

MAYOR MENINO CELEBRATES OPENING OF BHA'S GRANDPARENTS HOUSING PROGRAM

Last month Mayor Thomas M. Menino officially opened 15 new units of affordable, public housing in Dorchester for grandparents raising their grandchildren. The project is part of the mayor's ongoing effort to combat the city's housing crisis and also part of the Boston Housing Authority's vacancy reduction program.

John Young, of the Franklin Field Elderly Tenant Task Force, eloquently welcomed the new families. "We the residents already here at Franklin Field extend our arms forward to you in a warm embrace and sing out in a chorus of love: welcome home," offered Young.

"Not only is this project bringing back vacant public housing apartments, but it is also providing a necessary service for grandparents raising grandchildren in our city," said Mayor Menino. "The number of grandparents raising their grandchildren is steadily increasing and this program will bring needed affordable housing to these families."

The two-bedroom apartments consist of twelve townhouse-style units and three single level units, one of which is accessible. The units were originally thirty-two one-bedroom, long-term vacant public housing apartments, which were renovated and reconstructed to suit the needs of grandfamilies. The first families moved in on November 15.

"I love it," said Luz Troncoso, upon emerging from her new apartment with her grandson, Angel Salcedo, after their first tour.

Bettie Cutler and Monserrate Pagan discovered they would be neighbors when they simultaneously rushed up the steps after receiving the keys to their front doors. "We're neighbors," exclaimed Cutler.

As part of its vacancy reduction campaign, the BHA has renovated hundreds of long-term vacant

apartments including 71 units at Mary Ellen McCormack in South Boston, 136 at Cathedral in the South End, approximately 69 units at Bromley-Heath in Jamaica Plain and 43 units at Orient Heights in East Boston.

"We have made great strides in occupying vacant public housing units during the last several years and are very happy to be here today. Part of that effort included the apartments for grandfamilies at Franklin Field Elderly," said BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez.

The Franklin Field development has more than 400 apartments (both state and federally funded) for families and elderly/disabled residents. The Grandparents Housing Program was funded by the state Department of Housing and Community Development for approximately \$2.9 million.

"The occurrence of grandparents assuming the responsibility of raising younger generations is steadily on the rise, making housing opportunities

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Mayor Menino officially opens the BHA Grandparents Housing Program.

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COMMUNITY SERVICES DEBUTS THE WASHINGTON BEECH RESOURCE & DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Despite pouring rain, over 100 residents came out to take part in the Washington Beech Unity Day celebration.

The Caribbean Explosion Dancers and a DJ performed while residents came together around delicious food. BHA's Community Services Department also used the day to formally launch the new Washington-Beech Resource and Development Center staffed by María Chávez, Resident Services Coordinator.

As part of that effort, she invited community organizations/partners to join the celebration, including:

Greater Roslindale Medical & Dental Center, Boston Public Schools, One with One, Boston Medical Health Net Plan, Committee for Boston Public Housing, GirlStars, Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration, and Boston EMS.

There is a wide range of resources and information available for the residents who enroll in the new program. Residents will work with Chávez to identify goals, actions, and strategies to achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Residents can access detailed information regarding GED, English to Speakers of Other

Languages (ESOL), job readiness, financial awareness, health and well-being, legal services, employment listings, and training opportunities.

Job search, job readiness, job fairs, open houses and community collaborations for economic development are some of the programs being offered on-site.

To date, Chávez, working closely with the management at Washington-Beech, has helped 17 residents pursue job leads, skills training and ESL programs. In early October, Chávez and Washington-Beech residents participated in the Autumn Job Fair, co-sponsored by the BHA, the Boston Career Link, and Saint Elizabeth's Medical

Center. Approximately fifty BHA residents met with local employers and training providers.

Chávez believes in the potential of the program and it is evident in her work. "We have already enrolled a number of residents into Jewish Vocational Service and other area training programs and we are anxiously awaiting final confirmation of our first three job placements! I'm confident that there are many more successes to come."

For more information or for an appointment, contact María del Carmen Chávez at (617) 988-4356 or maria.chavez@bostonhousing.org.



