

Orchard Gardens Teen as Good as Gold

The closest most 15-year-olds get to experience Ancient Greece, is reading about it in a textbook. Most teenagers can only dream about seeing the Acropolis up close or sailing down the Aegan Sea, but for one Orchard Gardens teen those dreams became a reality.



Renata Caines was selected as one of two winners in the Olympic Spirit Essay Contest sponsored by John Hancock to attend the 2004 Olympic games in Greece. The contest was open to all Boston public high school students and in addition to the trip to Athens, the company provided finalists with a \$10,000 scholarship for all four years of college.

In her essay Renata wrote about Maritza Correia, the first black woman to make the United States Olympic Swim Team. In Greece, Renata

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BHA Elderly to Receive Computers

BHA elderly and disabled residents will receive state-of-the-art computer equipment thanks to IBM and the Democratic National Convention (DNC). Mayor Menino announced the redeployment of computers used at the DNC during a two-part event at the O'Bryant School and Dr. Martin Luther King Towers Development in Roxbury. The gift from IBM comes complete with free access to special web adaptation software that allows elderly residents to increase the size of text,

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Food Pantry Program Flourishes at Orient Heights

One week of every month a truck from Project Bread rolls to a stop in front of the Orient Heights Development's Community Center, delivering meals for low-income families. The food pantry program is extremely popular at the East Boston site, attracting approximately 70 families each month.

Families come from as far away as Lynn to receive the packages that usually include cereal, canned goods, juice, vegetables, fruits and more. Distribution depends on the size of the family, and participants can come back more than once during the week.

Mary Medina has headed the food pantry operation at the site for the past three years and has gotten to know many of the regulars. "I pretty much know everyone now," she said. "Some of the older people are a little nervous as first, but once they find out there is no catch, they come back."

The process is simple. Participants must show proof of income and fill out an application and they can then take part in the program at no cost to them.

As long as they meet the requirements nobody is turned away. "We don't say no to anybody," ensured Maria.

Similar programs exist at other BHA sites across the city. Contact your Task Force to see if your development runs a food pantry.

RAB honors BHA Administrator

Co-chair of the Boston Resident Advisory Board Philip Askew has traveled around the country meeting with RAB groups and tenant organizations to preach voter registration and to discuss issues and policies that directly impact public housing residents and Section 8 participants. During his journeys one thing has stuck out: "Every time I would come back home, I would report to the board and tell them how lucky we are to have Sandi Henriquez here at the BHA," he said.

The Boston RAB recently presented Henriquez with a certificate of appreciation honoring her "unwavering support of the Resident Advisory Board."

"There are so many issues where she comes down on the residents' side," explained Askew. "While other housing authorities are selling their residents out, Sandi is always helping us."

Askew cites several examples of times in which Henriquez has fought policies proposed by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development that would have had adverse effects on public housing and Section 8 residents in Boston. Henriquez vigorously protested the federal cuts to the PHDEP program, which provided funding for

after school activities. She also opposed the idea of "block granting" Section 8 vouchers, which would have given housing authorities a sum of money instead of a fixed dollar amount based on each unit.

Henriquez, who has been with the Boston Housing Authority for eight years, appreciated the award. "I'm always very grateful to receive recognition like this from our residents," she explained. "Along with my staff, my primary goal is to serve our residents and advocate for them so we are able to keep Boston affordable, while continuing to find innovative ways to provide services in spite of federal cutbacks."



Washington Beech Youth Unveil Community Murals

Washington Beech youth recently unveiled two community murals, one of which was available for public viewing at Boston City Hall. The mural was displayed at City Hall for ten days in late September and was hung permanently in the BHA's administrative offices at 52 Chauncy Street in early October. The second mural was hung at Washington Beech during an October 2 event, organized by the Washington Beech resident FFUN (Family and Friends Uniting Neighbors) committee.

