

Coming soon: A new home for MBHP

Starting this fall, you can visit MBHP at our new address: One Roxbury Crossing.

If you have visited MBHP's Boston office recently, you may have noticed that we have outgrown our current space. We are serving more than 25,000 households per year, which has made for some very tight quarters. Fortunately, we have a plan.

In late 2017, MBHP will be moving to our new home, which is currently being built right across the street from the Roxbury Crossing T-stop. The new facility will occupy the first two floors of a five-story building being developed by Mission Hill Neighborhood Housing Services, with the top three floors containing 40 apartments designated for households with low incomes. The project is part of a broad strategy to revitalize Roxbury Crossing as a vibrant neighborhood center, and residents from the neighborhood have been involved at every step.

MBHP's new location is being built from the ground up to meet our needs, and yours. Features will include:

- Newer, small interview rooms to better ensure privacy.



An artist's rendering of MBHP's new home, now being built in Roxbury Crossing.

- Large meeting space for trainings and workshops.
- Accessible entrance and lobby space designed for people with mobility impairments.
- A transit-oriented location, easily accessible by walking, driving, or public transportation.

Later this fall, we'll let you know when we're settled and you can begin visiting us in our new home.

Visit buildingonmission.org to learn more

This new website has been created to help us raise \$2 million to contribute to the cost of our new office. Visit the site to view photos of the construction, artist renderings of the new space, and more information on our new home.



Meet Team MBHP

For the past 11 years, thanks to the generosity of John Hancock, MBHP has had a team of volunteers run the Boston Marathon while also raising funds and awareness for MBHP, and this year is no different.

Team MBHP 2017 includes Diana Lane Jensen, Kevin Koch, and Todd Robinson, along with MBHP staff members Jesse Edsell-Vetter and Steve Farrell.

Every member of Team MBHP 2017 has committed to raising at least \$6,000 for MBHP, which will help us continue to run our vital programs and services. You can learn more about their stories and contribute to their fundraising goals at crowdrise.com/mbhpboston2017. And if you are planning to attend the race, be sure to look out for our runners and cheer them on!



Team MBHP 2017: Diana Lane Jensen (above), Kevin Koch, Todd Robinson, Steve Farrell, Jesse Edsell Vetter (left to right, below)

Meet MBHP: Thong Phan



If you are experiencing housing discrimination, you can always call MBHP. And if you do, there's a good chance you will talk to Thong Phan, our Fair Housing Client Advocate. Thong's days are spent investigating possible fair housing issues and following up on cases by reaching out to real estate agents, property owners, and clients with the goal of resolving those issues.

Hometown. I was born in the Philippines, which I have no memory of. I grew up in a suburb of Columbia, South Carolina, where the actor Aziz Ansari is also from.

Hobbies. I keep up with political news and social justice issues. I enjoy playing chess and listening to music.

Food. My favorites are Vietnamese and Southern food. I love Waffle House. I wish Boston had one.

Values. I try to be thoughtful and I appreciate that in others as well. I also have a really sharp sense of humor if people get to know me.

Motivation. I am motivated by the belief that gross inequality is not inevitable. I believe there are attainable solutions to some of society's most pressing issues.

Accomplishments. I entered a chess tournament once on a whim and won one of the four matches.

Motto. My name is pronounced as Tom. (Not really, I just say it so many times a day it feels like a motto.)

Personal heroes. Prince, parents, Malcolm X, Bruce Lee, and Barbara Chandler—not necessarily in that order.

Civil rights resources

MBHP is committed to protecting the civil rights of all residents in our region. Below are some resources for anyone who find themselves victim of a hate crime or discrimination.

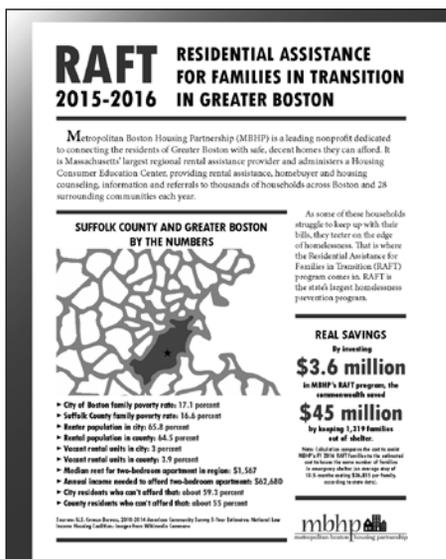
For complaints of housing discrimination: MBHP's Fair Housing team, 617.425.6681 or barbara.chandler@mbhp.org

