



HomeStart

Fall 2021 | Together We Are Home

- HomeStart Receives Record-Breaking \$1 Million Seed Gift from Northland
- HomeStart Hosts Its First Virtual Community Gathering—Featuring Matt Desmond, Pulitzer Prize-winning Author of *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*
- Congratulate Sarah Varney and Peter Hepburn, Team HomeStart's Runners in the 2021 Boston Marathon®!
- HomeStart's Newest Board Chair Honored by Lawyers Clearinghouse with Leadership Award
- Realtors Rally for HomeStart's Community Housing Assistance Fund
- Learn More About Legislation Impacting Neighbors Experiencing Homelessness or Housing Instability

HOMESTART RECEIVES RECORD-BREAKING \$1 MILLION SEED GIFT FROM NORTHLAND

Northland Investment Corporation, one of the country's leading real estate private equity firms, recently announced that it is donating a seed gift of \$1 million in support of HomeStart's differentiated approach to preventing homelessness before it starts and its potential to dramatically reshape the fight against homelessness. This represents the largest gift that HomeStart has ever received and the boldness of Northland's investment will hopefully inspire other corporate philanthropists to invest unrestricted funds that would allow HomeStart to strengthen and expand the foundation of our current services.

As Northland stated in their announcement, "This donation represents a key milestone in HomeStart's efforts to expand its offerings, including: scaling its disruptive and innovative eviction prevention model known as the Renew Collaborative beyond Massachusetts; piloting new innovative solutions to address housing insecurity; and doubling the number of clients served from 1,500 to

3,000. The donation's unrestricted nature enables HomeStart to utilize these funds in the most effective and direct ways, allowing it to have the greatest impact on the housing affordability crisis, with no caveats that may prevent the organization from reaching its objectives."

[**Read more about Northland's gift**](#)

**HOMESTART HOSTS ITS FIRST VIRTUAL COMMUNITY
GATHERING– FEATURING MATT DESMOND,
PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR OF
*EVICTED: POVERTY AND PROFIT IN THE AMERICAN CITY***

On Thursday, September 23rd the HomeStart community came together for 'Together We Are Home'– HomeStart's first ever virtual community gathering! Thank you so much to everyone who was able to join us and be a part of this time together. Introduced by Mayor Kim Janey and Pulitzer prize-winning author Matt Desmond, it featured frontline advocates, local leaders, and national experts discussing the impact of COVID on homelessness and housing instability across our state and nation. Thank you to everyone who joined us as we learned firsthand about how the pandemic is impacting our community and what we can do together to help.



"Issues of homelessness and housing instability don't exist in a vacuum, and we can't counteract the effects of generations of racially discriminatory housing policy, for instance, by solely focusing on individuals in crisis or stand-alone solutions. We don't need heroes or saviors– we need partnerships and collaborators from across ALL sectors and ALL walks of life to further broad-based movements for change."

[**Watch the full recorded program or browse through**](#)

CONGRATULATIONS TO SARAH VARNEY AND PETER HEPBURN, TEAM HOMESTART'S RUNNERS IN THE 2021 BOSTON MARATHON®!



Q&A with Peter Hepburn, Assistant Professor of Sociology at Rutgers University-Newark and Research Fellow at the Eviction Lab at Princeton University

When did you first start running and what do you enjoy about it?

I first started running when I was 22. I never much enjoyed it as a kid, but it started to click around that age and has continued to grow on me since. I enjoy the physical challenges that running provides—particularly long runs—and also the quiet, solitary time.

What has been the most challenging aspect of training for the 125th Boston Marathon?

The heat! Nearly all the previous marathons I've run have been in the spring, which means training in the winter. This time, by contrast, I was out training in July, August, and September. I'd much rather go for a run when it's 10 degrees and windy than when it's 75 and humid.

What part of HomeStart's mission resonates with you?

I'm **[an academic whose work focuses on eviction](#)** I aim to better explain the prevalence, causes, and consequences of housing loss in this country. I have so much respect for the hard but critically important work that HomeStart does. Providing safe, stable housing has so many important positive effects on people's lives, their families' and children's lives, and their communities.

What would you like non-runners to know about what it's like to run a marathon?

Running marathons is a lot of fun! This is my 12th, and every one of them has been a blast. Going for a long, hard run with a whole

bunch of people, huge crowds helping to cheer and push you on? It's exhilarating. The training can be a bit more challenging.



What Inspired Sarah Varney's Run?

"I am excited to run the 125th Boston Marathon in support of the incredible non-profit, HomeStart.

Over the last 25 years, HomeStart has permanently housed more than 14,000 individuals living on the street and in shelters, and has prevented nearly 4,000 families from experiencing homelessness in the Greater Boston area.

I strongly believe in their mission to not only help community members

experiencing homelessness obtain and maintain housing, but to also help families avoid eviction in the first place. HomeStart's focus on preventing families and individuals from experiencing the destabilizing trauma of eviction through advocacy, financial assistance, and ongoing supportive services is stabilizing communities and truly changing lives.

69% of Americans have less than \$1,000 in savings. As we weather the pandemic and begin to recover as a nation, many people are one emergency away from not being able to make rent."

CONGRATULATE PETER AND SARAH BY DONATING TO TEAM HOMESTART!

HomeStart is proud to be an official Partner of John Hancock in the Marathon Non-Profit Program. The Non-Profit Program provides over 1000 Boston Marathon® bibs to select non-profit organizations throughout the community, which provides organizations with a significant fundraising opportunity. Last year, John Hancock Non-Profit Runners raised over \$38.7M for their causes

HOMESTART'S NEWEST BOARD CHAIR HONORED BY LAWYERS CLEARINGHOUSE WITH LEADERSHIP AWARD!