The depictions on the murals (see photos) were planned by Washington Beech youth, the FFUN



committee, artist Kevin Jameel Parker and two teen peer assistant artists, Tiffany Fitzgerald and James Buford. BHA youth that participated are Christopher Paez, Joseph President, and Dexter and Isaac

Carr. The project was made possible through Art a la Carte, a program of Federated Dorchester Neighborhood Houses, Inc. Funding came from the National Endowment for the Arts and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Creative Communities Initiative. Federated uses this program, not only for art's sake, but also to connect people with their families and communities, other cultures, and educational and employment opportunities.

According to Maria Chavez, CSD's Services Coordinator at Washington Beech, "The mural project was one of our first collaborations with artists, teens and the whole community; everyone working together to create something we can all be proud of!"

Amory Task Force Hosts BHA Staff

"We want to thank all of you, Amory Street has come a long way," said Task Force President Ernie Powell, at a recent appreciation lunch for BHA employees. Powell proceeded to name individual BHA staff members and thank them for specific things they have done to assist residents. He also recognized past task force members who have made a positive contribution to the development.

"This is the first time at the BHA where a task force has done a thank you lunch for staff," said BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez. "I'm totally struck. Thank you for being a part of this; it's wonderful to hear what you have to say."



Affordable Housing Units Open in the South End

In 2001 the Boston Housing Authority designated properties at 282 Columbus Avenue, 68 West Concord Avenue and 564 and 688 Massachusetts Avenue to Madison Park Community Development Corporation and Haley House, Inc. so that they could be completely rehabilitated. The result is 69 affordable rental units for low- and moderate-income families located in historic South End buildings.



“Not only does this project bring about the renovation of 69 affordable apartments in the city, it also provides for their long-term viability, preserves historically important structures and ensures that they will remain affordable for years to come,” said BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez.

At the ribbon cutting to officially declare the completion of the buildings, Governor Mitt Romney praised the cooperation between the City of Boston and the State of Massachusetts in making the project a reality.

“It’s a great thing when the city and state can come together,” Romney said. “We still have a ways to go, but the key to being able to substantially increase our housing starts is not to build more McMansions, but rather, affordable and moderate income multifamily dwellings around Massachusetts.”

Mayor Thomas M. Menino echoed the Governor’s sentiments. “When we work together we can accomplish anything,” he said.

State Representative Byron Rushing lauded the efforts of the entire community over the years. He explained that, “this should be an example of what cities should be like.”

The neighborhood reflects a group of people of different incomes and races living together in the same community. By preserving affordable housing through ventures such as this one, many politicians and residents agree that diversity will continue to flourish and the City of Boston will remain open to everyone.



Computers

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removes distracting items from web pages and technology that will read text aloud to those who have trouble seeing or reading. Each site that receives computers will receive a printer as well.

At the event, residents took advantage of some individual attention, learning the basics of “surfing the web” and the special software that allows them greater access to information on the Internet.

Boston Housing Authority Elderly Developments will receive approximately 25 computers to be distributed among some of its sites, including Holgate, MLK Jr. Towers, Roslyn, and the Franklin Field Grandfamilies Program in Dorchester.

The donation of computers to elderly developments was one component of the “Technology ‘Ofor’ Program, in which more than 600 IBM computers used at the DNC were donated to schools and community centers across the City of Boston.

More than 600 Attend Elderly Health Fair

On Wednesday, August 18, 2004, the Elderly and Disabled Housing Program's Resident Services Department, under the direction of Alfred Davis and in collaboration with the Boston Public Health Commission's REACH 2010 Program and Boston's Elderly Affairs Commission, hosted a very successful health awareness event entitled: "An Affair for Life." The event took place at Blackstone Park, in the South End.

The objectives of the event were to identify elderly and disabled African-Americans that do not have primary care physicians and to outreach to diverse populations and service providers in order to coordinate seniors with services available to them in the South End community.



assignment to a primary care physician at Boston Medical Center.