Filing a civil rights complaint: MA Attorney General's Office www.mass.gov/ago (search for Civil Rights Complaint Form)

For legal help: American Civil Liberties Union of Massachusetts, aclum.org, legal help intake line: 617.482.3170 ext 100

RAFT helps families stay afloat

After experiencing a financial emergency, such as a temporary job loss or health problem, a little help is all some people need to catch up on the rent. For others, a few thousand dollars is all that stands between them and moving to a new home. For situations like these, the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) program may be able to help.



Last year, in Boston and the 29 surrounding communities we serve, MBHP distributed \$3.6 million in RAFT funding to help more than 1,300 families stay housed. State-wide, more than \$10.4 million in RAFT funding were distributed.

RAFT funds can be used by qualifying families for payment of rental arrears, first/last month's rent, utilities, child care, moving

expenses, and more. RAFT helps families remain stably housed and provides an alternative to entering emergency shelter.

Last fall, in partnership with the Regional Housing Network, MBHP released a statewide report on the RAFT program for 2015–16. The report was the first of its kind, building on regional reports released by MBHP in September 2014 and September 2015. The reports are being shared with legislators and other state officials to reinforce the importance of RAFT and the difference it makes in people's lives. Both the state and MBHP regional reports can be found on MBHP's website, mbhp.org (see: News > Policy Reports and Publications).

For more information on the RAFT program, including eligibility, please visit mbhp.org (see: Programs > Housing Supports and Homelessness Prevention > RAFT) or contact our Housing Consumer Education Center at ResourceLine@mbhp.org or 617.425.6700.

Additional resources

RAFT is just one tool of MBHP's Housing Consumer Education Center (HCEC). When families work with HCEC staff, they do not simply apply for RAFT. An HCEC staff member will document the family's housing situation and develop the best response to meet the family's needs. Depending on the specific situation, applicants may be referred to funding sources other than RAFT, such as fuel assistance, utility discount rate, unemployment, social security, food stamps, TAFDC, Medicaid/Mass Health.

Families seeking financial assistance should contact MBHP's Housing Consumer Education Center at ResourceLine@mbhp.org or 617.425.6700. You can also drop by our office to schedule an appointment with an HCEC staff member. On Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays, we will make every effort to schedule you for a same-day appointment. We cannot schedule HCEC appointments for walk-ins on Mondays and Wednesdays.

Free tax prep

FREE TAX SERVICES January to April 2017 if you worked in 2016 and earned less than \$54,000.

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help to people who generally make \$54,000 or less, persons with disabilities, and limited English-speaking taxpayers who need assistance in preparing their own tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals.

In addition to VITA, the Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program offers free tax help for all taxpayers, particularly those who are 60 years of age and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement-related issues unique to seniors. The IRS-certified volunteers who provide tax counseling are often retired individuals associated with non-profit organizations that receive grants from the IRS.

Find a VITA or TCE Site Near You

VITA and TCE sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping malls, and other convenient locations across the country. To locate the nearest VITA or TCE site near you, use the VITA Locator Tool or call 800.906.9887.

When looking for a TCE site keep in mind that a majority of the TCE sites are operated by the AARP Foundation's Tax Aide program. To locate the nearest AARP TCE Tax-Aide site between January and April use the AARP Site Locator Tool or call 888.227.7669.

To search for a VITA or TCE site in your area, use the Site Locator Tools found online at: irs.gov/individuals/free-tax-return-preparation-for-you-by-volunteers.

Featured partners

Boston Tax Help Coalition: A partnership of nonprofits, businesses, and community organizations, the BTHC is the largest program of the Mayor's Office of Financial Empowerment.

Bostontaxhelp.org, FreeTaxHelp@boston.gov, 617.635.4500

CONNECT: A partnership between community groups coming together to address the housing, financial, educational, and employment needs of residents of Chelsea and surrounding communities.

