investment part-

ners. And from the beginning, BHP worked closely with tenants as partners with a common mission. One resident of a building renovated through a BHP program noted, that “Before the rehabilitation started, a lot of drug deals and domestic violence were going on around here—things nobody wanted to take care of.”

In 1991, BHP merged with Metropolitan Housing, Inc. to create the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP). Today MBHP is known for its experience and expertise in affordable housing in Boston and 29 surrounding communities. It has become the “one-stop shop” in Greater Boston for housing issues, ranging from intensive support for chronically homeless individuals in finding a place to call home to foreclosure assistance for affected tenants and property owners alike.

Holding housing conversations in the communities served by MBHP is one key way that the agency is mark-



Gladys Vega, executive director of the Chelsea Collaborative, and Jay Ash, Chelsea City Manager, participated in a housing meeting sponsored by MBHP.

ing its 25th anniversary year. Nine meetings have already been held—in Winchester, Revere, Newton, Chelsea, Lexington, Arlington, Somerville, Malden and Everett—in which mutually beneficial conversations took place between community leaders, residents and MBHP staff. More than a third of the community meetings will have been held by mid-summer, with the remainder of the meetings scheduled

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Why Inspections Matter

Ensuring that your home is safe, decent and sanitary—that it meets standards set by the federal government—is at the heart of government-mandated inspections. We are required to schedule inspections annually to ensure housing quality is maintained. When you signed on for your subsidy, you committed as part of your obligation to be present—or to have someone present on your behalf—at all scheduled inspections. If it is difficult for you to be present at an inspection because of work or other obligation, you can have a family member or friend who is 18 or older



Christopher McWhite, an MBHP inspector, checks on water temperature.

there, or the property owner. If you ask your property owner to let in the MBHP inspector, we will need to a note from you giving the property

owner permission to open the door for us.

The MBHP Inspections team has worked hard to improve its own record. We try to call in advance to confirm the appointment and provide you with a list of key things we will be looking for. We are now asking for your help to reduce the number of times we arrive to inspect an apartment and cannot get in. It is critical that you or someone else be there, as the federal government requires that inspections be done within a certain time frame. It is not only your legal

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Fun Facts

Chelsea

- The area of Chelsea was first called “Winnisimmet” meaning “good spring nearby” by the Massachusetts tribe that lived there.
- In 1908 a fire destroyed nearly half of Chelsea.
- Chelsea is the smallest city in Massachusetts, measuring only 1.8 square miles.
- On June 4, 2007, Chelsea declared itself a sanctuary city—a safe haven for undocumented immigrants.

East Boston

- The landmass that is East Boston today was originally five islands that were connected using landfill.
- Transportation to the island of East Boston was originally a four-person-powered paddle boat that carried 15 persons at a time.
- The first public branch library in the United States was established in East Boston in 1869.

Revere

- Revere Beach, founded in 1896, was the first public beach in the United States.
- The first naval battle in the American Revolution occurred in Revere at Rumney Marsh in 1775.
- The movie *Next Stop Wonderland* was filmed in Revere.

Free Family Fun

Apollinaire Theater Company

July 9 to July 26, 7:30 p.m.

Mary O'Malley Park
at Chelsea Waterfront

Bring blankets or lawn chairs and come enjoy *The Real Inspector Hound/El Verdadero Inspector Sabueso* for FREE. The action starts by the fish sculpture by the dock! The play follows two theatre critics watching a spoof of a country house murder mystery. By chance, they become involved in the action with results that prove surprisingly serious for both. In English—Wed., Thurs., Sat. En Español—Viernes y Domingo.

Free Concerts in East Boston

Sundays, 5:00–7:30 p.m.

Waterfront Piers Park

Come picnic, enjoy games for kids and live music at the Sunday Summer Concert Series presented by ZUMIX every Sunday night in waterfront Piers Park. Fun for the entire family. Accessible by the Blue Line T.

July 13 Marlene Del Rosario with her Jazz Ensemble

July 20 Avantrio with Sofia Koutsovitis

July 27 Grupo Fantasia Quartet

August 3 Zili Misik

August 10 Al Natale Big Band, co-sponsored by the Eastie Pride Day Committee

August 24 CODE 51

August 31 Salvatore Baglio

East Boston Harvest Festival

September 7, 2:00–6:00 p.m.

Waterfront Piers Park

Apple pie baking competitions, corn on the cob, games for kids, and live music.

