

The Neighborhood News

The Somerville Housing Authority Newsletter

Spring 2004

Greetings From SHA

Well, the Groundhog has seen his shadow so according to tradition that means six more weeks of winter. Feels like the never-ending winter, doesn't it? Take heart though, Spring is on the way. It's starting to stay lighter later in the day, and there is a hint of spring in the air.



After a long and brutally cold winter enjoy the coming smells of Spring. Look forward to wonderful sunny days when you can open up your windows and enjoy the sights and sounds of Springtime.

We should collectively congratulate ourselves for making it through another New England Winter!

Sit back and relax as we tell you about some of the highlights from this past winter.

FROM PUBLIC SAFETY DEPT.

Do you know the Somerville Housing Authority has a confidential Tip Line?

The number is (617) 628-1258. Please use this line to report any information you would like the housing authority to know. This includes issues surrounding, fraud, gangs, drug dealing, illegal occupants, etc. This is a totally anonymous Tip Line. You do not need to leave your name. It's there for your safety, so use it! All reports will be investigated. We thank you for your help in making this a safe, great place to live.



IMPORTANT

SHA has received reports of the Misuse of Disability Placards. There is a fine for misuse. It is \$500 for the first offense and \$1,000 for the second or subsequent offenses. Mis-use of the placards will not be tolerated. Let's make sure that the Handicapped spaces are only used for those individuals who truly need it. It's all of our responsibilities to make sure the placards are not abused. If you think a placard is being improperly used, please call SHA and speak to the Public Safety Department. You may also report it on the Tip Line.



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WINTER HIGHLIGHTS



Our Annual Toy Drive was a huge success. We want to thank all of the residents, employees, seniors and local merchants who contributed.

Every year the program continues to grow. This year we collected over \$3,000! It was used to purchase toys and gift cards for families in our developments. It is a great combined effort. Local merchants really showed their support in a great way! We want to thank particularly our

Senior Buildings, Weston Manor, and Brady Towers for all their fund raising efforts. They had a penny drive where residents donated their spare change. What a terrific idea! They've learned how great it feels to give. Perhaps YOUR building will want to be a part of this. It's not too early to be thinking about it for next Christmas! Get out those containers, and start a penny drive. Residents of Brady and Weston will be happy to tell you how they got started. Call Beth Munroe-Howe at SHA Ext. 322, and she'll be glad to give you the details. We also had a gift wrapping party in mid-December. This year residents from the Senior Buildings joined us to help out. What a fun time we had

knowing we were really bringing joy to the children. It made our holidays all the more special. Special thanks to SHA employees Donna Langill and Gay Cataldo for spearheading this event. Three current SHA employees were made permanent employees in November of 2003. Congratulations go out to Gay Cataldo, Graciela Cordova and Janet Tinkler.



TENANT SELECTION DEPARTMENT

The SHA Tenant Selection Department would like to welcome back, Anna Castle. After serving for one year as a Housing Manager, Anna has returned to the Tenant Selection Department where she conducts interviews with elderly and disabled prospective SHA residents. Anna wishes to thank the residents of Clarendon, Brady Towers and Highland Gardens, and wishes everyone well.

A VERY SPECIAL PROGRAM

We would like to share with you a great program held at the Mystic Activity Center. It is sponsored by the Somerville Arts Council and the Mystic Learning Center. It's called the Books of Hope. Now in its fifth year it was started by director and author, Anika Naila. Anika realized the untapped potential of young people. Along with her assistant, Manson Kennedy, and a group of committed volunteers, they mentor youth in creative writing enabling the young writers to find and develop their creative writing voice.

Books of Hope seeks to create opportunities for self-expression and advocacy through creative writing, so that young people can reach out to each other, to their neighbors and to others around the world. The youth are really excited about the program. Here are some of their own words:

"I thought I'd write a book and make money," said Brad Burlamachi, ninth-grader at Somerville High whose book "Surviving the Spotlight" is everything he feels people didn't know about him. "I didn't think it

would be like this – that I would get lifelong friends. I am proud of my work, but I am also proud of everyone else's." Some came to improve their reading and writing: "I wanted to learn how to write better. I couldn't spell and had grammar

problems," said Doucette, Somerville High senior and emcee of the program last week.

