

Washington-Beech Gets a Facelift as Part of Citywide Serve-a-thon

They arrived by bus, train and automobile; young children, senior citizens, high school kids, college students, corporate teams and non-profit agencies, 200 in all, with one common goal: to serve their community. The volunteers, clad in red jackets, descended on the Washington-Beech Development in Roslindale to participate in the 15th Annual City Year Serve-a-thon on Saturday, October 25.



Volunteers from the City Year Serve-a-thon at Washington-Beech. Over 80 residents participated in the event.

Participants worked tirelessly in the cool fall air, from 9:30 am until 3:30 pm, to renovate and improve much of the 268-unit development. Among other projects, the volunteers revamped 14 elderly units, livened up the cement with drawings, painted the teen center, added new lines for the basketball court and refurbished the guardrails and tree guards.

"We have people helping out who are in high school, as well as people in their 70's," said Deb Burke, National Individual Giving Manager for City Year, of the diverse group of volunteers. "Our sponsors and volunteers both do an amazing job."



BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez poses for a picture with volunteers who helped revitalize Washington-Beech

The crew of volunteers certainly left a positive impression on the residents who got their apartments painted. "My mom has lived here for 10 years and this is the first time the apartment has been painted," explained Phillip Remy. "The place looks really nice, and they only took a little more than an hour to finish."

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BHA Wins National Excellence Award

The Boston Housing Authority has won the National Association of Housing and Re-development Officials' (NAHRO) Award of Excellence for its involvement in the Fleet Family Self-Sufficiency Loan Program. The award, officially presented October 21 at NAHRO's National Conference and Exhibition in Dallas, recognizes innovative and outstanding achievement in housing and community development programs throughout the nation.

The Fleet Family Self-Sufficiency Loan Program's purpose is to provide families with guidance on issues of economic self-sufficiency. Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) counselors help families meet their goals by making emergency loans available for credit rehabilitation, debt consolidation and emergency expenses.

The Consumer Credit Counseling Service of Southern New England provides a financial assessment of the applicant and then sends the application to Fleet, who makes the final decision. The program has already distributed over 100 loans worth more than \$600,000. Each individual loan is worth between \$500 and \$5,000 and lasts from one to five years.

"This project is important because it allows residents to establish credit with a prime lender," explained Suzanne Forgione, Director of FSS at the BHA. "The ultimate goal of most of our clients is homeownership and maintaining good credit is a good start in that direction."

Forgione and Ruth Olsen, also a Family Self Sufficiency Coordinator, are the Boston Housing Authority representatives involved in the project.

The program was started by a task force of FSS Coordinators who met once a month beginning in 2000 in order to find a way for families to secure loans.

In many cases, families need credit to pay for school tuition, childcare, transportation and other expenses, which obstruct them in their quest for self-sufficiency. The Fleet FSS Loan Program establishes an escrow account when the family increases its earned income instead of raising the resident's rent. This allows participants to rebuild

their credit, often wrought by credit card debt and other financial shortfalls.

"Programs like these set standards that are worthy models for the public and private sectors," said NAHRO President Kurt Creager. "NAHRO is proud of its members who consistently go the

extra mile in providing service for residents and their communities."

The Fleet FSS Loan Program is now available in communities throughout New England for housing authorities and non-profits who participate in a training session conducted by FSS Coordinators, Fleet and the Consumer Credit Counseling Service.

In order to be considered for the Fleet FSS Loan Program, the applicant must be in good standing, employed full-time and have enough income to make loan payments. Applicants must not have a record of bankruptcy within the past two years, default on student loans, outstanding child support or similar expenses.

"Programs like these set standards that are worthy models for the public and private sectors"

The Boston Housing Authority Unveils Its 2004 Annual Plan

The Boston Housing Authority recently unveiled its 2004 Annual Plan in accordance with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's requirements.

The BHA's Annual Plan provides information about the Authority's strategy for handling operations, responding to residents' concerns and needs, and outlining programs and services for the upcoming fiscal year.

This lengthy document has been developed in conjunction with the Resident Advisory Board, a group comprised of elected representatives from residents of the public housing and Section 8 programs.

This year's plan includes the implementation of the community service requirement. The plan assures that each resident required to perform com-

munity service will be notified along with an informational sheet, further explaining the requirements and exemptions of the program.

