



HomeStart

Winter 2022 | What Seemed Impossible...

- Ride in Solidarity with Unhoused Neighbors at This Year's ICycle Spin-A-Thon
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 - Run for HomeStart in the 2022 Boston Marathon ®!
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A NOTE FROM MATT PRITCHARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends,

Throughout this time of profound challenge, compassion, and collaboration, I've been inspired by how consistently the impossible becomes possible when a committed group of people make it their priority. Interventions like eviction moratoria, massively scaling up publicly-funded eviction diversion initiatives, altering Housing Court procedures to prioritize preserving tenancies through negotiated repayment agreements, and the kind of high-speed, high-impact citywide collaboration that's underway to rapidly find housing for unhoused neighbors displaced from Massachusetts Ave and Melnea Cass Blvd (which you'll read about later in this newsletter), **seemed politically impossible solutions – until they became a reality.**

After it became clear that the pandemic was causing hundreds of thousands of households to fall behind on rent, Housing Courts across the country began seriously considering –and implementing– ways they could prioritize non-eviction outcomes for households taken to court for back rent. Simultaneously, the federal government released a surge of funding distributed at the state level through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program.

As Matthew Desmond, Chief Investigator for the Eviction Lab, **shared during our Virtual Community Gathering** this past September, *these interventions worked to stabilize communities and save lives.* According to leaders in the field, these interventions, including the moratoria, were the third leading factor in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and variants, after vaccines and mask-wearing.

However, that infusion of federal funding for eviction prevention was temporary and eviction moratoria have ended. As of this month, Massachusetts has begun **restricting who's eligible for emergency rental assistance and reducing payouts** to conserve the dwindling emergency funding that remains. According to a recent federal report, experts fear that there will be an "eviction cliff" when the months-long backlog of pending evictions that were paused by moratoria will suddenly and rapidly begin moving again. Just since the moratorium ended in Massachusetts, **18,000 new eviction cases** for failure to pay rent have been filed and more than 4,300

executions have been issued allowing a landlord to evict a tenant, according to state Trial Court data.

As the City of Boston partners with HomeStart to ramp up the number of Housing Search advocates helping households pushed into homelessness to regain a stable home, HomeStart's Eviction Prevention services are critically needed to expand who's protected from becoming homeless. With temporary solutions coming to an end, it's up to all of us to come together in support of our neighbors, stabilizing our community.

Rather than being surprised by the once-unimaginable changes that arise from people uniting to answer a critical need, I'm grateful and recommitted to working together with you and a newly strengthened network of partner organizations throughout the city to continue our unimaginable, already-begun work of ending and preventing homelessness in Greater Boston. Thank you for your heartfelt support as a community and I'm grateful to continue reshaping what is possible with you in the year ahead.

Warmest Thanks,
Matt Pritchard



Matt Pritchard
President & CEO

RIDE IN SOLIDARITY WITH UNHOUSED NEIGHBORS AT THIS YEAR'S ICYCLE SPIN-A-THON

Greater Boston's only **OUTDOOR** spin-cycle fundraiser in the middle of **WINTER** is back!

On Thursday, February 17th at One International Place in Boston and Friday, February 18th at Kendall Plaza in Cambridge, teams will be gathering for a power half-hour of spin-cycling outside under a tent to help neighbors experiencing homelessness regain the warmth, safety, and stability of home.

We still have available class slots for Friday's spin-a-thon in Kendall Plaza, so it's not too late to [gather a team or register to ride solo.](#)

Staying Safe: ICycle is already an open-air event but we've taken additional precautions to make sure it's safe for everyone involved. These include reducing the density of spin-bikes by 30% and keeping classes to 30 minutes per hour block to avoid team overlaps between classes. There will also be two virtual classes (non-spinning, so no equipment needed) for anyone who wants to participate without being in-person.

COVID-19 Precautions:

-  **30% reduction in bike density per class from past years, classes capped at 20 riders**
-  **Classes kept to 30 minutes per hour block, avoiding team overlap and allowing for spin bike cleaning between classes**
-  **Masks required indoors, recommended while riding outside. Instructors will be behind a clear plastic windscreens**
-  **Two virtual fitness classes will be held for teammates who want to participate without being in-person, upon request (non-spinning, so no equipment required)**
-  **Additional safety precautions TBA based on evolving best-practice public health recommendations**

New In 2022: Thanks to the generosity of our friends at Morgan Stanley and Northland, this year's ICycle features brand new incentives for riders as they fundraise!

