

RAFT Program a Success in 2005

Through the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition Program (RAFT), MBHP was able to help nearly 500 families avoid homelessness in 2005! Emergency funds averaging \$1,335 per family were used for rental, mortgage and utility arrearages, first and last months' rent, and security deposits. RAFT is a state-funded program administered by MBHP in Greater Boston and by eight other regional nonprofits across the state.

Last year, RAFT administrators partnered with area utility companies who offered additional discounts or payment forgiveness plans to qualified applicants. In some cases, staff members were also able to negotiate lowered rents with property owners. Compared with 2004, MBHP received twice as many applications and approved twice as many families in 2005.

If RAFT is approved for this year's state budget, MBHP will again look forward to accepting applications in the summer of 2006.

Who's That Knocking At My Door? MBHP Inspections

From time to time, someone knocks on your door and says "Metro Housing!" This person is a member of MBHP's Inspections Department. Twelve inspectors ensure the safety of MBHP tenants in thirty cities and towns. Inspectors maintain contact with three inspections coordinators and report to the Property Owner Services Manager.

This team conducts more than 20,000 inspections each year.

Why do we conduct inspections?

In order for an apartment to be leased by a Section 8 program participant, the unit must meet the inspection requirements of HUD's Housing Quality Standards (HQS) as well as the supplemental requirements of the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). These rules are in place to make sure each apartment is safe for the tenants who live there.

Inspectors must understand complex housing codes and regulations. They carry a list of items to check, including smoke detectors that work properly; windows with locks that can open and close without being propped; handrails for stairways with more than three steps; a clean and working stove; heat that is operational between September and June; and flooring that is free of trip hazards.

Units are inspected annually, when a new tenant is about to move in, or when a tenant or property owner has made a complaint. If a unit fails inspection, the property owner has thirty days to make the necessary repairs. If a unit fails as a result of utility shutoff due to tenant non-payment, or the tenant has caused damage to the property beyond normal 'wear and tear,' he or she has 30 days to restore utilities or repair the damage.

Although inspections may sometimes seem inconvenient, they are necessary to make sure your home is a safe and comfortable place to live. The inspector knocking at your door is there to help.

HELP MBHP ADVOCATE FOR FUNDING!

The Massachusetts Legislature is currently working on the state budget for fiscal year 2007. MBHP needs your help to get funding for many of our programs:

- **Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC)** offers information, resources, and special programs to help tenants and property owners to solve their housing problems
- **Massachusetts Rental Voucher Program (MRVP)** provides housing subsidies to more than 4,000 Massachusetts residents
- **Individual Self-Sufficiency Initiative (ISSI)** provides emergency financial assistance and new housing units for individuals at risk of homelessness
- **Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)** provides emergency financial assistance to prevent families from becoming homeless
- **Scattered Site Family Emergency Shelter (SSFES)** provides emergency shelter for homeless families

If you have received assistance from any of these programs and would like to be involved in our conversations with state senators and representatives, please contact Mary Doyle at 617-426-6694. With your help, we can make sure that MBHP and other agencies can continue to offer these important services.

Kids Bring Holiday Spirit to MBHP

Serious business is conducted at MBHP, but we also like to have some fun. To celebrate the winter season, our Scattered Site Family Emergency Shelter Program (SSFES) and Childhood Enrichment Committee hosted a holiday party on Saturday, December 10th, 2005.

Staff members from each of MBHP's departments and volunteers from Boston Connects helped to serve food, paint faces, and create holiday arts and crafts for 56 children and their families. The highlights of the afternoon included a visit from Santa and a puppet show by Mariolio and the Hip Hoppets. "Everyone seemed to have a terrific time," said SSFES Clinical Coordinator Yoshiko Okazaki.



The event was made possible by State Street Corporation, Citizens Bank, ArWayne Furnishings, Building #19 Foundation, Elizabeth Louis, and with the support of Bertucci's Corporation, BJ's Wholesale Club, Caps for Kids, Cold Stone Creamery, CVS Corporation, Erin's Helping Hands, JP Licks, MIT Giving Tree, Pegasystems, Redbones BBQ, Ropes & Gray LLP, Rosie's Bakery, Stella Bella Toys, Toys for Tots, Uno Chicago Bar & Grill, and Whole Foods Market.

So far this year, SSFES has already helped 100 families. On any one night, 60 families—including approximately 135 children—reside in our private market units. Each participating family works with a case manager and a housing search worker to help them transition to permanent housing.

Childhood Enrichment Fund Now Taking Applications

Although spring has just begun, summer is around the corner and many of you have already begun to think about how your child will spend his or her summer vacation. MBHP realizes that many parents cannot afford summer camp, music lessons, sports, or cultural events without assistance.