Highlights of the event included a box lunch for all participants and entertainment by local jazz artist, Ms. Eula Lawrence.

Special thanks for the success of the event are given to the 14 health and service agencies, which consisted of: Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD), Boston Elderly Commission, Boston Healthy Start, Boston Public Health Center, Boston University Alzheimer Disease Center, Boston University Geriatric Services Department, Casa Myrna Vazquez, Children's Hospital Early Intervention Department, Greater Boston Aid to the Blind, Little Brothers Friends of the Elderly, REACH Boston Elders 2010, South End Community Health Center, South End Neighborhood Assistance Program (SNAP), Veteran's Affairs Health Care Department

Lastly, a group that really enhanced the event was the young people from the Boston Center for Youth and Families/Metro Boston Live Program. Their pleasant and energetic assistance really helped to put smiles on faces and to achieve the goal of serving the large number of people in attendance. Those young people consisted of: Sasha Bullock, Knottia Carrigan, Shartera Carrigan, Tiahna Jones, Tiesha Long-James, Ronald McClain, Shawday Mercer, Amita Peete and Irene Depina.

Regina Dennis contributed this story



The providers were multi-linguistic in order to handle the diversity of residents and the general public.

More than 600 people attended the daylong event and 200 people completed "Health Report Cards," which will be used in the REACH report to the Centers for Disease Control. The "Health Report Cards" are a part of our continuing goals for REACH. Recent studies show that African-Americans are treated differently by the health care system in all parts of the country. The event supported efforts to close this health gap with information from African-Americans. In addition, twenty-five individuals were identified as being without any primary care. These individuals were offered further testing and

Mayor Announces Completion of 10 New, Affordable Homes in Roxbury

On August 6, Mayor Thomas M. Menino announced the completion of 10 new, affordable homeownership units in Roxbury as part of the Forest Greenville Homes Project. The project involved the rehabilitation of 10-five bedroom duplexes, which are to be sold as affordable housing to first-time homebuyers.

“Affordable housing continues to be a high priority for the City of Boston,” said Mayor Menino. “It is important for families from all walks of life to be able to own their own homes so they can be a permanent part of the neighborhoods and communities of this city.”

The units, constructed by Nuestra Comunidad Community Development Corporation, are part of the offsite portion of the Orchard Gardens HOPE VI redevelopment and are benefiting from a contribution of \$588,589 in federal HOPE VI funds made available through the Boston Housing Authority and the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. Construction began on August 11, 2003 and was completed in mid-August.

“Initiatives like these help ensure that Boston will continue to be a city that is open to everyone,” said BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez. “With more affordable housing, families will be able to share in the vibrancy of Boston.”

The homes were sold through a public lottery and prices ranged from \$115,000 to \$155,000. The properties are located at 16, 17, 17A, 18, 19, and 19A Forest Street and 12, 16, 19, and 19A Greenville Street in Roxbury.

In addition to BHA and HUD funding, the project also received \$497,340 from the state’s Department of Housing and Community Development; \$610,000 from the Local Initiatives Support Corporation; \$720,000 from the Boston Community Loan Fund and \$95,000 from the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation.



Wentworth Students Lend a Helping Hand at Alice Taylor

One hundred Freshmen Wentworth students volunteered their time, performing some general landscape care work with the staff at Alice Taylor on Friday September 3. Wentworth also generously donated some fall flowers that the students and staff planted throughout the property.

The event, which was a collaborative effort between Alice Taylor Property Management staff, BHA Operations Staff, the Resident Task Force and Wentworth Community Service/Learning staff, was very successful.

The work that these students accomplished, greatly assisted us in enhancing the overall curb appeal of this Development and contributed to building and promoting positive community teamwork in this neighborhood.

Linda Fahy contributed this story

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was able to meet her inspiration after Correia won a silver medal in the 400-meter relay.

