



mbhp UPDATE

Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership • 125 Lincoln Street, 5th Floor • Boston, MA 02111-2503 • (617) 859-0400 • www.mbhp.org FALL 2008/WINTER 2009

MISSION STATEMENT

MBHP's mission is to ensure that the region's low- and moderate-income individuals and families have choice and mobility in finding and retaining decent affordable housing; all of our programs and initiatives are designed to encourage housing stability, increase economic self-sufficiency, and enhance the quality of the lives of those we serve. To achieve our mission and to promote efficient service delivery, we work collaboratively with a broad array of service providers and neighborhood-based organizations.

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MBHP Celebrates 25th Anniversary, Honors Founder William Edgerly

On Nov. 13, MBHP celebrated 25 years of helping individuals and families with low and moderate incomes find and retain decent, safe, affordable housing and honored its founder, former State Street Bank and Trust Co. CEO and Chairman William S. Edgerly.

The Nov. 13 reception hosted by State Street Corporation included a retrospective video, speakers, and a visit from Boston Mayor Thomas Menino, who at one time served as an MBHP program representative.

Edgerly was recognized for his vision and efforts in forming the Boston Housing Partnership (BHP) in late 1982 and early 1983. BHP in 1991 merged with its sister organization,



Mayor Thomas Menino chats with Bill Edgerly during the Nov. 13 reception.

Metropolitan Housing Incorporated, to become today's MBHP.

Edgerly had proposed an unprecedented idea: a true partnership among government, financial, and nonprofit/community development organizations designed to

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Metro Boston Region Awarded \$1.18 Million for Housing Pilot Network

MBHP is pleased to announce that the Metro Boston Region is one of eight regional pilot networks to share in \$8 million awarded Dec. 16, 2008, by the Patrick-Murray administration for a pilot program to help end homelessness through better coordination, integration and implementation of services.

MBHP serves as the convener agency for the Metro Boston Regional Network, bringing together a diverse network of partners—including community and municipal leaders, housing authorities, service agencies, faith communities and philanthropists—to develop a comprehensive, coordinated approach to the governor's challenge to end homelessness.

The Metro Boston Region, which was awarded \$1.18 million, submitted

a plan with a focus on Housing First, homelessness prevention and housing stabilization programs, as well as a plan to increase the supply of housing for residents with low incomes.

The Housing First program moves people as quickly as possible from shelter or the street to housing, with services to maintain the housing. With Housing First, people are able to avoid becoming homeless or to limit their stay in a shelter, moving to a safe and permanent home more quickly. The prevention and stabilization program targets work with courts, area housing authorities, the offices of the Department of Transitional Assistance, and large property owners to help families stay in their homes.

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MBHP'S PROGRAMS

- **Rental Assistance:** Section 8 housing voucher and other subsidy programs working with 4,300 property owners and serving 7,600 disabled, elderly, formerly homeless, and other individuals and families throughout Greater Boston. Included are subsidies for people with special needs requiring both housing and support services. Other voucher initiatives target tenants striving for greater economic self-sufficiency.
- **Housing Supports:** Programs that serve tenants, property owners and others with securing, stabilizing, or improving their housing. These include:
 - Housing Consumer Education Center:** An integrated network of services that provides housing related information, workshops, programs, and emergency financial assistance.
 - Specialized Intensive Programs and Services:** Individualized assistance to residents who have faced domestic violence, mental health or substance abuse issues, chronic homelessness, hoarding issues and other traumas.
 - Fair Housing Technical Assistance:** Trainings and technical assistance to tenants and property owners on their rights and responsibilities under federal and state fair housing laws.
 - Foreclosure Prevention and Tenancy Preservation:** Serves property owners facing foreclosure and tenants facing eviction due to foreclosure.
- **Boston Homelessness Prevention Clearinghouse:** Works with 35 provider agencies to help Boston residents avoid homelessness through common intake, assessment, and referrals.
- **Scattered Site Family Emergency Shelter:** Provides temporary homes to families while they work to transition to permanent housing.
- **Real Estate Services:** Equity services and asset management oversight for 924 affordable rental units, a loan program that keeps homes accessible for elders or people with disabilities, and affordable home ownership opportunities.