The Childhood Enrichment Fund (CEF) was established so children served by MBHP rental assistance programs can more easily participate in fun, enriching activities. Thanks to a generous gift by an anonymous donor, MBHP was able to help 53 children in the summer of 2005. CEF funding is determined on a case-by-case basis and parents will be expected to make a contribution toward the cost of the program. All requests will be considered, although we will be unable to fund requests for required summer school courses.

If you haven't yet identified a summer program for your child and need some help sorting through the available options, stop by our office or make an appointment with a staff member in our Housing Consumer Education Center. You can also obtain an application for the Childhood Enrichment Fund from your Program Representative.



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Join MBHP's Tenant Advisory Committee

Are you receiving rental assistance from MBHP? Do you want your voice to be heard? Join our Tenant Advisory Committee (TAC) and share your thoughts!

TAC meets monthly to advocate for positive changes in state and federal housing policies and to improve communication between tenants and MBHP staff.

What's in it for you?

- Get involved in creating positive changes
- Learn more about MBHP and the work we do
- Meet other tenants, talk about your experiences, and work together to solve problems.

To join TAC, please contact Nancy Sullivan at 617-425-6701 or email nancy.sullivan@mbhp.org.

Open Late Tuesdays!

The Housing Consumer Education Center is now open later to serve you better. Drop by MBHP any Tuesday night until 7:00 and get information to resolve your housing questions—or attend free workshops held at 5:30 p.m. every Tuesday.

Upcoming Free Workshops:

March 21: Basic Budgeting I

April 4: Fair Housing 101/
Basic Budgeting II

April 25: Building Assets
featuring Project Wealth

May 9: Basic Budgeting I

May 23: Benefits 101/
Basic Budgeting II

For more information on workshops and other services, visit us on the web at www.mbhp.org or call the Housing Consumer Education Center at 617-425-6700.

Recommended Reading from MBHP

by Elizabeth Guiney

In 2005 the violence in our city reached a ten-year high: too many of us lost loved ones, neighbors, and friends. Although we live in a time of unrest and turmoil, I believe that it is also a time of discovery and new beginnings. For me, this month marks the start of our new book club. I hope to use this column to discuss books that have touched me in some way and I hope that they will be as moving for you. The characters in the two books I am recommending have survived violence, yet they have managed to flourish.

A Matter of Trust by Anne Schraff is one of the first novels in the Bluford High series. Darcy Wills struggles to overcome her past and hold on to her first boyfriend, Hakeem Randall. The novel centers on Darcy's conflict with her old friend, Brisana Meeks, who competes for Hakeem's attention. Amid her jealousy, Darcy tries to make sense of the return of her father, who abandoned her family five years ago.

Although she is only a teenager, Darcy has much stress in her life. Her parents are separated, she is responsible for the care of her sister and her ailing grandmother, and her life is filled with violence. What will

become of her rivalry with Brisana? Will she learn to trust her father and boyfriend or will she succumb to jealousy and fear?

The second novel, *Brothers in Arms* by Paul Langan and Ben Alirez, is the ninth in the Bluford High series. It chronicles Martin Luna's struggle to overcome the tragic death of his eight year old brother, who is killed in a drive-by shooting. Haunted by his brother's death, Martin seeks revenge but is torn between a life of gang violence and the pleas of his mother who wants more for her only remaining child.

When Martin's mother forces him to move across town, Martin struggles to find his place at his new school and to escape his past. The novel explores the meaning of family, Martin's struggle to find the hero in himself, and the power of believing.

Both books are recommended for readers aged twelve and up and are available for free at MBHP. If you would like us to mail you a copy or if you would be interested in joining us for a free lunch and a discussion of these novels on Tuesday, April 18th, please call Elizabeth Guiney at 617-425-6767 or email elizabeth.guiney@mbhp.org.



MBHP BOOK CLUB

Tuesday, April 18 • 12:00–1:30 p.m.

Free lunch and discussion of
A Matter of Trust and *Brothers in Arms*
Both books available for free!

For books, reservations, or more info,
contact Elizabeth Guiney at 617-425-6767.

Have Higher Heating Costs Left You Out in the Cold?

This winter, the increased cost of oil, natural gas, and electricity has left many of us shivering. Warm up with a free night at the movies by sharing your story.

What have you done to save energy (and money) this past winter?

Entries should be typed or neatly printed.

The winner will receive four free movie tickets to AMC Theatres.



The winner will be notified by mail.

All material submitted becomes the property of MBHP and may be used in MBHP's printed and online publications, presentations, and display materials.

Send your entry along with your name, address, and MBHP program to:

MBHP Warm-Up Contest
125 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111

**Metropolitan
Boston Housing
Partnership**

125 Lincoln Street, 5th Floor
Boston, MA 02111
617-859-0400

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Free Family Concerts!