New England Sand Sculpting Festival at Revere Beach

Monday, July 14 to Sunday July 20

One of the premier events for sand sculptors all over the world, The New England Sand Sculpting Festival is held annually at Revere Beach. This is a family oriented event and all of the proceeds raised go directly towards funding programs for the Revere Beach Partnership.

Fishing 101 at Revere Beach

Wednesday, July 25, 1:00–3:00 p.m.

Thursday, August 9, 2:00–4:00 p.m.

Learn all about what you don't see under the sea this summer by attending a free fishing workshop (for ages 8 and up). Save the Harbor and Save the Bay naturalists will teach free

workshops about fishing, fish, and other marine life living on the low-tide, rocky shore at the foot of the Breakers. Workshops begin at Eliot Circle; participants walk along the shore toward the Breakers together. Registration required. Call (781) 286-8190 to enroll today!

Free Concerts at Revere Beach

Sunday Concert Series on the American Legion Lawn, 6:00 p.m.

July 15 Legendary Voices

July 22 Rico Barr Jump ‘N’ Jive Review

July 29 Smokin’ Joe and the Henchmen

August 5 Boston Rockabilly

August 12 North Shore Acappella

August 19 Pat Benti and the Sha-Boom Band

August 26 TBA

Thursday Concert Series at William G. Reinstein Bandstand, 6:00 p.m.

July 12 The Flounders

Celebrate Revere

Come celebrate “Revere on Revere Beach” at the Reinstein Bandstand on Saturday, August 18 from 4:00 to 9:00 p.m. This event includes family fun, entertainment and music including the North Shore Philharmonic Orchestra from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Meet MBHP: A Day on the Job with Barbara Chandler

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

Barbara: I am the Fair Housing Manager. MBHP was concerned with the discriminatory barriers that were confronting their tenants and putting property owners in very difficult situations. It is my job to reduce those barriers. I conduct trainings for tenants, property owners, and community agencies as to their rights and responsibilities under fair housing laws. I also help MBHP incorporate fair housing into agency operations to enhance customer services. And lastly, I participate in collaborative efforts with state agencies, service providers, and civil rights advocates to better integrate fair housing principles into the housing field.

Q: *What previous work experience(s) led you to your position at MBHP?*

Barbara: My background is a combination of fair housing, civil rights, and human service work. I first became involved with discrimination issues nearly 30 years ago when I

was an advocate for victims of domestic violence and their children. I then branched out into fair housing on federal, state, and local levels.

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

Barbara: I majored in sociology both on the undergraduate and graduate levels. That educational training helps me to see beyond the immediate situation and understand the larger context of what confronts tenants, property owners, government officials, and advocates in the housing field. Commitment to the principles of equal access and opportunity is essential for this type of work. You have to be willing to further these goals against a lot of opposition. Fair housing, like all civil rights, is personal so you really have to believe in yourself.

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

Barbara: The scope of fair housing is very broad so it is important to



prioritize projects so that I am productive in a way that is meaningful to the people that MBHP serves.

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

Barbara: I really enjoy the variety of what happens here. The agency deals with people looking for housing, people trying to hang on to their housing, and people who can provide housing. You seldom see such a holistic approach to housing like we do it here. I respect and appreciate the high standards of professionalism that my colleagues here set for themselves.

Ask MBHP

Q: *If I have a Mobile Section 8 voucher or MRVP voucher and I find out that the building is in foreclosure, what do I do next?*

A: If you are facing a foreclosure as a tenant, you should get in touch with MBHP as soon as possible. Call Anylis Castillo at (617) 425-6650.

Many people think that because their building is in foreclosure they will have to move immediately. This is not true. If you receive federal or state rental assistance, a foreclosure does not terminate your lease. The foreclosing entity simply becomes the new property owner. It has the same rights and responsibilities as the old property owner.

Often the foreclosing entity will want the building to be vacant before

it is sold. If the foreclosing entity wants you out, it must follow the same steps as any property owner. It will have to send you a notice to quit and possibly take you to court.

Even if you are taken to court, it does not mean you have to leave right away. You may get up to six months to relocate. If you are disabled, you may get up to a year. This matter is at the discretion of the judge. You may also have counterclaims against the foreclosing entity if the apartment is in disrepair. Just like any other landlord, the foreclosing entity is responsible for repairs to your apartment and must do them promptly.

Realtors or lawyers sometimes will send letters to tenants in this situation requesting them to move. You

may be offered “cash for keys.” This is when you are offered a small amount of money, usually \$500–\$1,500, to be out in 30 days. If you accept “cash for keys,” you are giving up your right to stay in the apartment longer and your security deposit. We recommend that you do not accept these offers until you have consulted an attorney.