Letter From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

Happy Hanukkah, Merry Christmas, Happy Kwanzaa, and Happy New Year! As 2008 draws to a close, change is in the air, but Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership (MBHP) steadfastly continues to help individuals and families find and retain safe, affordable housing.

These are difficult times for our clients and for those involved in public service. Foreclosures are increasing. Programs in the state budget have been reduced or eliminated. Economic stress and uncertainty are spurring a decline in private and corporate donations. Household, corporate and nonprofit budgets are in flux.

It is a time of turmoil, but it is also an opportunity for us to grow and tailor our resources in response. In addition to the 7,600 tenants and 4,300 property owners we work with through our government-funded Rental Assistance activities, we continue to grow our privately funded Housing Supports services, helping an increasing number of at-risk individuals and families through such programs as our Foreclosure Prevention and Tenancy Preservation Initiative, our Hoarding and Sanitation Initiative, and our other Special Intensive Programs and Services.

We also will continue to reach out to our communities through our community housing conversations. Initiated as part of our 25th Anniversary celebration, the community-based housing conversations are proving an effective way of communicating with each community's elected officials, service providers, and residents. They are resulting in increased partnerships and valuable feedback, and they are yielding a wealth of information about area affordable housing options, issues, trends, and concerns. To date, 17 such conversations have been held, with more on 2009's calendar.

On Nov. 13, MBHP "officially" celebrated its quarter-century anniversary with a reception generously hosted by State Street Corporation. With 150 people in attendance, we highlighted our broad reach with our neighborhood-based community development corporations, local, state, and federal officials, corporate and private foundation funders, and clients. Thank you to all who joined us in our celebration and especially those who donated to our Annual Fund as part of the recognition. (It's not too late to donate.)

One reason for MBHP's ongoing success in helping people secure safe, affordable housing is our focus on interagency collaboration. Because of this approach, we were asked by several organizations to bring together representatives from communities in MBHP's region to discuss developing a regional network to prevent and end homelessness. We submitted a proposal to the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness, and as this letter was being written we received word that our network was awarded nearly \$1.18 million.

It would not be the New Year if I did not include at least one resolution. In 2009, we at MBHP resolve to continue to develop compassionate, innovative and collaborative ways to help at-risk individuals and families secure the housing and services they need. I hope you will join us.

Sincerely,



Christopher T. Norris

Helping Tenants Overcome Hoarding and Preserve Tenancy

“Jim” was in jeopardy of losing his apartment. It had failed inspection due to bins full of childhood items, cinderblock and wood shelves laden with thousands of books, and shelves and containers bursting with computer components—all stacked floor to ceiling.

Decluttering his apartment did not appeal to Jim at first. “I am a man of knowledge,” he said. “What would I be if I got rid of my library and other things?”

Jim’s hoarding was compounded by his struggles with depression and other psychological issues.

But through interagency cooperation and with the help of MBHP hoarding specialist Jesse Edsell-Vetter, Jim was able to understand his situation and focus on decluttering his apartment. MBHP’s privately funded Emergency Fund provided money for removal of discarded items, which can cost anywhere between \$500 and \$3,000 and is not eligible for other funding.

Jim recently passed the one-year mark for successful inspections.

It’s a trend MBHP property inspectors are seeing more and more of: compulsive hoarding so severe that a home becomes unsafe and tenancy is jeopardized. In fact, hoarding/clutter is one of the leading causes of eviction in Massachusetts.

Compulsive hoarding is defined as the acquisition of and failure to discard a large number of possessions that appear to be useless or of limited value (Frost & Hartl, 1996). Homes become so cluttered that tenants cannot live in them appropriately. Exits become blocked, kitchens and bathrooms become hard to move around in, and clutter becomes a fire hazard.

In May 2006, MBHP began its Hoarding and Sanitation Initiative in response to both the need to keep hoarders from being evicted and the need for interagency cooperation to



Hoarding affects a person’s ability to live appropriately in his/her home. Shown is a boarder’s bathroom, in which the shower cannot be used due to the accumulation of items stored in the shower stall.

achieve long-term tenancy. Edsell-Vetter, a former MBHP Inspections Department staffer with first-hand experience with hoarders, led the initiative’s development.

In Fiscal Year 2008, 77 MBHP households participated in the Hoarding and Sanitation Initiative, with only three households either refusing long-term services or losing their housing. The remaining tenants have been successful in remaining housed. Overall, only one of the 77 households has lost its subsidy due to hoarding.