The Chameleon Arts Ensemble of Boston is offering MBHP tenants free tickets to its performance "To Breathe Their Marvelous Notes" at 8:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 20, 2006. The concert will take place at the Goethe-Institut, 170 Beacon Street, Boston. For tickets, contact April Myers at 617-425-6630 or email april.myers@mbhp.org.

Intimate Partner Violence—Escaping the Abuse

Intimate partner violence is a pattern of behavior where an individual tries to control the thoughts, attitudes, and/or behaviors of someone with whom they are involved. This cycle of abuse can be emotional, physical, economic, or sexual; it may include threats, intimidation, and isolation.

People from all walks of life are affected by intimate partner violence—and it has reached an epidemic level in Massachusetts. In 2003, almost 4,000 women and children sought safety at a shelter, more than 40,000 restraining orders were issued, and there was a 50% increase in the number of intimate partner homicides.

If you live in subsidized housing, you should contact MBHP and your landlord immediately about any

change in your income, number of household members, or other circumstances caused by the violence. Although this may seem like a small detail, reporting these changes will ensure that you are not paying more rent than you can afford.

You do not deserve to be abused, and the health and safety of you and your children should be your first priority. You have the right to request a transfer to another housing unit; however, only you can decide when it is the right time to leave the situation.

For more information or if you believe you are the victim of intimate partner violence, please call your MBHP program representative or the Massachusetts statewide domestic violence hotline, SafeLink, at 877-785-2020.

RECIPE

Spring Green Mexican Lasagna

Saute a chopped onion and garlic in some olive oil.

Add 2 pounds ground chicken or turkey breast.

Season with chili powder, cumin, salt and pepper, until browned.

Add a jar of 'salsa verde' (green salsa—found in Mexican section of supermarket) and a bag of fresh or frozen, drained, defrosted spinach, and stir until wilted.

Tear 8 whole wheat or spinach flour tortillas in half and layer like lasagna noodles.

Put a layer of salsa on the bottom of a baking dish, then add a little of the chicken mixture, the tortillas, grated cheddar or jack cheese, and repeat.

Bake in a 425 degree oven for approximately 30 minutes.

FSS UPDATE

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES FOR MBHP'S FAMILY SELF-SUFFICIENCY PROGRAM

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CAREER SPOTLIGHT: Physical Therapist Assistant or Aide

Physical Therapist Assistant

Physical therapist assistants perform a variety of tasks under the direction and supervision of licensed physical therapists. Assistants help the physical therapist in providing services that help improve mobility, relieve pain, and prevent or limit permanent physical disabilities of patients suffering from injuries or disease. They also record the patient's responses to treatment and report the outcomes to the physical therapist. Patients served include accident victims and people with disabling conditions such as back pain, arthritis, heart disease, fractures, head injuries, and cerebral palsy.

On a typical day a physical therapist assistant will perform tasks pertaining to treatment procedures including exercises, massages, electrical stimulation, paraffin baths, hot and cold packs, traction, and ultrasound.

There were about 50,000 people employed as physical therapist assistants in 2005.

Physical Therapist Aide

Physical therapist aides, under the supervision of a physical therapist or an assistant, assist clients and make therapy sessions more productive.

On a typical day a physical therapist aide will keep the treatment area clean and organized, prepare for each patient's therapy, and help patients get to or from the treatment area.

There were about 37,000 people employed as physical therapist aides in 2005.

How do I train to become a physical therapist assistant?

To work as an assistant in most states a person must complete an accredited physical therapist assistant

program where he or she earns an associate's degree. Assistants must be certified in CPR and have clinical experience, usually through an externship at a hospital. Academic course work includes algebra, anatomy and physiology, biology, chemistry, and psychology. Many programs require that students complete a semester of anatomy and physiology and have certifications in CPR and other first aid even before they begin their clinical field experience or externship. Some states require licensure or registration in order for an assistant to practice in a clinical setting.

What are the job requirements for a physical therapist aide?

Employers typically require physical therapist aides to have a high school diploma, strong interpersonal skills, and a desire to assist people in need. Most employers provide on-the-job training because this is a fast growing occupation.

Job Outlook

Employment of physical therapist assistants and aides is expected to grow much faster than the average for all occupations through the year 2014. The impact of proposed federal legislation imposing limits on reimbursement for therapy services may adversely affect the short-term job outlook for physical therapist assistants; however, over the long run, demand for physical therapist assistants will continue to rise. The growing elderly population is particularly vulnerable to chronic pain that requires physical therapy. The large baby-boom generation is entering the prime age for heart attacks and strokes, further increasing the

demand for cardiac and physical rehabilitation. In addition, future medical developments should permit an increased percentage of trauma victims to survive, creating added demand for therapy services.

How much can I make as a physical therapist assistant or aide?

Physical therapist assistants earned an average of \$37,890 in 2004. Physical therapist aides earned an average of \$21,380.