(L to R) Mar a Ch vez, CSD Resident Services Coordinator, Anita Webb and Mike Russell, from One with One, Rae Robinson and Lee Strunin, of GirlStars attend the Washington-Beech Unity Day Celebration.



Mayor Menino celebrates opening of BHA's Grandparents Housing Program *continued from page 1*

such as this more critical than ever" said DHCD Director Jane Wallis Gumble. "We are pleased to work in partnership with the City of Boston to help make this important project a reality."

The BHA decided to develop its own Grandparents Housing Program after contributing Section 8 vouchers to the Dorchester Grandfamilies

House, developed by Boston Aging Concerns, the YWCA and Women's Institute for Housing and Economic Development. The BHA also recently partnered with Boston Aging Concerns and the Home for Little Wanderers by providing 40 project-based vouchers to create affordable apartments for foster families and grandparents.

NEW GARDEN AT OLD COLONY TO HONOR NEIGHBORHOOD CARETAKER

John Berlandi would snake a garden hose from his wife's washing machine through the window of their building at the Old Colony development to wash the walkway and water the garden almost every day. He was renowned throughout the neighborhood for the attention and love he lavished upon the oft forgotten East Courtyard. In 1993, Berlandi suffered a fatal heart attack while reeling the hose back into the building one sweltering summer day. He was 80 years old.

Due to environmental regulations, the BHA recently removed a defunct oil tank from the ground beneath the courtyard. The Authority used this opportunity to completely rebuild the East courtyard from building to building. New landscaping with trees, flowers, grass, sidewalks and fencing, is planned to replace the cracked concrete and patches of dirt in the courtyard, which has never been the same since Berlandi's passing. In order to complete this project it was necessary to remove many of the human touches bestowed upon the space by Berlandi. The BHA's arborist discovered that many of the trees were dead and the bushes past their prime.

During the ongoing construction project, residents of the surrounding community were quite outspoken about his enduring focus on this little piece of the city. Many wanted to see Berlandi's legacy

honored. Therefore, the Boston Housing Authority dedicated the new garden in the East Courtyard to John C. Berlandi.

BHA Deputy Administrator Bill McGonagle was on hand to help dedicate the garden earlier this month. "As the manager of the Old Colony housing development in the early 80s, I remember with great fondness my conversations with John. I'd often stop by to chat while he was tending his garden. He was a good and decent man. I am pleased we are able to dedicate this garden in his memory," McGonagle recalled.

Berlandi was born in Boston in 1913. After graduating high school, he went on to marry and have a son, John Berlandi, Jr. Berlandi was divorced when he met his second wife Rosemary, a widow, who lived in the Old Colony Development. They were married in the late 70s, and John moved in. Immediately Berlandi began to take an interest in the maintenance of Building B and its adjacent courtyard. Rosemary often joked, "You should work for the housing authority."

While not picking up litter, raking leaves, planting rose bushes, watering the grass, or "chasing kids away," Berlandi worked as a contractor with his son and as a Zamboni (ice rink maintenance machine) driver at the old Boston Garden. The John C. Berlandi garden was dedicated on December 3.



TWELVE WOMEN BECOME RESIDENT HEALTH ADVOCATES

Twelve BHA residents from throughout the city celebrated the completion of eight weeks of training as part of the new Resident Health Advocate program. Staff from the BHA Community Services Department, the Boston University School of Public Health and the Boston Public Health Commission were on hand to present each graduate with a diploma certifying the completion of Phase I of the program. The students touched on many topics during the 32 sessions, including: health assessment models, leadership skills, cultural competence, outreach education, navigating the health care system,



The following residents completed Phase I of the Resident Health Advocate program: Carolyn King (Bromley-Heath), Olivia Martin (Cathedral), Perfecta Laboy (Charlestown), Sindy Perez (Commonwealth), Marilyn Mills (Franklin Field), Ambar Naranjo (Old Colony), Livys Calderon (Archdale), Masheda Little, Debra Brown, Brennetta Brown, Micheline Venette and Christine Jean (Maverick).