Others came to see their name in print. "Just to see my name on a book encouraged me and made me come back," said Amarilys Rivera, junior at

Somerville High.

All of them took away much more than they had hoped for.

Somerville High sophomore Papazian said that Books of Hope changed her life. "It gave me hope and encouraged me. It's a fun thing, and it made me happy and to really want to go there every Monday."

Ideas came from personal experiences. "Mostly stuff I have been through with my friends and family," said Reynalee Miranda Santana, an eighth-grader at the Healy School.

Many have returned to publish again and again, some now working on their third and fourth books.

Roubbins Jamal LaMothe, or "RJL" as he is popularly known, has



published 13 books since inception and remains a part of the program long after high school and is a mentor and inspiration to the newbies. He is working on three more currently, and plans to pursue journalism. He believes

he's learned a lot from the program, not just about writing but about himself.

"There's lots of discipline with the deadlines, and communication with a number of people. Now I am more open," he said. According to Naila, The teens themselves tell us the rewards of this program have been endless. "This is their payoff," said Nailah. "It's about writing from the heart and sharing it with strangers."

SHA is delighted to support this very worthwhile program. Do you have a program in your building that you would like to tell others about? Just let us know, and we'll include it in an upcoming newsletter.





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30 Memorial Road
Somerville, MA 02145
Attn: Vicki Wairi

Phone: 617-625-1152
Fax: 617-628-7057

We're on the web!

Visit us at sha-web.org

And on TV!

Watch the SHA Board of Commissioners
Fridays at 5pm on SCAT Channel 3

Somerville Housing Authority Mission Statement

The goal of the Somerville Housing Authority is to assist low and moderate-income families, elderly and disabled, and help them obtain affordable housing that is safe, decent and sanitary. And in so doing, to advocate for and serve the needs of our residents and to encourage and assist all those who can achieve maximum independence to do so.

Through our efforts, we will create and expand affordable housing opportunities for the diverse population of Somerville residents.

We will create and encourage resident self-sufficiency and independence.

We will efficiently allocate our resources encouraging innovation while working together as a team.

We will foster respect for residents, co-workers, and community.

SENIOR CORNER

The holiday parties at Brady, Highland and Weston were a complete success! Each building displayed their special holiday decorations and a few even showed off a few of their family recipes. In addition to many smiling faces that added to the festivities, there were lights, trees, and tinsel abound. We noted that residents of Properzi and Bryant Manors really went all out with their outside decorations. What a great way to brighten the season!

NOTES FROM RESIDENT SERVICES

We would like to announce that Cathy Hoog has left Resident Services to move on to new ventures and Beth Munroe-Howe is now the Acting Resident Services Supervisor. Beth has worked at the housing authority for the past three years, first in the Section 8 Department and most recently covering Brady Towers, Highland Gardens and Weston Manor as a Resident Service Coordinator. Beth will be attending your Tenant Association meeting to introduce herself and provide information

about Resident Services. If you have any questions, concerns or need services, please give her a call her at 617-625-1152, ext. 322.

Karen Marks has left her position as Resident Services Coordinator at Bryant Manor and 125 Jacques Street. She is now working in the Maintenance Dept as Maintenance Coordinator logging in calls for your work orders so you may still have an opportunity to speak to her! Karen wishes to thank the residents of Bryant and Jacques for their warmth and friendship. According to her, "I will miss the people so much, they are the best!"

PLEASE REMEMBER...

This is YOUR newsletter. Is there something that you'd like to see here? Just let me know. Like to write? Want to share your thoughts with others? I will be happy to work with groups or individuals to get their information or personal work in print. You may contact Vicki Wairi at (617) 625-1152 x 347, or email vickiw@sha-web.org.