

# THE NORTH STAR

Volume 5, Issue 1

"Initiating Solutions to End Homelessness"

Winter 2009

## Moving Homeless Services to Housing: A Step in the Right Direction

The Patrick-Murray Administration has announced an initiative to reorganize the service system for homeless individuals and families, showing once again their commitment to developing permanent solutions to homelessness in the Commonwealth.

The Administration filed legislation under Article 87 of the Commonwealth's Constitution to shift emergency shelter programs and housing delivery systems from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).

The Patrick-Murray Administration filed the proposal on January 28, 2009 and it must be approved without amendment by the Legislature within 60 days.

Under the plan, DTA's homeless programs will be transferred to DHCD to help carry out a Housing First approach, recommended by the state Commission to

End Homelessness. Housing First strategies help individuals and families quickly access and sustain housing and have been proven to lower costs across state systems of care.

The planned reorganization aligns with the MHSA conviction that housing, rather than temporary shelter, is the solution to homelessness. Placing homeless programs within DHCD is a clear statement that housing must be central to any strategy to eliminate homelessness in the Commonwealth.

"We have started to implement the recommendations of the Massachusetts Commission to End Homelessness to respond to a housing and homelessness crisis precipitated by a worsening economy," said Lt. Governor Timothy Murray, Chairman of the state Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH). "Our proposal will reduce long-term shelter use, and help give homeless people what they really need – a permanent place of their own to call home."



Learn more about the reorganization by reading the Q & A with ICHH Executive Director Robert Pulster on page 2.

## Regional Networks: Statewide Innovations Ending Homelessness

In December 2008 the Patrick-Murray Administration announced plans to fund eight "Regional Network Innovations to End Homelessness" through the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH).

Networks, each separately led by a convening agency, are comprised of local jurisdictions, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, local housing authorities, private property owners, developers and others from the private sector.

According to ICHH, these Networks will help better coordinate, integrate and implement innovative services focused on securing permanent housing for homeless individuals and families, which will ultimately lessen the need for emergency shelters.

ICHH challenged Networks to re- envision how current systems of care and service delivery could be transformed to work more cooperatively and effectively.

Networks were required to demonstrate how they would eliminate existing barriers that prevent homeless people from accessing resources. ICHH listed *Home & Healthy for Good*, the statewide Housing First initiative conceived and overseen by MHSA, as an evidence-based best practice and example for Networks to use when planning their innovations.

In conjunction with the emphasis on permanent housing and better service delivery, it is expected that Regional Networks will deliver prevention services to populations at risk of homelessness. Networks were encouraged to develop effective systems of early warning, uniform assessment and decision-making, which would result in either avoiding the need for emergency shelter or dramatically reducing the length of stay in shelter.

To ensure a focus on eliminating homelessness, ICHH also required that there be at least one regional Plan to

End Homelessness in each Network. In keeping with this goal, Networks are required to use data collection systems to clearly track essential information such as demographics, reasons for homelessness, resources and services delivered and if consumers received the ultimate solution: stable, permanent housing.

"The revolution in the way Massachusetts addresses homelessness continues," said MHSA Executive Director Joe Finn. "We hope the work of the Regional Networks will propel us toward our goal: permanently ending homelessness in the Commonwealth."

The Regional Networks include: Boston, Metro Boston, North Shore, Merrimack Valley, South Shore, Cape and Islands, Worcester County and Western Massachusetts. For a list of convening agencies in each Regional Network, visit [www.mhsa.net](http://www.mhsa.net).



MHSA is a non-profit 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

Caitlin Golden, Social Action Ministries Coordinator

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.*

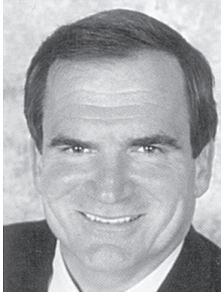
**Please use the enclosed envelope to send in your tax-deductible contribution today and be a part of this revolution.**

MHSA  
PO Box 120070  
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**MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOE FINN**

Massachusetts continues to move in the right direction. Homeless individuals are getting off the streets, out of shelters and into homes of their own. As we begin 2009, we are **closer than we've ever been** toward the ultimate goal of ending homelessness in the Commonwealth.

Recently, the Patrick-Murray Administration indicated their commitment to **housing-based solutions** to homelessness by proposing that emergency shelter programs be moved to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Additionally, the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH) has embraced the MHSA conviction that **keys cure homelessness** by encouraging regional networks across the state to use innovative, evidence-based best practices to solve the problem of homelessness.



After years of advocacy, the message is spreading rapidly.

People from all across the Commonwealth are joining efforts to **end, not just manage, homelessness**. Social Action Ministries of MHSA is engaging faith communities in the work of regional networks; the **MHSA Young Professionals Group**

is harnessing the energy and intellect of young leaders to forward new solutions for our poorest and most vulnerable neighbors; and MHSA, along with our member agencies, continues to work closely with the Legislature and Administration to advance our shared goal: permanently ending homelessness in Massachusetts.