Also, as required, the BHA has reviewed the effect of the site-based waiting list on the Orchard Commons, Orchard Gardens and Mission

Main sites. The Authority accessed the changes in the racial/ethnic tenant composition of the developments from the time the system was implemented until the present.

In addition, the BHA has signed a Voluntary Compliance Agreement with HUD to make 5% of its common areas handicap accessible within five years and indicated in the plan that implementation of phase one of the project has already begun.

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A draft of the 2004 Annual Plan is available for public review and comment from November 3 through December 18

Ten BHA Residents Receive Certificates from BU School of Public Health

On Tuesday, November 15, ten Boston Housing Authority residents received certificates from the Boston University School of Public Health for their completion of a 10-week training course, as part of the Resident Health Advocate Program.

Participants learned about a wide range of topics including health assessment, first aid, outreach education and leadership skills. The class is the second to complete the course since the inception of the program last year.

At the graduation ceremony, the students were praised for their hard work and dedication during the 30 hours of training.

"I am truly impressed by your accomplishments," said BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez.

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RHA graduates (L-R) (back) Jacque Furtado, Jevonne Murray, Sharon Terry, Peggy Santos, Yaremi Valerio, Gaisha Barrows (front) Nancy Velazquez, Thuy Dang, Dionicia Facenda (not pictured) Carolyn Justice

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As volunteers spruced up the community, neighbors took notice. "It's like an early Christmas present," explained Earlene Haymon. "I've lived here 36 years and I love this development and I love Roslindale."



Volunteers cleared brush and trash to create open space. Possible projects on the location include a sports field or a garden.

Over 80 of the volunteers participating in the revitalization of the development were residents of Washington-Beech.

"We had more people out here participating today than we did on Unity Day," explained Resident Services Coordinator Maria Chavez. "It's great to see residents being proactive in rebuilding their community."

Long-time tenants were pleasantly surprised to see the enthusiasm of Washington-Beech residents.

"It's nice to see all these neighbors out here showing they care about the development," said Harmon, who has raised five kids at the site. "I haven't seen this many people out helping in all the years I have lived here."

After a long and rewarding afternoon of hard work, the crew of volunteers concluded the day with a celebration. A DJ played music, while children and adults alike danced. There was also a large potluck meal prepared by residents.

Boston Housing Authority Administrator Sandra Henriquez, on hand for the event, praised the volunteers for their service. "The work you did is awesome," she exclaimed. "This is the biggest volunteer project in the city and it's a tribute to the people who are here today."

Henriquez encouraged the volunteers "to not be strangers and to share in the vibrancy of the community."

The City Year Serve-a-thon began in Boston in 1988 as a way to introduce people to the culture of City Year and bring diverse groups together for a high-impact day of community service. Since its inception, the program has engaged more than 90,000 volunteers who have committed over 540,000 hours and raised \$4.1 million to make a significant impact in the communities of Boston.

City Year will be assisting Maria Chavez every week at the WB Resource & Development Center. They will be working in collaboration with the site's management and maintenance teams.

Some of the projects slated for completion during the year include creating a project outreach for job searches and other workshops for adults, forming a boys group similar to the group "Girlstars" at WB, lending support for the ESL classes and much more.



Despite a long afternoon of hard work, volunteers were rejuvenated by the food and dancing at the end of the day.

Nuestra Breaks Ground on Forest Greenville

The Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation held a groundbreaking ceremony on October 6 to celebrate the beginning of construction to redevelop vacant infill buildings on Forest and Greenville Streets in the Dudley Square neighborhood of Roxbury.

The Forest Greenville Project involves the rehabilitation of 10-five bedroom, duplex units to be sold as affordable housing to first-time homebuyers. The units will be sold through a lottery with preference going to former residents who were displaced due to the reconstruction effort.

Nuestra will hold a number of homeowner workshops aimed at educating participants on topics relevant to homeownership. Subjects discussed will include how to deal with inspectors, appraisers and lawyers, information about the availability of down payment assistance, and one on one credit counseling.



U.S. Rep. Michael Capuano lauded the efforts of Nuestra and the BHA, while criticizing the federal government for its affordable housing policies.

Prior to being conveyed to Nuestra, the buildings were owned by the BHA and rented to its clients. However, the development had remained vacant for several years while the community awaited the renovation and re-occupancy of the units.

BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez explained the importance of public housing to the crowd gathered at the groundbreaking ceremony. "It is imperative that we make sure affordable housing is available to all segments of the population so nobody is left behind and everyone can share in the vitality of the city of Boston," she said.