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BHA STAFF WELCOMES NEW BOSTONIANS

In September the Mayor's Office for New Bostonians, along with many other city agencies and community organizations, sponsored its yearly event at City Hall Plaza. This community day allows the city to welcome Boston's newest residents and introduce the various public services available at City Hall and throughout the city. Tours of the various city departments and agencies were conducted, and public interaction with department heads occurred throughout the day. City councilors were also invited to participate in the event.

Sounds of Andean music filled the tent in front of City Hall, which hosts the Enchanted Village during the winter season. Brochures in several languages — which explained things as varied as the intricacies of city government, healthcare, and recycling — were stacked on most of the tables lining the inside of the tent. Food from around the world accompanied the information displays and free health exams.

BHA's Community Services Department has participated successfully in this event since its

inception three years ago. The BHA provided multilingual literature and staff to man a table at the event. Those in search of information had their questions answered quickly and honestly by trained BHA staff.

Raul Solano, of Community Services, praised the work of those who elected to work the event on behalf of the BHA.

"BHA staff participation was exceptional and the volunteers performed their functions very well. The number of BHA staff participation was more than adequate and punctual, providing valuable help to the event," said Solano.

Wendolyne Rivera from Leased Housing, Alaesa Walker, Diane Khoury, Man Choi, Ruth Santiago, Nancy Lagoa and Brenda Lowery from Occupancy, Juan Gonzalez from Community Services, Sandra Henriquez and Maya Hasegawa from Administration, and Chu Le from Civil Rights all participated in, or helped prepare for, the New Bostonians event at City Hall Plaza.



Man Choi, Chu Le from Civil Rights; and Ruth Santiago (L to R) help out at New Bostonians Day.



Twelve women become resident health advocates continued from page 3

asthma, first aid, nutrition for life, mental health, depression, stress, and STDs.

During Phase II, the graduates will continue their training in four separate programs. The *GirlStars* program will target girls at the Archdale and Washington-Beech developments and is designed to introduce girls to structured physical/recreational activities. Those in the *General Health Advocates*

Program will create a team of public housing residents to inform and advocate for other residents at the developments. Others will tackle *Family Health Promotion*. The remaining graduates will be a part of the *Cancer Screening Program*. For more information contact Rachel Goodman at (617) 988-4021 or Kate Bennett at (617) 988-4108 (TTY 800-545-1833 x420).

New Employees:

Richard Carr, *Vacancy Rehab* • Michael Cerundolo, *Old Colony* • Thomas Connaughton, *Gallivan* • Albert Fritz, *Orient Heights* • Irma Gomes, *Capital Construction* • Edward Monroe, Jr., *Charlestown*

WEST BROADWAY DEVELOPMENT TO GET LONG OVERDUE FACE LIFT

In early December, the BHA held a ceremony to celebrate the commencement of the long-awaited West Broadway redevelopment. State and city officials, local politicians, residents and BHA staff were on hand to watch the wrecking ball swing. This exciting project includes the reconstruction of 133 public housing apartments.

Environmental Demolition Services has been selected to demolish the abandoned buildings fronting West Broadway and the former BHA Police Station beginning later this month. After demolition, new buildings will rise, new parks and gardens will grow, and new streets will be laid.

"The community of South Boston has waited a long time to see this stretch of West Broadway rejuvenated, and we are proud to announce this exciting and positive step toward the completion of this project. I want to thank all of the BHA and DHCD staff who worked hard to secure funding for this redevelopment," said BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez.

The creative funding for the project will include bond sales, tax credits, city funding, and Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) capital and operating subsidies. The BHA and DHCD selected ICON Architecture to design the new apartments. The new buildings will sit closer to the sidewalk on West Broadway and feature exterior details designed to complement the surrounding neighborhood. Construction is expected to begin in June, with

occupancy expected in late 2004. The new apartments will replace 244 long-term vacant and boarded up units at West Broadway. These are the last long-term vacant units at that site, and part of Mayor Menino's

"Leading the Way Strategy." The construction cost of the Phase 4 redevelopment is approximately \$29 million.