Works Cited: Information courtesy of Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2004-05 Edition, Physical Therapist Assistants and Aides, on the Internet at www.bls.gov/oco/ocos167.htm.

Want to learn more about the Family Self-Sufficiency Program?

The Family Self-Sufficiency Program (FSS) links Section 8 rental assistance tenants with an advisor to help them achieve career goals and work toward financial security.

Last year's graduates of the five-year FSS program increased their income by an average of more than \$12,000/year and received more than \$9,000 in savings!

Join us on Thursday, March 30 at 10:00am for an info session about FSS.

Learn about eligibility, program requirements, and benefits of participation.

To RSVP, please call Melinda Koenig at 617-425-6641 or email melinda.koenig@mbhp.org.

Local Community Centers Are There For You!

Family community or recreation centers can be found in almost every neighborhood in Boston. Most are low-cost or free, and provide activities such as sports, arts and crafts, technology, after-school programs, and academic help. If you're worried about what your kids are doing after school or on the week-ends, consider these alternatives!

Please remember to call each center to check their fees and their most current schedule of activities.

Agassiz Community Center **20 Child Street, Jamaica Plain**

Contact: Martha Salamanca, Cluster Administrator 617-635-5191
Hours: M-F, 11:00 a.m.–9:30 p.m.
Membership Fees: Youth \$5; Teen \$10; Adult \$25; Family \$45

The Agassiz Community Center is a place for kids to learn and have fun. Programs include an OCCS licensed after-school program, gym, soccer, sports clinics, girls' center, and a reading and math tutoring program.

Cleveland Community Center **11 Charles Street, Dorchester**

Contact: Gloria Moon 617-635-5141
Hours: M-F, 1:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m.
Membership Fees: Child \$5; Teen \$10; Adult \$15

Facilities include two gyms, a fully equipped dance studio, playground, sports-league basketball, soccer, tutoring program, and a girls' program

Holland Community Center **85 Olney Street, Dorchester**

Contact: Gloria Moon, Jeanette Ayala 617-635-5144
Hours: M-F: 1:00 p.m.–9:00 p.m., Saturday, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Membership Fees: Child \$5; Teen (15-17) \$10; Adult \$15

Offers licensed after-school and tutoring programs, teen and adult fitness programs, a swim team, basketball,

and arts and crafts. Facilities include a pool, gym, community room, after-school room and cafeteria.

Madison Park Community Center **55 New Dudley Street, Roxbury**

Contact: Shirley Billings, Donnette Owens, 617-635-5206
Hours: M-F 2:00–10:00 p.m., Saturday: 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.
Membership Fees: 13 & under \$4; 14-17 \$7; 18 & over \$10; Family: \$15

Madison Park Community Center offers a variety of affordable programs. Enrichment programs such as basketball and swimming, karate, a teen program, and Rainbow Reading and Math after-school tutoring. Facilities include gyms and a swimming pool, classrooms, and a computer lab.

Orient Heights Community Center **86 Boardman Street, East Boston**

Contact: Joe Weddleton, MaryAnne Gillespie, 617-635-5120
Hours: M-F, 10:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m.
Membership Fees: Children \$5; Teen \$10; Senior Citizen \$5; Adult \$25; Family \$50

Orient Heights Community Center has something for everyone. Popular programs include senior lunches, wheelchair basketball, Saturday basketball league, flag football, floor hockey, soccer, and an after-school reading program. Orient Heights is located next to the Noyes Field, and includes a gym and locker rooms.

Gallivan Community Center **61 Woodruff Way, Mattapan**

Contact: Beverly Mines, Program Supervisor 617-635-5252
Hours: M-F, 8:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m., Saturday, 2:00 p.m.–10:00 p.m.
Membership Fees: Child \$10; Adult \$25

The Gallivan Community Center offers "kid-friendly" programs that include a teen center, after-school program, computer lab, sports and recreation, and African drumming lessons.

Information from Boston Center for Youth and Families website, www.ci.boston.ma.us/bcyf/search.asp

Help with Your Prescription Costs

As of January 1, 2006 everyone who receives Medicare has access to prescription drug coverage. The Medicare Advantage Plan or other Medicare Health Plans that offer drug coverage will be available at participating pharmacies in your area to help pay for prescriptions and to protect you from unexpected prescription drug expenses. The cost of this insurance varies, depending on which plan you choose. You must sign up for a plan no later than May 15, 2006 in order to avoid any penalties. If you miss this deadline your next opportunity to enroll will be November 15, 2006 through December 31, 2006. For more information:

- Visit www.medicare.gov to consult the Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Finder or call 1-800-633-4227 (TTY 1-877-486-2048).
- Find Medicare Premiums and Deductibles for 2006 on the www.cms.gov website.
- Call Social Security at 1-800-772-1213 (TTY 1-800-325-0778) or visit www.socialsecurity.gov for extra help with paying for Medicare premiums.