The Forest Greenville project is benefiting from a contribution of \$588,589 in funds made available from HUD through the Orchard Gardens HOPE IV Program.

Nuestra is also benefiting from its relationship with Sears. It is one of twenty organizations across the country to participate in the Sears American Dream Campaign. Sears will contribute \$50,000 in down payment assistance. In addition, they will donate \$1,000 gift certificates to homeowners on Forest Street who agreed to allow the company to perform an appliance and energy audit in their homes. Finally, Sears also pledged \$8,500 to be divided amongst the tenants of Forest Street and used for home necessities.

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BHA Administrator Sandra Henriquez and U.S. Rep. Michael Capuano pull the boards off an old house at the groundbreaking of the project, while Nuestra CEO Evelyn Friedman looks on.

At the groundbreaking, Evelyn Friedman, CEO of Nuestra, praised the idea of former tenants becoming homeowners calling it, "part of the American dream." She also commended the effort of the Boston Housing Authority and the many lenders who made the project possible.



Job Well Done



DaVonne Bolton would like to thank **Peter Martinez** (Switchboard Operator) for graciously agreeing to record the greetings for the BHA's new phone system. It took nearly two days to complete and he did a great job.

DaVonne would also like to thank **LeRoy Shelton** and **Louis Sasso** for their hard work over the past several weeks. Among other feats while shorthanded, LeRoy and Louis rescued six people from elevator cab number one in the Chauncy Street Office. They worked tirelessly to identify the location of the car and once they did, they successfully got the door open for the clients and staff who were stuck inside. All in a day's work!!!

Angel Lopez would like to extend his appreciation and say "gracias" to all the volunteers who took time from their busy weekend schedules to work to improve the Archdale playgrounds. Volunteers from **People Making a Difference** (PMD), the **Boston University Chapter of Alpha Phi Omega**, **Linda Fahy**, **Mathew Richardson** and the **Archdale management & maintenance crew** all generously donated their time. Also, a special thanks to Linda Fahy, **Lori Tsuruda** (PMD), **Lori Luce**, **Jim Reed** and **Bobby Burgess** who helped make this project happen.

On Saturday, September 20, everybody worked very hard and sweated under a hot September sun to improve six Archdale playgrounds. Some volunteers got minor blisters on their hands, some may have gotten a suntan, and many were exhausted from distributing 90 yards of fiber-mulch. But in the end it was well worth it!

Dick L'Europa from Risk Management would like to thank **Sheila Donahue** for her generous donation of pennies to the Lions Pennies for Eyesight Canister. Donations of Pennies for Eyesight and used eyeglasses from BHA employees continue to climb and Lions International is very grateful for our support.

Congratulations to **Barney Murphree**. Murphree, a Fellow in the Risk and Insurance Management Society, has been invited to join the Board of Directors of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Society. This is a singular honor reserved for per-

sons with the most experience and knowledge about the profession.

A special thank you and congratulations to **Fran Swain**, **Dolores McGee** and **Joe Allen** of the Office of Civil Rights. They are responsible for monitoring labor standards on all BHA construction jobs. A recent HUD audit resulted in no findings and concluded that all aspects of the compliance program have been performed well. Thank you for your commitment and a job well done!

Thanks and congratulations are in order to all of the volunteers who worked diligently to renovate and improve the Washington Beech Development on Saturday, October 25.

In addition to the City Year folks, **Rachel Goodman** would like to thank the 80 Washington Beech residents who participated in the Serve-a-thon and also helped in preparing the potluck meal.

She would also like to thank her whole department — **Greg Davis**, **Raul Solano**, **Mary Whouley**, with special thanks and recognition to **Maria Chavez!!!**

Also, thanks to **Bob MacGregor**, **Carvis Hollis**, and **Beta Baptista** — the Washington Beech Management team! Thanks to **Public Safety** for coming by during the day to make sure that all went well. Goodman would also like to say a special thank you to **Nancy Velazquez**, who played a big part in the success of the City Year Serve a-thon at Washington Beech.

Congratulations to **Jacob Lavin** of the Office of Civil Rights for passing the Massachusetts Bar Exam.