“MBHP has been visionary in addressing hoarding with well-trained staff and clearly articulated protocols for handling serious hoarding problems,” said Dr. Gail Steketee, professor and dean of Boston University’s School of Social Work.

Intervention begins with an MBHP staff member visiting the home for an assessment following an unsuccessful inspection due to hoarding or following a report of suspected hoarding issues. If the tenant agrees to work to bring

his/her home into compliance, an individualized action plan is developed. It tailors resources for home decluttering; in-home education and skill building regarding shopping, organization, and sanitation skills; and counseling and support using cognitive and behavioral techniques. And while not mandatory for participation, treatment is strongly recommended due to the complex psychological nature of hoarding. Hoarding is a mental health condition, and hoarders usually have additional mental health issues.

MBHP works with the tenant to secure a “reasonable accommodation” regarding the inspection process. Compulsive hoarders can request a reasonable accommodation from their property owner or housing subsidy provider, which grants the client time to work on the hoarding problem and gradually bring the property into compliance.

Hoarding intervention is most successful when it is team-based among support services. Coordinated services—such as home visits, occupational therapy, visiting nurses, substance abuse treatment, individual and group therapies, and funding for clean-out and organizational supplies—combined with ongoing communication among service providers creates the optimal environment for successful hoarding intervention.

The Hoarding and Sanitation Initiative is part of MBHP’s privately funded Specialized Intensive Programs and Services. It continues to operate thanks to the generous support of corporations and individuals committed to preserving tenancy by providing services to those who need it most. To learn more about the program, or to donate money to the Hoarding and Sanitation Initiative or the Emergency Fund so others can receive similar help, contact Edsell-Vetter at (617) 425-6658.

Student Study Helps MBHP Make Sure All Have Access

They measured doorways and countertop heights. They took photos of meeting areas and counted bathroom stalls. They documented parking options and the status of sidewalks and curb cuts. They looked at building signage and drinking fountains.

Students in David Leib's New England Institute of Art code compliance class recently spent a few days at MBHP with their rulers, cameras, and charts to evaluate accessibility for both clients and staff with disabilities.

The visits were part of the students' class work, but the benefits to MBHP will extend well beyond helping them get a good grade.

"The accessibility audit will help MBHP enhance its service for persons with disabilities" said Barbara Chandler, MBHP's fair housing man-

ager. "It also will help us identify ways we can better hire and accommodate employees with disabilities."

Plus, the audit, which would cost upwards of \$10,000 if done by an outside firm, is free.

"Barbara and I have known each other for years," Lieb said. "We were talking one day and Barbara asked what was going on in code class, and here we are!"

Lieb said the audit is providing the students "a great learning opportunity. They get to take an awareness of disability culture and laws and integrate it with the technology guidelines. It's a great way for them to understand that it's about civil rights."

Lieb and the students will consolidate the information collected and issue a report that documents findings and make suggestions for improved



Amanda Brown and Cbi Tran evaluate the height of the counter in MBHP's main kitchen area.

access. He said the students will have an active role in the presentation of the report and findings.

An executive summary will include a set of priorities and timelines as well as cost estimates for any recommended renovations.

MBHP Celebrates 25th Anniversary *continued from cover*

address the lack of affordable housing in Boston. BHP's Board of Directors included representatives from city and state government, the business community, community development corporations and other nonprofits, and academic and human service policy organizations.

"He (Edgerly) thought that Boston couldn't be a great city if it had depressed neighborhoods, that there was something inconsistent with that," remembered former BHP Director Robert Whittlesey. "Bill saw the potential and he saw the role of the corporations in effecting change."

Thomas Bledsoe, president and CEO of Housing Partnership Network and former MBHP executive director, agreed that Edgerly's leadership was pivotal to BHP's success.

"I think the thing that was remarkable about Bill Edgerly is that given all the sophistication of the financial world that he understood so



MBHP Co-Chairmen of the Board Steven Rioff and Lowell Richards join Board Vice Chairman Ronald Logue in thanking Bill Edgerly for his vision, dedication and leadership.

well and his ability to grasp very complex issues, he could look at something and really distill it down to its most fundamental," Bledsoe said.