The new housing units at the West Broadway Development will provide clean and safe housing for families of low and moderate income in the City of Boston and will complete the redevelopment of the South Boston site. Eligible

residents will have an income less than 80% of Area Median Income (AMI), with 15% of residents having an income between 60%-80% of AMI and 85% having an income below 60% of AMI. There will be a development specific waiting list so that potential residents may apply for housing at West Broadway on-site.

The new buildings closer to West Broadway will be three stories, blending in with the nearby street line. The buildings to the south, facing a new Silver Street extension, will be only two stories. Landscaped gardens and courtyards will fill the space between the buildings. A portion of the site, at the corner of D Street and West Broadway, is already occupied by the Labouré Social Service Center, which provides social services to the South Boston community. The BHA Department of Public Safety is relocating to a new station in Jamaica Plain to allow for the demolition of the former station on West Broadway.



The north elevation from West Broadway is shown at top, while the south elevation from the reconstructed New Silver Street is shown at the bottom.



EARLY RETIREMENT PARTY HELD IN DORCHESTER

Thirty-two long-time BHA employees retired at the end of September as a result of the Early Retirement Incentive Program. A party was held to commemorate and offer thanks for the commitment, dedication and hard work that these employees gave to the BHA. A great time was had by all and all of the retirees will be greatly missed. Pictured at the retirement party are retirees (back row, L to R) Richard LeBlanc, James Orlando, Rupert Walcott, Johnnie Gorham, Edwin Roth, William Wormstead (front row, L to R), Margarette Dukes, Teresa Murphy, Marguerite Young, Priscilla Queally, William Keady, and Peter Suffredini.



JOB WELL DONE

As we wish **Terry Murphy** good luck on her retirement, we welcome **Carol McCaffrey** to her new position of Assistant Director of Property Management as Private Management.

Ron Marlow, on behalf of the Community Services Department (CSD), thanks staff who assisted in recruitment efforts for the **Resident Health Advocate Program**: **Bob MacGregor, Beta Batista, George McGrath, Bethany Kirby, Kellie Dean, Michelle Feliz, Joan Shea, Joanne Moore, Jennifer Haynes, Ruth Barkley, Angel Lopez, Esther McPherson, Patricia Barry, Alan Feinberg, Raysa Tapia, Gicela Castro, Gloribell Mota, Rachel Goodman, Greg Davis, María Chávez** and **Mary Whouley**.

Officer Thomas Fay and Officer Timothy Brady of the BHA Police Department are both in line to receive official commendations for bravery and outstanding police work following an incident this **September**. Fay and Brady, while patrolling the Cathedral development and looking for suspected drug activity, confronted a man who was found to be in possession of crack cocaine. When Fay and Brady attempted to place the suspect under arrest, he struggled and managed to break free and flee the scene. After a lengthy foot pursuit, the two officers apprehended the man in Blackstone Park. After booking, it was revealed that the suspect, Lamarr Wyatt, was wanted in New Jersey for the shooting of a police officer with the officer's own weapon. Wyatt was also wanted in Pennsylvania for allegedly using that gun to shoot someone else. Through the hard work of Officers Fay and Brady, a dangerous situation was successfully quelled and a man wanted for violent crimes was removed from the Cathedral development and the streets of Boston.

Gwen Friend and Operations wish **Ron Marlow** good luck as he moves on to the Massachusetts Association of CDCs. We welcome **Rachel Goodman** to the role of Director of CSD.

At Washington-Beech there was a fire in an apartment. **Bob MacGregor** thanks the following staff for help during this incident: **Milton Hunt, Dwight**

Watson, David McDonald, Joseph Champagne, Ronald White, Jorge Navarro, Fabian Ortega, Roy Williams, Mark Tuttle, Frank Tringali, Carol McCaffrey, Gene Volosevich and BHA Police Officer **Skippy Martin**.

The **Risk Management Department** thanks **Linda Fahy**, landscape coordinator, for her hard work at the Franklin Field Site Improvement Project.

