

Owner News

a publication of
Metropolitan Boston
Housing Partnership
Spring 2006

125 Lincoln Street • Boston, MA 02111 • 617-859-0400 • Fax 617-426-4256 • www.mbhp.org

Spruce Up Your House for Spring!

If you are a Boston home owner, you may be eligible to receive financial assistance to improve the exterior of your home through the City's Paint-Works Program. Income eligible* owner occupants of 1-4 unit residential properties could qualify to receive:

- Cash rebates of up to \$1,000 (some restrictions apply)
- 1% APR loans of up to \$8,000 from Citizens Bank to match your investment
- Free home improvement workshops with the North Bennet Street School
- Discounted prices on materials from local hardware stores
- Step by step guidance throughout your project

Typical projects include repairs to shingles and clapboards, front porches and stairs, windows and shutters, chimneys, garages, roofs, and gutters; fencing; masonry work; and debris removal.

For more information and an application packet visit www.bostonhomecenter.com or call 617-635-0600.

**Income guidelines:*

1 person household: \$69,400

2 person household: \$99,100

Shop amazon.com via MBHP.org!

MBHP will receive a percentage of every sale when you purchase books, CDs, DVDs and more by clicking on the amazon.com banners on our website.

The money will be used in our homelessness prevention and housing stabilization programs — at no cost whatsoever to you!

Join Us at Our First Annual Property Owner Resource Fair!

Saturday, May 20, 10:00 am – 2:00 pm at MBHP

ADMISSION IS FREE!

A variety of educational workshops will be offered, such as:

- Landlord/Tenant Law
- Conflict Resolution
- Section 8 Regulations
- Inspections and the new carbon monoxide regulations
- Home Rehabilitation Resources and finance opportunities from the City of Boston

Participating organizations include:

- Boston Building Materials Co-op
- Building Materials Resource Center
- Attorney Joseph Ross
- Home Modification Loan Program
- Mediation for Results
- Boston Home Center
- Boston Housing Authority Inspections and MBHP staff

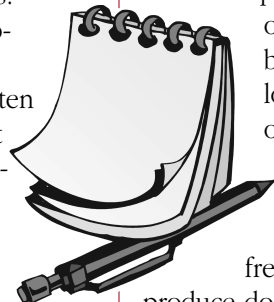
The event will also feature informational tables, refreshments, and raffle prizes.

Reservations are required. Please call Jennifer Shaw at 617-425-6637 or email jennifer.shaw@mbhp.org. We hope to see you there!

Mediation for Results Creates a PaperTrail

Mediation for Results (MFR), a program of the Just a Start Corp. in Cambridge, provides assistance with conflict resolution, housing occupancy stabilization, evictions and legal education for owners and tenants.

PaperTrail is an MFR program which emphasizes the importance of keeping a written record before landlord/tenant disputes arise. Types of documents that can be written include agreements, plans, clarifications of rights and responsibilities, notifications that tenancies have been breached, and specifics for how to resolve con-



flicts and strengthen relationships.

Peter Shapiro, MFR's program director, explains the motivation behind *PaperTrail*: "In our work we saw a huge need for low-income tenants and their landlords to be able to exercise their rights AND reach their own resolutions, ones that were practical yet considerate of the relationships between them. There's a lot of unnecessary stress out there and we wanted to create a service that would be accessible, efficient, low cost or free. We also wanted to produce documents which parties could submit into court

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MBHP NEEDS BOOKS!

We need donations of new or gently used books for Read It!—a program that provides free reading material to our program participants. Thanks to generous donors, 880 books have been distributed so far in FY 2006.



Books can be dropped off at our office, 125 Lincoln Street, 5th Floor, Boston, MA. We are especially in need of picture books for children. For more information, please contact Carla Goncalves at 617-425-6644 or carla.goncalves@mbhp.org.

Know the Housing Discrimination Laws

Passed by Congress in 1968, the Fair Housing Act, makes it illegal to discriminate in housing-related transactions on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, sex, and family and disability status.

These protected classes have been extended in the state of Massachusetts to include age, sexual orientation, marital status, military history, and source of income (including housing subsidies such as Section 8 vouchers).

It is therefore illegal to refuse to rent or sell, set different terms or conditions for a rental or sale, or impose different fees to individuals and families because of their protected class status. For example, a landlord, property owner, or real estate agent cannot refuse a rental because an individual is receiving a housing subsidy. It is also discriminatory to refuse to rent to a family with children under age 6 because the unit contains lead paint.

In order to avoid acting in a discriminatory manner, remember to treat all people alike, provide consistent and thorough information about a property to all prospective tenants and buyers, and make decisions based on objective criteria only.

If you would like a complete list of discriminatory actions or to learn more about housing discrimination, contact the Fair Housing Center of Greater Boston at (617) 399-0491.

Staying Home Helping Elders and People with Disabilities Retain Independence

Elders and people with disabilities face difficult housing choices.

Hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities are all valid options—but for individuals longing to remain independent, these alternatives can be cost-prohibitive and unsatisfying. The Staying Home Program was created to help these individuals stay in their own homes.

Staying Home is administered by MBHP's Housing Consumer Education Center. Staff members work with state, local, and community-based organizations to provide outreach, mediation, and targeted service delivery. With new resources and improved access to existing community supports, elderly and disabled tenants, housing applicants, property owners, and

family members can avoid hospitalizations and residential placements.

How Does it Work?

Individuals needing support should call or visit the Housing Consumer Education Center. Participants are also identified through other programs including Rental Assistance and the Home Modification Loan Program.

Each case is assessed and a plan is formulated to meet the participant's specific needs. Services may include home visits; financial assistance for home repairs or housing; or referrals to programs such as Meals on Wheels, Elder Home Repair, fuel assistance, home health care, adult day care and senior centers, and eviction mediation.

Who Has it Helped?

Staying Home assisted 413 people in FY 2005. In the first half of FY 2006, 200 people have been served.

Initial funding for the Staying Home Program was provided by The Boston Foundation. Subsequent funding has been provided by the Gillette Company. For more information, contact Farrah Bruny at 617-425-6759.

Mediation for Results Creates a PaperTrail

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evidence when needed. So far, our clients have been delighted with the service and in particular with the attention and support we provide."

The next time you are dealing with a difficult tenancy issue, contact *PaperTrail* for a **free consultation**. MFR can provide these free or affordable services thanks in part to funding from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development.

For more information about MFR or *Papertrail*, contact Peter Shapiro at 617-494-0444 ext 317 or petershapiro@justastart.org.

Stay Connected

Visit us at www.mbhp.org to join our free e-mail list. Once you've signed up, you'll receive regular updates about:

- MBHP workshops and special events
- Program News
- Services for property owners
- And more!