In addition to meeting her idol, John Hancock provided Renata and her mother with access to many other high-profile sporting events. They were able to see Carly Patterson dazzle the judges with her gold medal performance in the women's gymnastics all-around competition. They were in attendance for gymnast Paul Hamm's controversial gold medal and they met two Massachusetts Olympian medallists, Jimmy Pedro and Tyler Hamilton.

Renata and her mother were also treated to a cruise to the island of Hydras and had all accommodations paid for by John Hancock.

After winning a highly competitive contest and touring the birthplace of the Olympic games, what's next for this ambitious teen? Upon graduation, Renata hopes to attend Columbia University in New York City.



Renata poses with her inspiration, Olympic Silver Medalist Maritza Correia

An Excerpt from Renata's Award-Winning Essay

"I consider Maritza a role model because she is different – a leader not a follower – she became somebody. I believe that I am sort of like her in a way. I'm just a girl of Hispanic descent trying to become somebody against the odds. There are many ways I can use Olympic values in my own personal life. The Olympic value I use most in my life is perseverance..."

I learned about perseverance from my mother, who has persevered even with her illnesses while single-handedly taking care of me and my younger sister. She has stayed strong even while dealing with thyroid cancer for which she has had to have many surgeries and a bout of radiation. She was also diagnosed with C.R.E.S.T. which is a rare form of scleroderma. Leadership is a quality everyone has but only a few choose to show it. In my life I can use leadership to show other people that nothing is impossible and with perseverance they can reach their goals. Respect is the most important value not only an Olympian, but everyone should have. I have learned by personal experience that without respect for myself and others I can't make it anywhere..."

Orchard Residents Graduate from Operation A.B.L.E.

Residents from Orchard Gardens participated in an intense 16-week program to learn computer skills, job skills, and more as part of Operation A.B.L.E.

Group members displayed a great deal of determination and perseverance in graduating. They had classes four nights a week and for six hours on Saturday.



Old Colony Reopens Youth Center

After the Boston Housing Authority lost federal funding for its youth programs, the Old Colony Youth Center fell into disuse. The space remained vacant except for occasional meetings and the annual Christmas party and the center was often broken into and vandalized.

"It was so dilapidated," said Task Force President Lacreteria Greene. "It wasn't being taken care of."

But a meeting between Ms. Greene and BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez turned things around.

"I had wanted to do something about the youth center for a long time and when I talked about it with Sandra things got going quickly," explained Lacreteria. "If it weren't for her this wouldn't have happened."

The task force and a number of volunteers worked to outfit the building with an array of new furniture and games. Thanks to the donations of generous individuals in the community, the center now features an air hockey table, ping-pong table, pool table, toys for children, books, and much more.

September 15 was the grand opening of the youth center and the community came out to support the efforts of everyone involved. "It was standing room only," noted Lacreteria.

"The turnout was great," she continued. "Residents want this because it's for the kids."

With the center now open, the task force seeks volunteers to help staff and supervise activities. They already host a weekly event called "Mommy and Me," in which mothers can come with their kids and sit and talk while their children play in a safe environment. It is held every Tuesday from 10:00 am-12:00 pm, and is open to families with children up to four years old.

In addition, they have also established a partnership with the South Boston Neighborhood House. The organization provides the Old Colony Youth Center with a youth worker and makes a van available for off-site activities. The task force has also partnered with the Perkins School. The principal has pledged to offer assistance with an after school homework program in which teachers will be on site to aide students. A collaboration has been forged with a librarian to provide books and a reading time for children.

But the task force has much more envisioned for the center.

"The goal is to have the youth center open five days a week, but we need volunteers for that to happen," said Ms. Greene. "We'd like to have apple picking trips, pumpkin carving contests, thanksgiving celebrations and Christmas parties."

If you are interested in volunteering your time or donating items to the new youth center please contact the Old Colony Tenant Task Force at octaskforce@hotmail.com



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