Every rider who raises the suggested minimum of \$350 will be entered to win two tickets to the Celtics vs. Dallas Mavericks game on March 13th, courtesy of Northland. The seats are Loge 11 Row 7, ten rows back from the free throw line. They're officially retiring Kevin Garnett's jersey that evening, so the winner will have prime seats to a historic night for Celtics Nation!

This year each participant will get an ICycle water bottle! Instead of handing out disposable plastic bottles, you'll be able to fill them up at water stations set up for the event.



If you're a cyclist beyond your annual ICycle ride, you can now ride with ICycle pride! All riders who raise over \$1,000 will receive one of our new ICycle-exclusive cycling jerseys as a gift.



HOMESTART AT 'MASS AND CASS'

If you [follow the news](#) in Boston you've probably heard about Mayor Wu's push to relocate unhoused Boston residents from encampments along "Mass and Cass"— Massachusetts Avenue and Melnea Cass Boulevard.

What you may not know is that HomeStart has been a core part of ongoing efforts to secure permanent affordable housing for the residents who've been displaced from these encampments. For over a year, HomeStart staff have collaborated closely with a coalition of partner agencies and the City of Boston as part of the City's Mass and Cass Advisory Council. Through these efforts, the coalition was able to help 154 unhoused neighbors move from "sleeping rough" in outdoor tents to staying in newly-created transitional housing accompanied by supportive services. The ultimate goal is for these former residents of the Mass and Cass encampments to be connected with a safe, stable place of their own to call home.

Seeing an opportunity to help, HomeStart assigned our Housing Search Program Manager, Dani Bloom, to serve as a Housing Search advocate exclusively for Mass and Cass. The coalition of providers is working together at an unheard of speed to achieve incredible results: connecting displaced residents with BHA rental subsidy vouchers, securing vouchers through other programs, and coordinating placements into available permanent supportive housing. With so many different players all moving as quickly as possible there is, inevitably, miscommunication and confusion that arises between different state agencies, providers, and clients. Because of HomeStart's position at the hub of all these entities, we've been able to play a key role in facilitating communication, speaking daily with clients to address these confusions and clarify any misinformation.

In the upcoming weeks, two more HomeStart Housing Search advocates will be added to support displaced residents through the entire process of locating, applying for, and moving into affordable, permanent housing. Additionally, they'll be working on the ground to locate and serve former Mass and Cass encampment residents who didn't go into transitional housing and instead relocated to motels, hospitals, or around the corner to Atkinson St.

RUN FOR TEAM HOMESTART IN THE

HomeStart is looking for one more runner to round out our 2022 Boston Marathon team!

This year's marathon will be held in-person on April 18th, following its historic route. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you or someone you know to run the Boston Marathon in a way that has a lasting impact on the city.

For more information and to apply, [click here](#).

Deadline to Apply: Monday, January 31st, 2022



News & Views:

The High Cost of Homelessness, Judges on the Importance of Diverting Evictions, Rent Control's Resurgence, & The COVID Housing Equity Bill

HomeStart highlighted as Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health professor discusses how assistance programs that reduce eviction rates and increase housing stability contribute to public health:

<https://www.milbank.org/quarterly/opinions/good-news-on-social-determinants-of-health-through-preventing-tenant-evictions/>

A reporter's in-depth account of the personal trauma –and cost– of experiencing homelessness:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/12/29/opinion/debt-homelessness.html>

Two high-ranking judges weigh in on the importance of eviction diversion initiatives like HomeStart's, in other states:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/13/opinion/housing->

[eviction.html](#)

Initiatives to legalize rent control in the state legislature are seeing a resurgence:

<https://www.masslive.com/politics/2022/01/like-housing-costs-interest-in-rent-control-running-high-in-massachusetts.html>

Read about the COVID Housing Equity Bill and give your feedback:

<https://www.homesforallmass.org/content/covid-19-housing-equity-bill-fact-sheet.pdf>

<https://www.homesforallmass.org/act/>

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