Stephanie Uftring thanks the Retirement Party Committee, especially **Richard L'Europa**, for all of their help, commitment and dedication.

Cheryl Girvan, manager at the Codman development, thanks staff, especially **Russell Radcliffe**, for hard work during the electrical outage last month.

Kate Bennett, Director of Planning, thanks everyone involved in the successful effort to secure a \$500,000 grant from the **Mass Tech Collaborative** for green building measures at the reconstructed Maverick development.

Joan Shea, manager at Franklin Field, thanks **Bobby Burgess**, crew leader; **Eddie Curran**, crew leader; **T.C. Woods**, crew leader; **Ricky Ortiz; Vitol Brutus; Artermio Hernandez; Graylan Hart; Eddie Anderson; Al Simmons; Raphael Gonzalez; Billy Perez; J.G.; Carlos Velasquez; Donald Graham; Denise Murphy; Linda Fahy** and **Bill Wuschke** for help in preparing for the opening of the Grandparents Housing Program.

The Risk Management Center thanks **Denise Murphy, Hugh Donovan, Jim Fenton, Bill Wuschke, Kellie Dean, Jim McCarthy, Tony Cunningham, Wanda Roldan, Lori Luce, Francis Heywood, Esther McPherson, Michael Holmes** and **Joe Allen** for assistance with the Risk Management University.

Gwen Friend and **Rachel Goodman** thank the following staff for helping to make **Washington Beech's Unity Day** such a success: **Bob MacGregor, Beta Batista, Frank Tringali, Dwight Watson, Joe Champagne, María Chávez, and Greg Davis**. Thanks also go to the **Washington Beech Tenant Task Force**.

BHA EMBARKS ON AMBITIOUS *ACCESS BHA* PLAN TO CREATE 367 ACCESSIBLE APARTMENTS

The Boston Housing Authority recently signed a voluntary compliance agreement (VCA) with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. This agreement requires the BHA to make 5% of its citywide units, and all of its common spaces, handicapped accessible within 5 years. The District of Columbia Housing Authority and the New York City Housing Authority have also signed VCAs with HUD. In Boston, the BHA has also agreed to make policy and procedural changes in order to make the agency more accessible. The entire plan has been dubbed *Access BHA*, and is a complicated and capital-intensive project.

Beginning in mid-November, the BHA began to implement a new communication protocol. These carefully developed guidelines provide clear and understandable standards and rules for all documentation produced by the authority. The TTY number, a special telephone device used by hearing-impaired individuals, will be included beside all authority telephone numbers. Mailings to elderly and disabled residents will be printed in easier to read text, and provided in alternative formats upon request.

The BHA has also crafted new resident accessibility policies. These policies clearly articulate what assistance disabled residents are entitled to and how to go about obtaining it. These services range from help with trash removal to an inaccessible dumpster, to aid with a tripped circuit breaker after a power failure. These policies will allow BHA staff to provide an alternative to physical accessibility improvements, where these enhancements are not feasible.

Training sessions for BHA staff will cover the new communication protocol, resident accessibility policies, and procedures for reasonable accommodations.

However, the largest part of the *Access BHA* plan is the creation of the new handicapped accessible units. During the past few months, the BHA has conducted several public meetings at elderly/disabled developments. Residents were given an opportunity to discuss the upcoming reconstruction of elderly/

disabled units at Frederick Douglass, Hampton House, Washington Manor, Hassan, Lower Mills, and Pasciucco. Similar meetings will be held at other developments prior to the commencement of construction.

The first phase of reconstruction at the family developments, Commonwealth, Charlestown, Franklin Hill, Lenox, and Franklin Field, is scheduled to commence in 2003. Meetings to finalize the plan for these sites are currently underway.

The developments selected for improvements under the *Access BHA* plan will provide easy access to public transportation, hospitals and other community amenities. The design of the buildings and the developments, as well as cost, also influenced which sites were selected for the new accessible units.

The expense of the *Access BHA* physical improvements will unfortunately delay previously planned capital projects at some of the developments. BHA staff will keep residents and resident leaders informed of any necessary changes in capital improvement plans.