Despite tough economic times, these positive developments continue to give us reason for hope.

**Q & A: ICHH Executive Director Robert Pulster**

*What is the rationale for the Article 87 proposal to transfer shelter programs from DTA to DHCD?*

The Patrick-Murray Administration is undertaking a comprehensive set of initiatives to reform the Commonwealth's emergency shelter and housing delivery systems. By integrating shelter and housing within a single department it will be easier to identify and address critical gaps in our housing delivery system.

The initiative also advances the recommendations of the Commission to End Homelessness by acknowledging that homelessness is primarily a housing issue. The proposal institutionalizes a Housing First approach, which will reduce reliance on long-term shelter stays.

*How will this transition affect the population served?*

The consolidation of housing and shelter programs within DHCD will advance the administration's goal of eliminating homelessness in the Commonwealth. As a result of the proposed restructuring, residents of the Commonwealth, whether they are facing housing challenges or not, can expect:

- More seamless access to housing services
- More effective use of state resources
- Better coordination and integration of services across systems and programs

- More timely and appropriate service responses at the local level
- Accelerated housing placements with support services
- A reduced need for shelters and the elimination of motels as a last resort for shelter

*Based on these changes, what will the homeless system look like in the future?*

The proposal will dramatically change the delivery of services offered to families and individuals that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. By consolidating shelter and housing and making use of best practices demonstrated through the ICHH Regional Network Innovations the Commonwealth will:

- Offer access to services that include a comprehensive assessment and provision of services that conform to the principle of *the right resources to the right people at the right time*
- Provide an expanded array of prevention and diversion resources to assist families and individuals to sustain housing
- Inform the housing production agenda by identifying specific housing supply needs and development opportunities
- Extend the supply of subsidized housing and supportive housing to extremely low-income individuals and households

## A Year in Review: MHSA Annual Meeting

MHSA member agencies, donors, young professionals, and members of the MHSA Board of Directors attended the **2008 MHSA Annual Meeting** at member agency Project Place on December 11, 2008. The evening featured light fare catered by HomePlate, a program of Project Place.

**Charles Gagnon** of SMOC opened the meeting and **Philip Mangano**, executive director of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness and former executive director of MHSA joined current **Executive Director Joe Finn** in presenting three recognitions.

The Board thanked **Reverend Canon Brian Kelley** (bottom, left) and **Sister Rose Gallogly** (bottom, right) for their years of dedicated service as members of the MHSA Board. MHSA also honored **Robert Pulster** (top) for his work to end homelessness



as executive director of the Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness.

**“I am humbled to stand here tonight as we recognize three committed advocates in the struggle to end homelessness in Massachusetts,”** said Finn.

In addition to the awards presentation, guests watched a slide show, created using images by photographers **John Deputy** and **Tara Morris** and created for MHSA by **TLC Marketing**. The slide show reminded those present that homeless individuals are family members: brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons or daughters.

After a brief review of MHSA's recent accomplishments, the Board of Directors voted and welcomed **Walter Osterman**, President of TLC Marketing and Founder and President of TORQ Marketing, to the Board.



## MHSA's Social Action Ministries: Faith Summit on Homelessness



**Social Action Ministries**, a program of MHSA, in collaboration with **Episcopal City Mission**, **One Family, Inc.**, and **United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley** held “A Faith Community Summit on Homelessness,” a dinner forum and discussion on the ways faith communities can be effective partners to end homelessness in

Massachusetts.

The dinner was held at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Framingham. Speakers included: The **Rt. Rev. Gayle Harris** (left), Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts, **ICHH Executive Director Robert Pulster**, and **Rev. Bob Bachelder**, Co-Chair of The Interfaith Coalition to End Family Homelessness: Central Massachusetts.

*Would you like to get involved in the mission of MHSA: ending homelessness in the Commonwealth?*  
 Visit [www.mhsa.net](http://www.mhsa.net) and click “Get Involved” for more information about what you can do through Social Action Ministries, the MHSA Young Professionals Group and more!

## MHSA Young Professionals Group: Join the Housing Revolution

On October 15, 2008, more than 200 young professionals attended the MHSA Young Professionals Group's first fundraising event, **Join the Housing**

**Revolution**, held at Revolution Rock Bar in Boston.

The event raised more than \$6,000 to support MHSA advocacy efforts to end homelessness in Massachusetts. Guests enjoyed live music performed by **Chris Mathison** of BearFight, raffle prizes, appetizers and complimentary **Maker's Mark** cocktails and **Harpoon Brewery** beer. Thanks to all who supported this event. **The revolution continues!**



Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance  
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SAVE THE DATE  
Thursday, May 14, 2009

Sixth Annual Spring  
Fundraising Event for MHSA  
Omni Parker House Hotel, Boston  
Cocktail Reception and Awards Presentation

Honorees

Boston City Council President Michael P. Ross  
Robert A. Glassman of Wainwright Bank  
Pine Street Inn's Paul Sullivan Housing Team