You should always offer to pay your rent to the new property owner. Write them a letter, offer to pay the rent, and save a copy of the letter. In some instances, the foreclosing entity will not want to acknowledge that it is the new property owner and will not accept your payments. You should put the rent money aside in a bank account, however, in case you are taken to court in the future.



metropolitan boston housing partnership

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25 Years *continued from cover*

for the fall and early winter. Some common themes that have emerged include the struggles of seniors to stay in their homes or find other affordable housing in their own communities, the impact of foreclosures on tenants, and the need for more housing vouchers and support services for people who are disabled, veterans or victims of domestic violence.



John "JT" Toole, administrator of the Somerville Home, Melissa McWhinney, advocacy director of CAAS (Community Action Agency of Somerville), and others discuss housing issues with MBHP.

"During this anniversary year, we are recommitting ourselves to understanding and furthering each community's housing needs and goals," says Chris Norris, MBHP's executive director. "The purpose of the community meetings is to hear about the housing issues facing each city or town, share information about resources at MBHP, and forge strong service partnerships to better address the housing needs of residents."

Inspections

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responsibility to be there, but your presence also keeps you from being inconvenienced when we have to come out multiple times—and it keeps costs down at MBHP, where every dollar counts!

We appreciate your cooperation in doing everything possible to help ensure that your home gets the inspection it deserves. One tenant

recently commented that railings installed after the last inspection of her home made all the difference when she later had major spine surgery. "If it wasn't for your guidelines, I don't think I could have gotten up and down the stairs," she wrote. "There were no railings in the entire building but now I have them on the front, back, and cellar stairs. Every day I have to grab one to get up the stairs, and I thank you for that!"

Things needed for your inspection

1. Someone to let us in (see below)
2. Access to your basement and common area
3. Your current phone number

If you cannot be home

1. Have an adult who is 18 or older who you trust be there
2. Provide a letter to your property owner allowing him/her to provide access



FSS Update

SUMMER 2008

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

CAREER SPOTLIGHT: Interpreters and Translators

What Do They Do?

Interpreters and translators enable cross-cultural communication by converting one language into another. Interpreters deal with spoken words while translators deal with written words. Interpreters and translators must be fluent in at least two languages and should have a thorough understanding of the subject matter that they work with in order to accurately convert information from one language to another. This profession usually requires some travel and some type of formal education or training. Most interpreters and translators have specialties or areas of expertise such as the medical field, tourism, literature, the criminal justice system, government and/or business.

How Does Someone Become an Interpreter or Translator?

Again, you must be fluent in at least two languages. Educational backgrounds vary widely. A bachelor's degree is encouraged. Employment that requires expertise in a certain

subject matter, such as sports or foreign affairs, often also requires some type of related job training. Experience is important. Most organizations look for three to five years of experience. Experience can be obtained by volunteering, internships, or apprenticeships. There is currently no universal form of certification required in the U.S., but there are a variety of tests that workers can take to demonstrate proficiency.

What is the Earnings Potential?

Employment of interpreters and translators is projected to increase 24% over the next decade, much faster than the average for all occupations. Urban areas provide the largest number of employment possibilities. However, as immigrant populations spread, jobs will become available in many rural areas as well. In May 2006, interpreters and translators had median hourly earnings of \$17.10 nationally, according to the U.S. Department of Labor. Individuals classified as lan-

guage specialists—a group which includes interpreters and translators—for the federal government earned an average of \$76,287 annually in 2007.

Other Considerations

About 22% of interpreters and translators are self-employed. Earnings potential and job prospects vary by specialty. Work can be sporadic and is often part-time. Travel, at least to some extent, is almost always necessary. Increased education will lead to increased earnings.

How to Learn More

Visit the following links to learn more about becoming an interpreter or translator:

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

American Translators Association
www.atanet.org

**U.S. Department of State,
Office of Language Services**
www.usajobs.opm.gov

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
www.mass.gov

SUMMER WORKSHOPS

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

To RSVP for any of our workshops, please contact Angie Castillo at (617) 425-6650.

Career Collaborative July 15 at 5:30 p.m.

Would you like to make a salary of \$20,000–\$30,000 a year? Join us as we welcome Career Collaborative to MBHP. This free career workshop can help you find the job of your dreams! Career Collaborative is a nonprofit that helps individuals create or polish a résumé, develop effective job search strategies, and better understand social issues in the workplace.

