



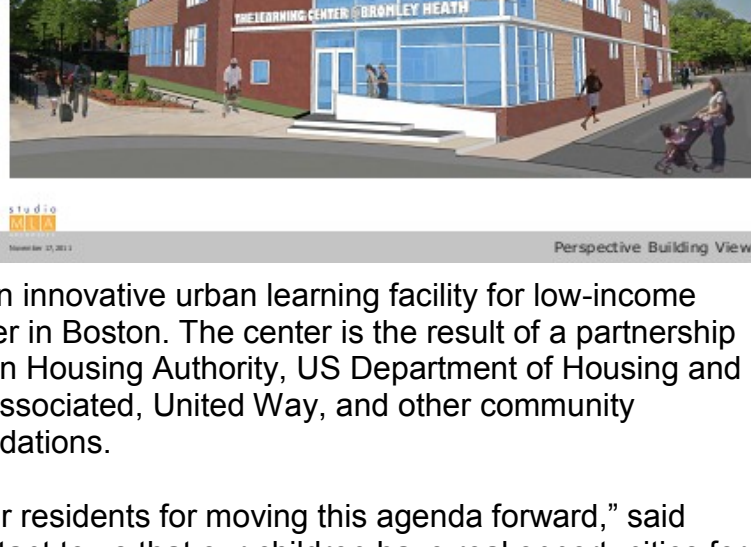
Boston Housing Authority

BHA Today

Boston Housing Authority e-newsletter: Volume 1, Issue 3, November 2012

BHA Announces \$16 Million Early Learning Center at Bromley Heath

BHA Administrator Bill McGonagle recently announced the development of a \$16 million early childhood and family Learning Center at the Bromley-Heath public housing development in Jamaica Plain. Developed and operated by Associated Early Care and Education, the center will create an innovative urban learning facility for low-income families unlike any other in Boston. The center is the result of a partnership that includes the Boston Housing Authority, US Department of Housing and Urban Development, Associated, United Way, and other community organizations and foundations.



Perspective Building View

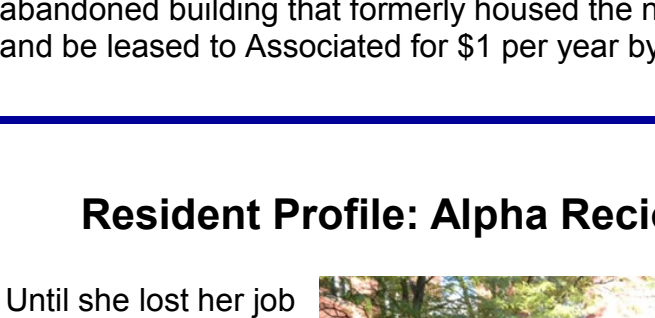
"I want to commend our residents for moving this agenda forward," said McGonagle. "It's important to us that our children have real opportunities for high-quality early education. The earlier we engage them with educational opportunities, the more likely they are to succeed."

The first-of-its-kind program to serve families and their children in a public housing development will reach more than 1,000 low-income families and house a childhood education center that incorporates a variety of creative, evidence-based curriculum and teaching methods. The preschool and after-school programming will be available to 175 children up to age 8, their siblings and families; 50 percent of the children will be residents of the Bromley-Heath development.

"This is Associated's crowning achievement and is the result of four years of planning and dreaming with many community partners to bring our vision to completion," said Wayne Ysaguirre, President and CEO of Associated Early Care and Education. "The Center's goal is to engage the community – parents, civic partners, service providers, neighborhood leaders, public schools, health care institutions – to take a shared interest in helping young children achieve school readiness to succeed in school and in life."

The curriculum will include Science Technology Engineering & Math programs (STEM), enrichment in physical fitness and the arts, adventure play and after school programs focusing on nature and outdoor exploration. The center will include a 12,000 square foot outdoor play area with a natural playground and rooftop greenhouse. The building will be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Gold certified to ensure energy efficiency and a healthier climate for children and staff.

The 20,000-square-foot facility will also offer parents workforce development assistance such as mentoring, interviewing and workplace coaching as well as health screenings, parenting classes, nutrition coaching and GED classes. The project is part of Boston's commitment to universal school readiness -- the Thrive in 5 movement, which Mayor Menino and the United Way launched to ensure that all kids have the support and resources they (and their families) need to be ready for kindergarten.



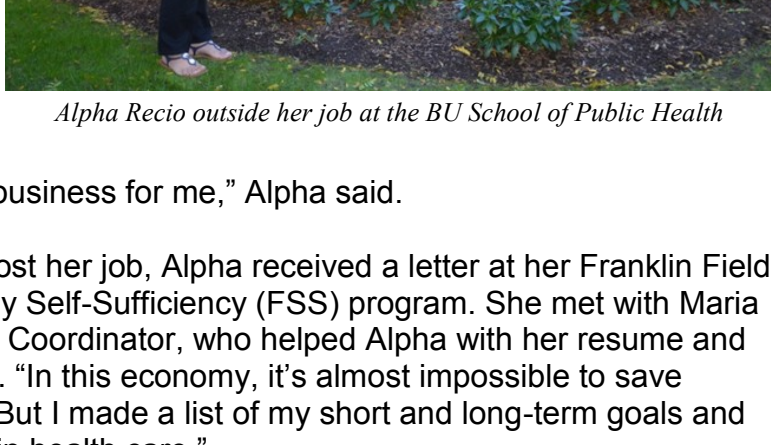
Children from the Associated program sang at the event

"This new learning center will offer space we need to open doors to even more opportunities said Latoya Taromino, a Bromley resident and mother of a three-year old son. "I know that this center will be positive for our community and our development."