Edgerly's Vision Lives on 25 Years Later at MBHP

Today, MBHP works with 4,300 property owners and administers 7,600 rental subsidies. Our Housing Consumer Education Center in Fiscal

Year 2008 alone responded to more than 10,000 housing inquiries.

According to MBHP Board Member and Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation Executive Director Gail Latimore, "We need MBHP because it is a strong voice for advocacy for low- and moderate-income people who need housing. And, housing is such a huge basic need that is vastly under-met in Boston."

In addition to the anniversary celebration and Edgerly's recognition, Nov. 13 inaugurated MBHP's Annual Fund, which finances our Specialized Intensive Programs and Services for individuals and families most at risk of homelessness and most difficult to house.

To learn more about the Annual Fund and how you can help or to view more snapshots from the Nov. 13 event, visit MBHP's Web site at www.mbhp.org.

Save the Date

Mark your calendars for MBHP's annual Employment and Bank Fair scheduled for 4 to 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 10, 2009.

Included in the event will be employment search resources, resume assistance, workshops, vendors, financial information, door prizes and more. Details will be posted on MBHP's Web site, www.mbhp.org, as they become available.

Landmark Foreclosure-Related Tenancy Preservation Decision

Thanks to the efforts of New Haven Legal Assistance in Connecticut, Fannie Mae announced Dec. 15 that beginning in January it no longer will evict tenants solely because the landlord has gone into foreclosure. Previously, Fannie had suspended evictions temporarily for the holidays.

For more than a year MBHP has advocated for lenders to honor existing leases and to allow tenants who are paying their rent to remain in foreclosed properties.

In September 2007, Judith Liben from the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Financial Services and used MBHP data as part of her testimony to point out foreclosure's impact on tenants who receive Section 8 assistance.

Home Modification Loan Program Update

Did you know that there's a way for homeowners to get help with accessibility improvements for homes with elderly or disabled adult resident(s), or with families with disabled children, allowing them to remain in their homes?

Learn about the state-funded Home Modification Loan Program by logging on to www.mbhp.org and visiting "Home Modification Assistance" under Property Owner Programs. Or, contact Jennifer Shaw at (617) 425-6637 or jennifer.shaw@mbhp.org.

Annual Fund

Anonymous
Automatic Temperature Control Corporation
Bank of America
Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, Inc.
Clifford Boehmer
Leah Camhi
in Honor of Rabbi Karen Landy
Central Bank
Peggy and Kai Chan
Barbara Chandler
Chardon Law Offices
Citi
Citizens Bank
Citizens' Housing and Planning Association
Codman Square Neighborhood Development Corporation
Jeffrey and Nadine Cordon
The Cruz-Lemus Family
Deloitte
Kevin and Karen Donaher
Lyndia Downie and John Francis
Mary Doyle
William Edgerly
Jesse and Carolyn Edsell-Vetter
Rennie Elliott and John Bry
Mr. and Mrs. Howard H. Fairweather
Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston
Laurie Gould
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
Ivy Guo
Housing Partnership Network
Intercontinental Real Estate Corporation
John Hancock
Julia Kehoe
Cynthia Lacasse and Samuel Ogden
Craig and Ellen Leckband
Ronald E. Logue and Kathleen M. McGillicuddy
The Lynch Foundation
Elzadie A. Martin
Loretta Martin
Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation
Peter Munkenbeck
New Boston Fund, Inc.
Nixon Peabody LLP
Susan Nohl
Christopher T. Norris and Drew Bartley
Mark Nuccio
Yelena Orkin
Maura Pensak and Nancy Alach
Pine Street Inn
Rackemann, Sawyer & Brewster, P.C.
Lowell and Karen Richards
Rev. Anne Rousseau and Nancy Sableski
Deborah Ryan

Esther Schlorholtz and Joseph Hunter
Christina Sieber and Stuart Peterfreund
Marvin M. and Joan Roberta Sifflinger
Sovereign Bank
Stephanie H. & David A. Spina
Family Foundation
State Street Matching Gift Program
Michael Stone
The Community Builders, Inc.
United Benefit Services LLC
Urban Edge
Thomas and Beth Wagner
James Wessler and Susan Goodman
Major Supporters
Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation
Housing Partnership Network
Mabel Louise Riley Foundation
The Paul and Phyllis Fireman Charitable Foundation
United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley

Other Monetary Gifts

George Alexakos
Felix Amsler
Susan Ambcock
Dima Berdiev
Alison E. Callahan
Carrie Carrizosa
George Carroll
Carole S. Cohen
Rodnell and Annie Collins
Nancy L. Corcoran
David Coughlin
Lina DiBenedetto
Diane Dole
Jaclyn C. Drake
Rennie Elliott and John Bry
Elaine Fitzpatrick
Robert Foley
Chris Ford
Aida Franquiz
Joan Friedman
Martha Garcia
Josephine Giordano
Sarah W. Gorham
Brian F. Gregory
Christen Grey
Marie Grimaldi
Florence Grose
William and Catherine Guiney
Karen A. Haerincq
Polly Heater
Chris and Martha Higgins
Jill K. Howland
Theresa Hynes
In Memory of Michael Clements
Sen. Patricia Jehlen
In the name of her Senate colleagues
Ethel M. Jones
Ginger Kapinos

Kelly Kearns
Frances G. Kehoe
Brad Keuning
Sarah Lamitie and Douglas C. Matthews
Francis-Lee Laughlin
Patrick Leahy
Albert Lovingood
Ingrid S. Lynch
Lisa Mariotti
Elaine Martin
William P. Massos
Shawn and Laurel B. McCafferty
John McNally
Lyn Mello and Beth Anderson
Barbara Molla
Sharon Nasser
Niki South Street Salon
In Memory of Michael Clements
James and Patricia O'Brien
Arielle Ocasio
Leslie L. Olson
Lisa Paciulli
Larry Packenham
Ellen Heath Plapinger and Keith D. Plapinger
Pilar Pueyo
Anne Randall
Gerald and Miriam Raphael
Neil Rohr
Alexis Roth
Josephine Ruggiero
Esther Schlorholtz and Joseph Hunter
Karen Shaw
Denise Stefanopoulos
Rusty Stieff
Robert and Gloria Stoneham
Derek and Kimberly Szabo
In Memory of Michael Clements
Joan Thayer
Anne Tirrell
Richard Tyson, Jr.
Christopher J. Wade
Howard and Judith Wensley
In Memory of Stanley Solomont
Elizabeth Worrick
Shirley Young

In-Kind Donations

Caps for Kids Campaign
Rennie Elliott and John Bry
Fayerweather Street School
Feld Entertainment
The House and Goggins Family
John Hancock Financial Services
John and Rosemary Kearney
Stanley M. Legaski, Jr.
Pegasystems Inc.
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State Street Corporation
Thomas and Beth Wagner



\$1.18 Million Awarded

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“The partnerships are key to the success of the programs,” said MBHP Executive Director Chris Norris. “We are thrilled to work with so many dedicated and knowledgeable service professionals and community members in the region who are committed to ending homelessness, and we appreciate the administration’s leadership.”

“Homelessness is a much bigger problem than any one community has the resources to tackle, and the City of Cambridge and its Continuum of Care providers welcome the opportunity to be part of a broad-based regional partnership,” said Ellen Semonoff, Cambridge’s assistant city manager for human services.

For more information on the pilot programs, contact MBHP Director of Policy and Program Development Mary Doyle at (617) 425-6694.

2008 Family Self-Sufficiency Program Graduates

Thirty-three MBHP rental assistance recipients celebrated their completion of the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) Program on Oct. 16 in a graduation ceremony hosted by the Boston Private Bank & Trust Company. The FSS Program provides tenants with rental assistance, the opportunity to move toward increased self-sufficiency, and housing stability. FSS participants create five-year plans which include educational and career goals. As their incomes rise, they pay a larger portion of the rent, and this increased rental payment is put into individual escrow savings accounts. Upon graduation, the money can be used for higher education, to buy a home, or to pay significant bills.



2008 FSS graduate Alice Beato, second from left, is shown here with FSS Program Manager Thomas Graham, DHCD Bureau of Federal Rental Assistance Special Initiatives and Consumer Education Manager Leslie Gleason, FSS Advisor Marshall James, MBHP Board Member and Boston Private Bank & Trust Company Senior Vice President and Director of Community Investment Esther Schlorholtz, and MBHP Executive Director Chris Norris.