

Orchard Gone Green

Marysabel Mejia and her friends were frustrated with the lack of recycling opportunities at the Orchard Gardens Development. “I got interested in recycling because of school, and we didn’t have it here. So that’s what sparked my interest,” the 17-year old Boston Latin student said.

So when her boss at the Madison Park Development Corporation where she works summers asked her to start a project benefiting her community, a recycling project was the first thing to come to mind. Working with John McCarthy, the city’s Large Apartment Building Recycling Coordinator, management and maintenance staff, the Tenant Task Force and David Hinton, Cluster Administrator from the Vine Street and Orchard Community Centers, the group started *Orchard Gone Green*, a campaign to bring recycling to the development. One of the group’s members, Stephany Foster doesn’t live at Orchard, but has known Marysabel for over a decade. “Sure, they’re my friends and I wanted to help,” she said, “But it was also something I really wanted to do.”



Walter Estrada, Stephany Foster and Marysabel Mejia.

The two girls, along with Walter Estrada and Tre Williams, started by doing a lot of research on everything from recyclable versus non-recyclable materials to what bin types would best suit their needs. Within a few weeks, management and maintenance had identified five sites throughout the development where recycling bins could be placed. There is one located next to each dumpster and several in 25 Ambrose Street, where the management office is. Each bin is clearly labeled and residents must separate their recyclables beforehand.

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RHAs Walk to Get Fit

BHA Community Services Department in collaboration with the Boston Public Health Commission has launched– Walking for a Healthy Public Housing Community NeighborWalk Program at five family housing developments: Old Colony, Cathedral, Franklin Field, Lenox Camden and Faneuil. The project was made possible by a grant from the Partners in Health and Housing Prevention Research Center, located at BU’s School of Public Health.

NeighborWalk, a program of the Boston Public Health Commission, encourages residents of Boston to walk as a health benefit and is low cost. The RHAs and Task Force members attended training sessions with Mary Jane Williams, Wellness Coordinator at BPHC to become Walk Leaders for their respective developments. They recruit fellow residents and stake out walk routes.

Each group is currently involved in a walking challenge ending July 24. When the groups were formed, each member received a kit that includes a Walk Log to track distance, a pedometer to measure steps taken and a T-shirt to wear while working out. The length of each walk is a minimum of 30 minutes and the goal is to increase the

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distance every time out. At the end of the challenge, all of the groups will meet for a chance to share their experiences and win prizes.




Franklin Field residents at the grocery store walkthrough.

relied on it much less. Another resident, Julietta, is glad for the chance to get outside. “I get to know some of the neighbors and get in shape at the same time.”

Walking isn't the only component of the program. Each group took a tour of their local grocery store with Jo-Anna Rorie, RN or Dia Dimali, a wellness expert. Both showed residents how to read labels and make healthier food choices. At the end of the tour, each participant was given a \$10 gift certificate. They were also invited to attend healthy cooking demonstrations.

In addition to Neighbor Walk, Illuminada has arranged other activities to keep her group informed and healthy. On Thursday, June 4, about 20 Lenox Camden residents attended a CPR training session at the development. Illuminada arranged the event with the American Heart Association. This was an especially important event for Illuminada and her group. “Some of them didn't even know what CPR was for,” she said.

To find out more about upcoming events at Lenox Camden, call Illuminada at (857)222-7710 or (617) 988-4333. For questions about starting a walking group at your development, please call CSD at (617) 988-4333. 

At Lenox Camden, a group of about ten women meets each Tuesday and Thursday to walk three or four times around the block. They meet at 575 Shawmut Ave. for a quick warm-up then start the walk. RHA Illuminada Gonzalez is the Walk Leader. “I get experience working with residents, and I like to see them getting educated,” she said of her group. “I like to see them happy and be around the community.”

One resident said that she started walking because she suffers from various ailments including diabetes and arthritis. At first, she used a cane to get around, but since joining Neighbor Walk, she has



The Lenox Camden walking group.