Construction will begin in late November, with an anticipated completion date of January 2014. The Center will replace an abandoned building that formerly housed the neighborhood's health center and be leased to Associated for \$1 per year by the BHA.

Resident Profile: Alpha Recio, FSS Participant

Until she lost her job in 2010, Alpha Recio had always been employed. She received a business degree in her home country, and when she moved to the United States in 2001 she worked as a manager for a gas station. But that career path was not for her. "It was too much responsibility, not enough benefits and it just wasn't the business for me," Alpha said.



Alpha Recio outside her job at the BU School of Public Health

Around the time she lost her job, Alpha received a letter at her Franklin Field home about the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program. She met with Maria Chavez, BHA Service Coordinator, who helped Alpha with her resume and her plan for the future. "In this economy, it's almost impossible to save money," Alpha said. "But I made a list of my short and long-term goals and set up a plan to work in health care."

Through the FSS program, Alpha got a part-time job at the Boston University School of Public Health and enrolled in Roxbury Community College's AA in Health Careers programs. After graduating, Alpha looked for a nursing program to enroll in. She was accepted at UMass-Boston but had to defer her acceptance for a semester after her father died. However, that personal tragedy did not deter Alpha from her ultimate goals. "FSS helps you learn to fix problems so you can be successful and not stressed out about what else is going on in your life," Alpha added.

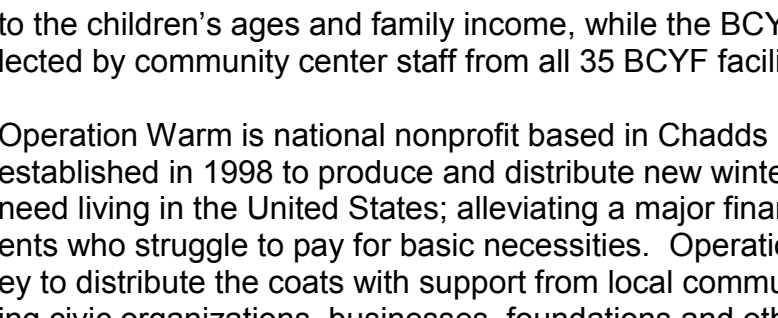
When she returned to UMass-Boston as a full-time student, Alpha applied for and received the Chancellor Scholarship which pays for all her tuition and fees as long as she maintains a 3.50 GPA. Recently, she was one of five people selected to participate in the Clinical Leadership Collaborative for Diversity in Nursing (CLCDN) leadership and scholarship initiative. This scholarship not only gives recipients money to achieve their academic goals, it also guarantees a nursing job with one of Partners Healthcare Systems hospitals after graduation.

Alpha is expected to graduate with a BS in Nursing in June of 2014. In addition to being a full-time student, Alpha is still a part-time Community Health Researcher at BU School of Public Health. In this position, Alpha works on smoking cessation programs at BHA developments. She also hopes to pick up more part-time work as a Nursing Assistant at Mass General Hospital.

Although life is busy with school, work and family, Alpha is excited about her involvement with FSS. "The program is amazing," she said. "Every time I achieve a goal I call Maria to let her know."

FSS families have the opportunity to develop escrowed savings through an account established and controlled by the BHA. As income increases, so does rent; however, for FSS participants, an amount equal to the rent increase is placed in the FSS escrow account. The more money an individual earns, the more money BHA deposits into the escrow account. The escrow is not counted as an individual asset until the contract is completed and only when the money is paid directly to the individual. At the BHA's discretion, the BHA may make a portion of this escrow account available to the family during the term of the contract to enable the family to complete an interim goal such as education or other employment related needs.

BHA Gives Coats to Section 8 Families



This month, Mayor Menino announced the donation of 3000 new winter coats to children ages 2 - 14 in the city. Half of the coats were given to children participating in the Boston Centers for Youth and Families and the other half were given to children in BHA Section 8 families. The donation was made

possible through a partnership with the Boston Foundation, Operation Warm and Genzyme.

Coats for Section 8 families were distributed at the Roxbury Boys and Girls Club, and simultaneously distributed at the BCYF Tobin Community Center for BCYF families. The Section 8 children were randomly selected according to the children's ages and family income, while the BCYF children were selected by community center staff from all 35 BCYF facilities.

Operation Warm is national nonprofit based in Chadds Ford, Pa., that was established in 1998 to produce and distribute new winter coats to children in need living in the United States; alleviating a major financial burden for parents who struggle to pay for basic necessities. Operation Warm raises money to distribute the coats with support from local community partners including civic organizations, businesses, foundations and other philanthropic organizations. Last year, Operation Warm and the Boston Foundation donated 5000 coats to the BHA for children in public housing.

Annapolis Wins Homes & Gardens Beautification Award

The Annapolis housing development in Dorchester recently won the Upham's Corner Homes and Gardens Beautification Award. Sponsored by the Upham's Corner Improvement Association, the award is given to area residents and businesses who maintain their property with pride, enhancing its "curb appeal" and contributing to the overall beauty of Upham's Corner.



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