Risk Management provided a skid loader refresher training course on November 4, 2003 at the Charlestown development. Seventeen employees participated and **Bob Burgess** from Federal Program I was the instructor. Risk Management provided coffee and donuts for the employees. We would like to thank **Kellie Dean**, Manager at Charlestown, **Jim McCarthy** and **John Frost** and their staff's assistance in providing the training.

The BHA would like to welcome **Paul McDonald**. McDonald will be working as a temporary hire while **Peter Brouwer** is out.

Nuestra Breaks Ground on Forest Greenville

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Rick Spellman, District General Manager of Sears, explained that his company “looks for local organizations that are doing wonderful work,” and makes contributions accordingly.

U.S. Representative Michael Capuano, also in attendance for the groundbreaking admitted, “I usually come to events like these to apologize.” He criticized the federal government for not doing enough to help affordable housing programs. Capuano called the ten years it took to get the project underway “obscene”. He told the audience “decisions are made by people you elect” and noted, “we have no problem putting billions and billions of dollars in the hands of people who don’t need it.” Capuano concluded by saying that it is projects like these that make neighborhoods strong and that people must encourage elected officials to support affordable housing or elect ones who will.

Local activists in attendance applauded the efforts of everyone involved in the project. Cathy Griswold, a long-time neighborhood resident, is excited about the changes. “It is such a joy to look out of your window and see so many positive things going on,” she said.

The development is slated for completion around the end of June of 2004 and applications are scheduled to be available in January. The lottery is expected to be held in February.

The Forest Greenville project is funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Boston Housing Authority, the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, Local Initiatives Support Corporation, the Boston Community Loan Fund and Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation.



Pictured: One of the ten former BHA-owned units that Nuestra plans to rehabilitate.

Ten BHA Residents Receive Certificates from BU School of Public Health

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“When you give back and do good that is true leadership,” said Henriquez. “I am honored and delighted that you have chosen to be leaders in public housing.”

Gail Douglas, Associate Dean at the BU School of Public Health, noted that when the course began “we were from different cultures and different backgrounds but we all wanted safe communities and to do good to make our neighborhoods better.”

As friends and family looked on, the graduates received their certificates certifying them as Health Advocates. Each woman can now go back into her community and distribute the knowledge she has gained. With that, residents will be meeting one of the main objectives of the program: to bring public health awareness to public housing.

The Resident Health Advocate program is a collaboration of the BHA, the BU School of Public Health and the Boston Public Health Commission.

The Boston Housing Authority Unveils Its 2004 Annual Plan

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The 2004 Annual Plan also details changes and updates in the Authority's 5-year Progress Report.

The first Agency Plan was submitted to HUD in February 2000 in compliance with the Housing Quality and Work Responsibility Act of 1998. The latest plan is expected to be submitted to HUD by January 15, 2004. HUD is then required to review the document by April 1 and then has the option of approving the plan or returning it with cited deficiencies.

As required by Congress and HUD, the BHA is currently undergoing a 45-day public re-

view process. A draft of the 2004 Annual Plan is available for public review and comment from November 3 through December 18. The plan and its supporting documents can be accessed through the BHA's website at www.bostonhousing.org or can be viewed by visiting the BHA's Planning Department at 52 Chauncy Street, 11th floor during regular business hours.

In addition, a copy of the Plan will be on reserve in the Government Documents section of the Copley Branch of the Boston Public Library and a Public Hearing will be held December 16 at 6:00 pm at Roxbury Community College in the Media Arts Center.

BHA Employees Walk To Raise Money For Breast Cancer Research

On a cool, damp October morning, BHA employees and friends gathered at the Hatch Shell in Boston to participate in the Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk.

The Walk, which has been held nationwide since 1993, is the American Cancer Society's biggest event to raise money and awareness to battle breast cancer.

As a group, the team of BHA employees and friends managed to raise over \$1,700.

All proceeds from the walk go to research, education, patient support and advocacy programs.

Walkers and contributors included: **Gloria Meneses**, Gloria's brother and son, **Linda Fahy**, **Kate Bennett**, **Rachel Goodman**, **Hugh Donovan**, **Zenaida Figueroa**, **Bernice Ryner**, **Lynne Jones** (Occupancy), **Lynne Jones** (Monsignor Powers), **Stephanie Uftring**, Stephanie's friend Linda and **Thuy Xuan Dang**.



*(L-R) (front) Linda Fahey, Rachel Goodman
(back) Lynne M. Jones, Lynne Jones
and Hugh Donovan*

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