

THE NORTH STAR

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“Initiating Solutions to End Homelessness”

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Staying Clean and Sober – And Permanently Housed

Conversion to permanent housing yields treatment success

The Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance (MHSA) has partnered with the Department of Public Health Bureau of Substance Abuse Services (BSAS) to convert 41 transitional housing units to permanent housing with case management. The results are showing that permanent housing, combined with case management, provides a long-awaited path out of homelessness for those struggling with substance abuse issues.

Starting in 2001, the **Post-Detox Pre-Recovery Program (PDPR)** provided transitional housing and services to homeless individuals in early recovery from substance abuse. Last year, MHSA and BSAS worked with the three provider organizations, HighPoint/NEBCOA (New Bedford), the Henry Lee Willis Center (Worcester) and SMOG (Framingham and Palmer) to convert the program from temporary to permanent housing and to change from a strict no-relapse model to a harm reduction model that is relapse tolerant.

Cheryl Kennedy-Perez, Manager of BSAS Housing and Homeless Services, sees this as a unique opportunity to offer a new housing model for this population. **“It’s a marriage between Housing First and recovery services, which gives us the chance to offer housing combined with the specific expertise of substance abuse service providers. It is really pioneering work,”** said Kennedy-Perez.

She also cites the importance of monthly meetings, co-chaired by MHSA and BSAS, in giving the case managers and supervisors the support they need during this transition. After the conversion, it was largely up to the front-line case managers and supervisors to make it work. Everyone came to the table for several meetings to work out rules and participant agreement language but also to express their doubts and apprehensions. **The question most often asked: Why would anyone stay clean and sober if they could relapse without consequences?**



From cold winter nights in a storage bin to his own home, PDPR client Mike, now clean and sober, states this program saved his life.

Randy Dupell, case manager at the Willis Center, was up front about his feelings. Coming from a traditional treatment background, he was at first completely against the switch to a harm reduction model. **Today, he says, “If I can be swayed, anyone can. It took about six months, but now I believe in it 100 percent.”** His reasons for believing are a direct result of his experience with the tenants in the program. **He has seen people succeed for the first time in their lives.** Dupell shared the example of one particular participant, John, who relapsed as soon as he entered PDPR last October. Dupell assumed that John probably wouldn’t last in the program, but that first relapse turned out to be his last. Since then John has been doing great. He keeps busy with maintenance and remodeling projects and takes pride in caring for his home. He is well on his way to a productive, sober life, because he finally has something to feel proud about – a home of his own.

See PDPR, Page 2

Fifth Annual MHSA Spring Fundraising Event Is a Hit

More than 300 MHSA members, friends and supporters gathered in the Rooftop Ballroom of the Omni Parker House Hotel and overflowed into the next room for our largest fundraiser to date. **Home for Good: Join the Housing Revolution**, the fifth annual MHSA awards and fundraising event, honored **Marc & Anne Margulies, State Representative Robert A. DeLeo and Geraldine McCafferty** of the City of Springfield for their outstanding work in ending homelessness.

“We are on the cusp of a revolution in the way homelessness is addressed in Massachusetts, and the message is getting out,” said MHSA Executive Director Joe Finn. “The turnout

for this event shows us that people want to be a part of the solution – they are joining MHSA in ending, not managing, homelessness.”

The evening began with a cocktail hour where guests mingled while enjoying live jazz, carving and pasta stations, passed hors d’oeuvres and open bar. **Tom Collins**, Executive Managing Director of Cushman & Wakefield of Massachusetts and a MHSA board member, opened the awards presentations by recognizing the tremendous strides made in ending homelessness by MHSA and its member agencies, especially over the past few years.

See EVENT, Page 3



MHSA is a public policy advocacy alliance with the singular mission of ending homelessness in the Commonwealth.

Through strategic partnerships formed with government, private philanthropy, business leaders, homeless individuals and service providers, MHSA works to ensure that homelessness does not become a permanent part of the social landscape.

Joe Finn, President and Executive Director

Tom Brigham, Housing First Coordinator

Erin Donohue, Development and Communications Director

Dr. Jessie Gaeta, Physician Advocate

Alex Gray, Legislative Liaison

Nicole Silva, Development and Communications Associate

Patrick Walsh, Policy and Advocacy Director

Janice Whalen, Financial Assistant

Kaye Wild, Vice President

Tom Yotts, Director of Finance and Administration

Contributing to MHSA

Today there is an unprecedented consensus on our shared capacity to end homelessness. State and local governments are taking an interagency approach to the problem, plans to end homelessness are being enacted, and corporate and community partners are joining forces to create systemic change. Action is producing visible outcomes in Massachusetts.

Please use the enclosed envelope to send in your tax-deductible contribution today and be a part of this revolution.

MHSA

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LIFE LOST, LESSONS LEARNED By Joe Finn, Executive Director

Wanda died a couple of weeks after this picture was taken. Only in her forties, known by many homeless people and service providers in Greater Boston, in and out of shelters for many years, she died in the restroom of a fast food restaurant. Her picture haunts me still. It fills me with an undeniable sadness about the existence of homelessness in our Commonwealth.