Orchard - Continued

The next step was outreach. The group planned a kick-off event for November 1 and immediately got to work handing out flyers and making posters. David Hinton had T-shirts made, and the teens picked up reusable grocery bags from Dollar Tree. They put packets together and created games designed to teach children what can and can't be recycled.

On the day of the event, 75 to 100 people showed up at the community center. Orchard Gone Green was off to a good start. “There are a few people here who already recycled, so I guess that's why we got the biggest response,” Marysabel added. “And because we were the first family development [to have a recycling program], we got the most attention and help.”


Although the group was eager to start recycling immediately, the program didn't take off until last March because the maintenance crew was busy with de-icing and snow removal. Now, the maintenance staff is able to take the bins out with the trash every Monday. The city comes to pick it up.

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There are still some minor issues, not everyone cleans out their recyclables and some days the bins are not very full. However, the Orchard Gone Green teens are happy with their overall success. "I like that we help out the world and make our community better," said Walter.

For David Hinton it's not just about improving the community through recycling. It's also about keeping teenagers focused on something positive. "People say, 'how does recycling help stop violence,' but if you got kids involved with different things and you give them something to do they're not thinking about going out there doing something that's going to get them into trouble," he said. "They're walking around and they're proud of the neighborhood and want to respect where they come from and give back to where they come from."

Sharon Russell-Mack, the property manager at Orchard, couldn't be prouder of the group. "I think the program is great," she said. "But what is greater is that these kids are involved. They brought in the adults, even those who have never done it before."

If you are interested in starting a recycling program at your development, please contact your management office for assistance. 

BHA Receives \$33 Million in Stimulus Funds



Former BHA Administrator, Sandra Henriquez and Mayor Menino listen as Jimmy Coyle, general agent for Boston Building Trades, responds to the stimulus announcement.

Mayor Menino and former BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez came together recently to announce the receipt of more than \$33 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds. These funds were made available by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development as a Public Housing Capital Fund formula allocation and will be used for a variety of modernization and revitalization projects across BHA's portfolio.

The event was held at the Washington Beech Housing Development where \$10 million in ARRA funds will be used to complete Phase 1 of HOPE VI redevelopment. Phase 1 of the project includes the construction of 100 affordable rental units using green principles and technology.

"Public housing is really being recognized this time through ARRA," said Henriquez. "We will spend this money well, and we will be accountable."

Mayor Menino praised the influx of funds as not only a way to update public housing developments in the city, but also as a way to create jobs during a tough economic climate. The modernization projects will create close to 700 jobs over the next few years.


"ARRA is really being kicked off here at Washington Beech," Menino said to a crowd that included union workers and building tradesmen. "It's about putting men and women back to work, and it's important to continue to have growth with this project and the city's stimulus package. We don't have a lot of money, but the money we do have, we know how we're going to use it."

In addition to completing Phase 1 of Washington Beech redevelopment, ARRA funds will be used on the following projects:

- Bathroom and plumbing upgrades: Approximately \$10 million will be used to upgrade and modernize over 600 bathrooms and/or ventilation systems at Charlestown, Mary Ellen McCormack and Old Colony, three of BHA's oldest family developments
- HVAC and heating upgrades: Approximately \$3.5 million to complete boiler replacements and upgrades at Charlestown, Lenox, Cathedral, Bellflower and Peabody and ensure health and safety of residents by installing newer and more efficient boilers.
- Underground storage tank replacement: Approximately \$800,000 will be used to replace outdated underground fuel tanks for heating oil with modern, spill-proof, environmentally – compliant tanks at six buildings at the Commonwealth development.