HomeStart is excited to announce that Kenan Bigby, seasoned HomeStart Board member and Managing Director of Development at Trinity Financial, has stepped into the role of Chair for HomeStart's Board of Directors as of October 1, 2021. He recently received the **Stephen M. Nolan Leadership Award** from the Lawyers Clearinghouse for his work as an industry leader in affordable housing development and management.



[Click here to watch Kenan Bigby's address to HomeStart's Virtual Community Gathering last month!](#)

REAL ESTATE AGENTS RALLY FOR HOMESTART'S COMMUNITY HOUSING ASSISTANCE FUND



What is the Community Housing Assistance Fund (CHAF)?

In 1999, a private-public community coalition formed in response to the emerging crisis of homelessness and housing instability in Cambridge, spear-headed by local Realtors, businesses, and Cambridge-based banks in partnership with HomeStart. They saw a solvable problem: families and individuals experiencing homelessness rarely have the financial savings necessary to pay for the rental start-up costs required to move out of homelessness and into a new apartment.

Their answer was to create the Cambridge Housing Assistance Fund specifically to pay for rental housing startup costs such as first and last month's rent, security deposits, realtor's fees, and moving costs. Realizing that "our" homelessness crisis is increasingly a regional

crisis, CHAF has since expanded its scope to include Greater Boston, growing into the **Community Housing Assistance Fund**.

The Real Estate Community Unites in Support

This fall, real estate agents from across the city banded together to spread awareness about HomeStart's Community Housing Assistance Fund (CHAF) throughout the real estate community and to raise money for the fund. Rallied by Debbie and Holden Lewis of the **Denman/Drapkin Group at Compass**, the group of real estate community ambassadors **helped to raise \$100,000 for CHAF!**

For the families and individuals who HomeStart helps to transition out of homelessness this year, this money will serve as a guarantee that no financial hurdle stands in the way of moving into a new unit. State-funded assistance for startup costs is highly restrictive, both in who's eligible and what it can be used for. It can usually only be used to pay first month's rent, last month's rent, and a security deposit. In contrast, CHAF has also been used to pay for moving costs including storage unit and moving truck fees, as well as paying off old utility debts necessary for setting up utilities in a new unit.

Realtor's fees are another often-insurmountable barrier to renting a new unit– While most emergency assistance can't be used to pay Realtor's fees, CHAF can. **This drastically widens the pool of available rental units that our clients can access, speeding up housing search times.**

During the height of COVID-related closures, when our nation ground to a standstill, the assurance that CHAF could be used to cover clients' startup costs meant that advocates were able to proceed with the process of moving a client into a new apartment without waiting for the delays in accessing public funding. Even for clients whose start-up costs were ultimately covered by other programs, having CHAF available meant that payment was guaranteed so the housing process could proceed even while clients' applications for additional funding were still pending.

The Cities of Boston and Cambridge are both working with HomeStart to expand housing search services– adding almost a dozen advocate positions to help re-house neighbors pushed into homelessness by the pandemic. Start-up costs will be a significant barrier for many of these new clients– ranging between \$3,000-\$4,000 per household. Between money raised by CHAF community ambassadors within the real estate sector, socially-responsible community banks, and ongoing individual donations to CHAF, we have the opportunity to ensure that CHAF will be available to keep up with the increase in families and individuals who HomeStart is helping to transition into safe, permanent housing.

For more information on HomeStart's Community Housing Assistance Fund, visit **www.homestart.org/chaf**.

**JOIN IN THE BROADER WORK OF HELPING TO PROMOTE
HOUSING STABILITY IN OUR CITY BY LEARNING MORE ABOUT
THESE IMPORTANT POLICIES THAT WOULD IMPACT NEIGHBORS
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS OR HOUSING INSTABILITY:**

1) When evictions reach court, there is an immediate disparity of landlords versus tenants. Over 81% of landlords have legal representation in court, compared to the over 91% of tenants without legal representation. Right to counsel act H.1436/ S.874 gives more rights to tenants through legal representation access providing that everyone's day in court is equitable.

<https://www.massrtc.org/>

In June, Connecticut passed a right to counsel program and is funding it initially with federal American Rescue Plan Act dollars. Advocates for Right to Counsel in Massachusetts, including the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, are urging people to [ask their MA legislators to do the same](#) by passing right to counsel and starting it with \$78 million in ARPA dollars over three years as long term funding is identified.

2) While eviction is in process and when it cannot be prevented, there is a public and permanent record that causes an incredible barrier for future housing opportunities. We can prevent this from being a permanent barrier through the HOMES Act H.1808/S.921 - Housing opportunity and mobility through eviction sealing. This would seal pending cases (that do not yet have a judgment), cases seeking repairs, satisfied and remedied judgments, and cases over 3 years old while also providing online access or correcting errors and general management.

<https://www.passtheshomesact.org/>

3) COVID-19 threw housing stability to the wind for many tenants and homeowners. Preventing evictions and foreclosures due to COVID-19 requires equal access to resources. H.1434/S.891 An Act to prevent COVID-19 evictions and foreclosures and promote an equitable housing recovery provides this opportunity to both tenants and homeowners to know their rights and resources to avoid displacement. Access to resources would need to be provided prior to the process of filing for eviction and foreclosures.

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

SAVE THE DATE

ICYCLE 2022

Thursday, February 17th
and Friday, February 18th

More Information To Be Announced Soon

Questions or Inquiries?
Contact neff@homestart.org



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