At MHSA we are concerned with the metrics of success. We want policy to address and fund what actually works – policy that leads to fewer homeless people on our streets and in our emergency shelters. We want measurable outcomes. We embrace and promote best practices that are effective in reducing the high cost to the state of emergency-based services. We have shared with you success stories from around



Massachusetts that show how possible – and cost-effective – it is to move from managing homelessness to actually ending it.

Yet our successes do not allow us to ignore the failures. We cannot forget Wanda, and so many like her, who struggled every day in an endless, grinding toil for survival. We cannot forget the anguish of the mother who has no idea where her mentally ill son is - or even if he is still alive. We cannot forget the elderly man in the shelter dying from his untreated illness because he doesn't have a stable home to recuperate in. We cannot forget the woman forced by a history of abuse into homelessness only to find the terrible abuse that often occurs on the street or in shelter.

At MHSA we are driven to make those around us aware of the financial cost that bad policy related to homelessness has created for the taxpayer of Massachusetts. Yet each time I look at Wanda's picture I am reminded of the staggering human cost of homelessness as well. She is but one life lost from the vast sea of humanity, but we are all diminished by her death. The existence of chronic homelessness leads to collective desensitization and deterioration of our appreciation for human dignity and life. That, my friends, is far too big a price for any of us to pay.

PDPR: Case managers and tenants praise new model

Continued from Page 1...

In Palmer, case manager **Allison Maynard** of the SMOC - Crossroads II PDPR program states one of the biggest challenges - and benefits - of running a relapse-tolerant program is that the rules are not black and white. She admits that it would be easier in some ways if she had no choice but to terminate people from the program for relapsing, but she prefers the rewards of working with people to move past those relapses and seeing them succeed. **"That's the beauty of it,"** she states. **"We are giving people opportunities they never had before."**

Mike, another Palmer client, was eager to share his life-changing experience with the new PDPR model. **"This program saved my life,"** said Mike. This past winter he was living in a storage bin when he came down with pneumonia and probably would have died if a friend from the PDPR program had

not taken him to the hospital. After Mike was well enough to leave, he moved into Crossroads II, where he feels that he is accomplishing something with his life for the first time in a long time. He is healthy and sober, and will be going back to school in the fall to get his associate degree in mechanical engineering.

"A large part of the success of our conversion to permanent housing is that these tenants have a tangible reason to get their lives back in order – somewhere safe to return to every night and the feelings of pride and security that this engenders," said MHSA Executive Director **Joe Finn**.

"MHSA and BSAS are on the forefront of what is proving to be a very successful approach. Together, we look forward to expanding this model - one that is truly revolutionizing the way homelessness and substance abuse are addressed in the Commonwealth."

EVENT: Home for Good: Join the Housing Revolution



Photos (Clockwise): Representative Byron Rushing presents the *William Lloyd Garrison Lifetime Achievement Award* to Representative Robert A. DeLeo. (Left to Right) Marc and Anne Margulies with the Bob Ray Family: Sandra Ray, Stephanie Eckersley-Ray, Tim Kannally and Jennifer Ray. MHSA Young Professionals (Left to Right) Mike Murphy, Maryanne Dearborn, Mark Pappalardo, Marissa Solomon and Matt Donatelle. Joe Finn with awardee Geraldine McCafferty, Deputy Director of Homeless and Special Needs Housing for the City of Springfield.



Continued from Page 1...

Joe Finn shared his excitement about the direction in which the state is moving – from an emergency response to permanent solutions – before the award presentations began. State Representative Byron Rushing presented the *William Lloyd Garrison Lifetime Achievement Award* to Representative DeLeo, Gerry McCafferty received the *MHSA Cornerstone Award* and Marc & Anne Margulies received the inaugural *Bob Ray Partnership Award*, named after the late Robert E. Ray, retired vice president at The Gillette Company, who used his business savvy and philanthropic spirit to develop new approaches to ending homelessness. Mr. Ray's widow, Sandra and two of their three daughters were on hand to share some stories about Mr. Ray's generous spirit and to present the award.

Guests continued to mingle after the presentations, bid

A NEW FACE AT MHSAs

Colleen Court, a second-year law student at New England School of Law, has joined MHSAs for the summer. Colleen will be researching legal issues surrounding presumptive eligibility, tenant rights and more. Welcome Colleen!

on silent auction items and enjoy the music and elegant atmosphere. Many were moved by the slide show and portrait gallery of homeless individuals, which reminded attendees that those we see on the streets and in shelters every day are family members – they are someone's mother, sister, brother or son – and that supporting MHSAs is a direct way to help these vulnerable individuals obtain keys to a happy, healthy new start.

MHSAs is grateful to the **Omni Parker House Hotel**, our sponsors, attendees and especially to photographer **Tara Morris** and **TLC Marketing**, who spent hours of donated time capturing images and crafting them into the slide show and portrait gallery. If you would like to support or be on the committee for next year's event, please contact Erin Donohue at edonohue@mhsa.net or (617) 367-6447 ext. 25.

Are you a young professional interested in ending homelessness? The MHSAs Young Professionals' Group offers opportunities to network and socialize while supporting the mission of MHSAs. To join, contact Erin Donohue at edonohue@mhsa.net or (617) 367-6447.

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 **JOIN THE HOUSING
REVOLUTION**