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Stimulus - Continued

- Security camera preparation: About \$1.8 million will be spent to make elevators at 4 family developments and elevators and lobbies at 24 elderly developments ready to receive security cameras. Developments receiving this upgrade are Cathedral, Whittier, Alice Taylor, Commonwealth, Foley Apartments, Washington Street, Walnut Park, Amory Street, Torre Unidad, Rockland Towers, Heritage, St. Botolph, Pasciucco, Ausonia, Hassan, Patricia White, Roslyn, Peabody Square, Commonwealth Elderly, Holgate Apartments, MLK Towers, Eva White, Frederick Douglass, Codman Apartments, Lower Mills, Bellflower, Hampton House, and Washington Manor.
- Walnut Park building envelope: The building envelope will be repaired at a cost of about \$800,000.
- Drainage improvements: Approximately \$200,000 will be made available to complete drainage and waterproofing affecting the Old Colony Teen Center community space at 290 Old Colony Ave. 



Out & About




Washington Beech Demolished for Redevelopment

On May 12, as cranes roared in the background, Mayor Menino and Washington Beech residents celebrated the demolition and redevelopment of Washington Beech. BHA staff, elected officials, representatives from HUD, MassHousing, DHCD and Trinity Financial all welcomed the redevelopment and praised the efforts of the dedicated tenants who made it possible. As her family members stood by, Menino also recognized the work of the late Mercedes Cash, a longtime tenant advocate. The Mayor announced that the first new street built in the development will be named Mercedes View in her honor.

Meena Carr, Chair of the Washington Beech FFUN Residents' Committee, praised the collaboration between all involved. "I'm looking forward to moving in to a new building with an elevator," she said with a smile. "Together we brought this project to this point."

Redevelopment will allow for the construction of 342 new affordable housing opportunities, 206 onsite and 136 offsite. A variety of unit types replace the existing walk-ups including a low-rise elevator building, small garden apartments, duplexes over flats, and townhouses. The new Washington Beech will have a central green space with playground equipment and park benches for children and young adults. In addition to the physical makeover, Washington Beech residents will receive a number of social services and case management programs throughout the life of the HOPE VI grant. All residents on and offsite will be eligible to participate in these programs.

All residents in Phase 1 apartments have been relocated. Construction on that side of the development began in June. Apartments will be constructed using green principles and technology, allowing for maximum energy efficiency at the site. Redevelopment will be fully completed by 2012.

This redevelopment effort is made possible in part with \$10 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds and HOPE VI funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. Other funders include the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit, HOME, Housing Stabilization and Affordable Housing Trust programs, the City of Boston's Neighborhood Housing Trust Program, the City of Boston's Department of Public Works, the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, MassHousing, The Bank of America, and private equity generated from the syndication of Low Income Housing Tax credits through RBC Capital Partners. 



Meena Carr, Councilor Consalvo and Mayor Menino are just a few who attended the demolition celebration. Meena and Councilor Consalvo are holding bricks from the demolished buildings.



Out & About



Cathedral Children get the “Key” to Success

From early September until the last week of April, eight children from the Cathedral Housing Development and surrounding area participated in the Phillips Brooks House Keylatch program for kids ages 3 to 10. This after-school program is staffed by volunteers from Harvard University.



Kids play with paper-mâché at Cathedral.

The program was held in the Community room at Cathedral from 3:00 to 5:00 Monday through Wednesday. When the day ends, the children are escorted home by the volunteers or picked up by their parents. The afternoon begins with circle time, during which the children talk about their days at school. Homework time is when the children are encouraged to do their work and ask questions. If the kids finish early, they can read a book, write a story, or practice multiplication.

After that, it’s time for arts and crafts or another fun learning activity. This particular Keylatch program was “science-based,” meaning that the lead volunteer usually comes up with a fun, creative way to teach the kids a simple science topic. One of the older children helped with the lesson plans.

“I get so familiar with the children and interacting with the parents is like interacting with my aunts and uncles,” said Karla Reyes, a sophomore at Harvard who has volunteered with Keylatch since she started school. “For me, it’s kind of a little escape from Harvard.”

Keylatch also runs a summer program that meets Monday through Friday from 8:30 to 4 at the Blackstone Elementary School. The summer program is open to children from the South End and lower Roxbury, and begins on June 29.