4 Gerrish Avenue, Chelsea, MA, 02150
erodriguez@tndinc.org, 617.889.1375, ext 110

MAKE SURE TO BRING:

- Government Issued Photo ID
- Social Security card or Individual Taxpayer ID Letter (ITIN) for you, your dependents and/or your spouse
- A copy of last year's tax return
- All 1099 forms:
 - 1099-G (unemployment)
 - 1099-R (pension payments)
 - 1099-INT (bank interest)
 - 1099-SSA (Social Security)
 - 1099 (Self-employment)
- W2 forms from all jobs in 2016
- Bank-issued printed account and routing numbers to direct deposit your tax refund into your account
- Proof of health insurance (Health insurance cards, HC-1099, 1095-A, etc.) for taxpayer, spouse, and all dependents*
- If you received the premium tax credit, you must bring in a 1095-A.
- Total child care expenses in 2016, and child care provider's name, address, and Employer Identification Number (EIN) or Social Security Number (SSN)
- All 1098-T forms (tuition payments), college statements receipts for materials
- Total student loan interest paid (1098-E) or lender statement
- Proof of all rent paid in 2016
- Proof of ANY deductible out of pocket expenses (annual BWSC, charitable receipts, property taxes)
- Any mail from the MA Department of Revenue and/or the IRS

**Taxpayers who have received or expect to receive health insurance credits need to bring proof of ALL household income.*

Winter moratorium extended through April 1

Each year, Massachusetts helps protect residents who are struggling with their heating costs by imposing a “winter moratorium,” meaning gas and electric companies cannot shut off heating fuel and electric delivery because of a customer’s inability to pay. This year, the moratorium has been extended through April 1, 2017.

Continue to pay what you can

It is important to note that charges will still accrue and residents will still owe the providers the full amount come spring. Resident should still pay what they can afford to pay during this time. Customers who make no payments all winter are likely to be the first ones terminated once the moratorium ends.

If you need help with your utility costs, the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may be able to help. For more information, visit mass.gov/hed/community/energy and search for “LIHEAP.”



Career Spotlight: Dress for Success



A professional outfit can make an excellent first impression.

For every interview or formal event in a workplace, you should dress business professional. However, some company cultures reflect a more laid back approach during the workweek where business casual is appropriate and expected. It is important to always get a feel for how others dress at your workplace. If you dress differently than everyone else, you will stand out, and not in a good way. You want to make those around you comfortable and, most importantly, feel confident about yourself.

Our colleagues at Dress for Success Boston have provided the following tips on dressing for a business casual workplace.

1. “Casual” does not mean sloppy. You always want to look pulled together. Even if it’s on the casual side, you want to make sure what you’re wearing is clean and ironed.
2. Invest in some quality pieces that you can pair with lots of different things, such as a pair of basic black pants or a white button-down shirt.
3. When in doubt, dress conservatively. Stick with solid colors or simple patterns.
4. Accessories should be kept simple: basic pumps or flats, modest jewelry, light make-up, and light perfume.
5. Shirts with lettering or graphics should not be worn.
6. Check your outfit for missing buttons, lint, or a crooked tie.
7. A skirt should be no shorter than the tips of your middle fingers (or just above the knee).

Dress for Success Boston provides women with a network of support, professional attire, and the development tools to help women thrive in work and in life. One service they provide is a free outfit for job seekers to wear to interviews and additional outfits upon gaining employment. For more information on Dress for Success Boston, contact jrobinson@dfsoston.org.



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Plan ahead! Summer camp registration

If you have school-age children, spring is the time to start planning for summer vacation, as camp programs tend to fill up quickly. Below are some suggestions for affordable summer camps.

Boys and Girls Club of America

There are multiple Boys and Girls Clubs in and around Boston that offer summer programming. Find a club near you at bgca.org/whoweare/Pages/FindaClub.aspx.

Camp Harbor View

A four-week summer camp on Long Island in the Boston Harbor. \$5 tuition covers round trip transportation, apparel, three meals per day, and access to school year programming and social

services. Open to Boston residents ages 11–14, a limited number of slots are available for each neighborhood on a first come, first served basis. Learn more at chvf.org.

Cambridge Camping

Since 1893, Cambridge Camping has served children from under-resources families. They offer affordable day camps and overnight partner-camps. Learn more at www.cambridgecamping.org.

Boston Centers for Youth and Families

BCYF offers dozens of neighborhood-based summer day camps and programs. Their summer guide is now available at boston.gov/health-and-human-services/summer-programs-and-events-bcyf.