When completed the BHA will have approximately 680 accessible apartments citywide. There is a consistent and unmet need within the current BHA resident and applicant population for accessible apartments. Some who require accessible units are living in non-accessible flats, while those on the wait list who need the units often endure a long wait. In addition the Boston Housing Authority hired an independent consultant to complete a comprehensive survey of area housing patterns. The consultant concluded that 4.8% of families eligible for public housing in Greater Boston are in need of accessible units. To raise public awareness of the new apartments, the BHA will conduct an extensive outreach program through regional advocacy organizations.

For more information on the *Access BHA* project see: <http://www.bostonhousing.org/detpages/rservices336.html>



Members of the West Broadway community await the arrival of trick or treaters on Halloween evening.

BHA DIVERSITY THEATRE DEBUTS AT THE STRAND

At press time, youth from BHA developments and other communities throughout the Boston area were preparing to present the award winning play *SKIN* at the Strand Theatre in Dorchester on December 6. This is the first production by the BHA Diversity Theatre, and part of an ongoing effort to address tolerance and diversity at the BHA.

SKIN was written by Dennis Foon of Vancouver, Canada and has won the Governor-Generals' Award for Drama, Chalmers Children's Play Awards, and the Jessie Richardson Theatre Awards. The play is licensed by Green Thumb Theatre for Young People, one of Canada's leading theatre companies for youth.

Justin Stephens, an African-American teen who plays a teacher who discriminates against blacks, calls it a "good experience." "I want to see how it feels to be treated like this so I can avoid it when it happens to me," said Stephens. "Instead of being teased, I'm the one doing the teasing."

In this exciting production, the issues of race discrimination and acceptance dominate the stage as delicate and often unspoken social stereotypes are interpreted and attacked through the eyes and hearts of the young cast members. Local youth, ages 12-18, from neighborhoods throughout the city are rehearsing for this unforgettable artistic display of tolerance, growth, and redemption. About half of the youth cast are BHA residents, while the other half live near BHA developments. Some cast members are the children of BHA staff.

"I am very pleased to announce this new endeavor by the BHA," said Sandra Henriquez, BHA Administrator. "This effort represents yet another milestone in the BHA's efforts to bring residents together

and develop better understanding of our differences and similarities through various forms of diversity activities."



Staff in the BHA's Civil Rights Department chose to launch a "Diversity Theatre" program and produce the play as a fun and creative way to educate youth and BHA residents about diversity issues within their communities.

Dawn Hadley, Civil Rights Specialist and Co-Producer/Director of *SKIN* is confident in both the production and the youth involved. "The rehearsals are going well. The

teens get along with each other and are amazingly motivated and committed. As they practice scenes, the actors feel uncomfortable playing the role of an oppressor as well as being victimized. Therefore, the play is achieving its objective by demonstrating that discrimination is uncomfortable no matter who dishes it out or who receives it," said Hadley. "The performers, their families and friends, and residents are all gaining a deeper respect and understanding of differences as well as an appreciation of the many things we have in common."

In addition to honing their acting skills, youth involved in the Diversity Theatre are receiving training on theatre development, diversity issues and team building. Each rehearsal incorporates activities and homework that develops the youths' understanding in these three areas. The rehearsal schedule is very demanding, and the cast members are committed to three two-hour rehearsals per week for one month.

"Local area teenagers, many of whom live in BHA housing, committed themselves to an educational performance, focusing on race relations, that challenges the mind and soul," said Michelle Ekanem, BHA Civil Rights Specialist and Co-Producer/Director of *SKIN*.

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The BHA Communications Committee advises the editor, guides content for BHA Today and works on other BHA communications related issues. Active committee members are Declan Breslin/Public Safety; Brenda Cora/Elderly; Christine Curry/Elderly; Barbara Donovan/Purchasing; Morris Flood/Budget; Peg Kennedy/Elderly; Jim LaCroix/Elderly; Steve Melia/Public Safety; Bernice Ryner/Leased Housing Inspections; and Joshua Mello/Communications.

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