Apartment Search July 16 at 10:00 a.m.

Utilities Workshop* July 16 at 11:30 a.m.

Budgeting Workshop, Part 1 July 29 at 5:30 p.m.

Budgeting Workshop, Part 2 August 5 at 5:30 p.m.

Apartment Search August 20 at 10:00 a.m.

Utilities Workshop* August 20 at 11:30 a.m.

Apartment Search September 17 at 10:00 a.m.

Utilities Workshop* September 17 at 11:30 a.m.

**A Utilities Workshop helps you get a handle on issues ranging from reading your utility bill and finding out if you qualify for discount rates to understanding payment plans, fuel and weatherization assistance, and shutoff protection.*

What You Should Know About Bed Bugs

Bed bugs have made an unfortunate comeback! They are now more common than any time in the last 30 years and have been invading apartments, homes, motels, and hotels all over the United States. Bed bugs are not known to spread disease among people and they can be successfully removed from your home. They are nevertheless a frustrating and unwanted parasite. They can get into your home on furniture, clothing, backpacks or other items that have been in contact with bed bugs. Because any home can be invaded by bed bugs, it is nothing to be ashamed of.

Bed bugs are very small (less than half the size of a pencil eraser), and fairly flat. Young bugs are nearly colorless while older ones may be darker or redder in color. They live in tight spaces close to where people sleep or rest such as mattresses, air vents near beds, and spaces where the floor carpet meets the wall. These pests bite people typically when they are sleeping, resting, or sitting for long periods of time—and then move quickly into hiding. Bites may look like the bites from other types of small insects. Some people develop a mild rash while others show more of a severe reaction.

When an infestation of bed bugs is suspected, you should do a thorough inspection. Look very closely on all items in your bedroom (start-

ing with the bed) and throughout the home for large and small bugs, fecal spots left by the bugs, and cast off bug skins. Also make sure that you check backpacks, luggage, couches, dirty clothes hampers, linen storage, and other places where bugs may hide. Use a flashlight, magnifying glass, and small mirror to help find the bugs and a thin spatula to get in cracks, garbage bags, tape for picking them up, and a vacuum that uses filter bags to remove them.

When searching a mattress, start with the edges and along the stitching lines. Look along the sides of the mattress, and along all stitch lines on the top and bottom. Finally, pay attention to any labels, tags, and buttons that may be on the mattress. Then quickly look to the box spring following the same methods and onto the bed frame. Move outward from the bed and check the surrounding carpet, drawers, bedside tables, upholstered furniture, and curtains.

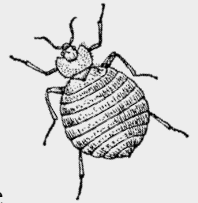
Any infested items should be contained in sealed plastic bags until they can be washed with soap in very hot water. Beds do not necessarily need to be thrown out if treated by an expert exterminator, but it is recommended that they be sealed with a full zippering mattress cover before future use. Any items, including mattresses, should be sealed in plastic sheeting or plastic bedding to prevent spread of the infestation

while you are waiting to wash them or if you are discarding them. Heat drying should be used at highest possible settings. A commercial steam machine with a capacity of at least 1 gallon (4 liters) also may work well if steam temperature is at least 176°F (80°C).

It is best to consult a professional exterminator to determine the appropriate course of action to fully remove bed bugs from your home. If you believe there may be an infestation, contact your landlord and your local health department immediately. Working together, you can successfully remove these bugs from your home. Two weeks after extermination, an inspection is required to confirm that all bed bugs were fully eliminated.

It is important to remember that your mattress, furniture and clothing can be kept after an infestation if properly cleaned. If you do end up throwing out infected items, NEVER get rid of anything without first cleaning it and/or making it unusable (an infected mattress could be cut or painted on, for instance). Otherwise, bed bugs may spread to neighboring homes.

For further information on bed bugs visit www.webmd.com and enter "bed bugs" in the search bar, or go to www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/housingandclothing/DK1022.html.



KIDS CORNER CONTEST

Hey kids! Win a chance to have your picture in the next *mbhp@home* newsletter and a certificate for a free Kid's Pizza at Uno Chicago Grill!

To enter, draw a picture and write a sentence to describe your favorite summer activity.
Ages 14 and under

Send entries by Monday, July 28 to Kids Corner Contest c/o MBHP,
125 Lincoln Street, 5th Floor, Boston, MA 02111-2503