For more information about the Keylatch program, please contact Karla Reyes at 857-233-8745.

West Broadway Seniors Award Elderly Commission

Elderly West Broadway residents met at the Senior Center on June 29 for a luncheon with workers from the Boston Elderly Commission. The Task Force took the opportunity to award Marybeth Kelly from the Commission with a plaque thanking her for her work in the neighborhood.



From Left: Lu O’Brien, Pam Collins, BHA Administrator Bill McGonagle, Sandy Crowley, Marybeth Kelly, Betty Flaherty, Lily Berry and Mary van Gordon.



Out & About



BHA Upgrades Underground Utilities at MEM and Old Colony

The Boston Housing Authority recently awarded L M Holdings, LLC of Westford Massachusetts a contract for almost \$3 million for improvements to underground utilities at the Mary Ellen McCormack and Old Colony Developments in South Boston.

These two properties are the oldest BHA developments; Mary Ellen McCormack was constructed in 1938, followed by Old Colony in 1940. The work included in this contract will replace deficient underground sewer and storm drainage piping that has been in service for 70 years.

Because the work is underground, it will not visually impact the sites. However, these improvements will eliminate the piping problems that often result in back-ups in the buildings' basements and are a burden to residents and maintenance crews.

Construction began in May and will be completed by December of 2010. Depending on weather conditions, it is anticipated that the construction will require a shut down period of twelve to fifteen weeks during the winter of 2010.

The BSC Group of South Boston, Massachusetts is the Designer/Engineer for this project, and the BHA Capital Construction Department's Project Manager James Potvin and Construction Representative Tom Pellegrini will oversee the Construction. This project is made possible by the \$77 million in bond money the BHA received for development improvements.

BHA Police Host Crime meeting



Chief Stephen Melia addresses the crowd at the elderly/disabled crime meeting.

On Tuesday June 9, tenant leaders from elderly/disabled developments across the city met at 125 Amory Street for the quarterly crime meeting. BHA Police Chief Steve Melia hosted the meeting for an opportunity to listen to and address resident complaints and concerns. The next meeting will be held in September.



Out & About



Congratulations to everyone who graduated from the Charlestown ESOL and GED classes. Best of luck to all!



The proud graduates, their teachers and families.


Senior Choir Performs at Roslyn



Northeastern Kings Education Center Senior Concert Band and Choir.

Wednesday afternoon, May 20th, the Northeastern Kings Education Center Senior Concert Band and Choir from Canning Nova Scotia, Canada performed a live concert at the Roslyn Apartments in Roslindale. The concert consisted of show tunes, early 1920s and 1930s big band sounds and two recently composed contemporary tunes.


The band also played the Canadian National Anthem and Star Spangled Banner in preparation for their performance at Fenway Park later that evening. Many of the over 30 members of the band expressed their deep appreciation for playing for the esteemed residents of Roslyn Apartments. The Concert Band first came to Roslyn 12 years ago to perform for Roslyn residents.

On behalf of the residents, we want to thank the Band Director Ken Hassell for once again thinking of the Boston Housing Authority residents on their visit to Boston. 

BHA Teens Receive NU Scholarships




Rachel Goodman and Edmund Poon.

Congratulations to Edmund Poon (Old Colony) and Jacky Lu (Faneuil) on their acceptance to Northeastern University with a full tuition scholarship. Edmund received his award on June 10, along with 69 other Boston Public School students from across the city who received one of the scholarships Northeastern offers through seven different programs. To learn more about the BHA/NU Scholarship, contact Rachel Goodman or Mary Whouley at CSD, (617) 988-4333. 

Elderly Commission Plants Flowers at Old Colony



Task Force President, Susan Lenardis, worked with elderly residents and volunteers on Boston Shines Day

Elderly residents at Old Colony got a special treat this year for Boston Shines 2009 in April. Workers from the city's Elderly Commission came to help the residents plant flowers outside of their Senior Center. Members of the Old Colony Junior Task Force were on hand to help as well. 

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