

Owner Excellence Program

31 honorees provide exceptional service

MaineHousing recently honored 29 exceptional property owners and landlords who participate in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program during the agency's first Owner Excellence Program award ceremony in Augusta.

MaineHousing Director John Gallagher and HCV Program Director Lauren Bustard thanked the honorees for their commitment to ensuring that their lower-income tenants have a decent, safe, and affordable place to live.

MaineHousing's new Owner Excellence Program recognizes and rewards Section 8 HCV program participants who have solid property management skills and demonstrate a high level of dedication to their properties and their tenants. Landlords and property owners interested in receiving this distinction can apply with MaineHousing at any time.

"The Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program provides individuals and families with low incomes a chance to have a quality place to live," said MaineHousing Director John Gallagher. "The outstanding property owners and landlords we honor through the Owner Excellence Program also know how important it is to have a home and work to ensure a strong relationship with their tenants."

The Section 8 property owners or landlords being honored had a lease with an active tenant in the HCV program during the past year, and do not have a history of Housing Assistance Payment abatements, Fair Housing violations, or serious complaints on file. Also, they do not have a history of failure to enforce a lease, manage a unit, or follow other

OEP honorees

- ABL Management, LLC
- Avesta Cousens Housing, LP
- Betty Pooler
- Bread of Life Ministries
- Bruce MacDonald
- C.B. Mattson
- C & C Realty Management
- Calvin Burgess
- Cathleen Manchester
- Community Housing of Maine
- Community Concepts, Inc.
- Cummings Mill, LLC
- Dalton Scovil
- Daniel Frazel
- Facilities, Inc.
- James Russell Tarason
- Kent Stevens
- Lawrence Sturgeon
- Leonard Bard
- Mark Leo Cyr
- Matthew M. Smith
- Patterson Hill Housing Associates, LP
- Riverside Housing Associates, LP
- Roddy Theriault
- Ronald St. Amand
- Rural Community Action Ministry
- S and S Properties
- Salvatore DiStefano
- Troy Ripley
- York County Shelter Programs
- Gerald Hotel Associates

Section 8 HCV program rules or state laws, plus other requirements.

MaineHousing also asks property owners or landlords to list their available housing units on MaineHousingSearch.org, a free rental listing site for Section 8 HCV or market-rate landlords.

The 31 honorees represent 136 properties in: Mexico, Auburn, Rumford, Mars Hill, Bangor, Waterville, Oakland, Saco, Biddeford, Lisbon, Waldoboro, Kittery, Fryeburg, Brownfield, South Paris, Gray, Lincoln, Thomaston, Leeds, Fairfield, Fort Kent, Kennebunk, Damariscotta, Belfast,

Searsport, Augusta, Rockland, Wiscasset, Farmington, Denmark, Corinna, Norway, Skowhegan, Houlton, Calais, Madawaska, South Berwick, and New Sharon.

Each month, MaineHousing's Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program provides rental assistance to more than 3,800 income-eligible low-income tenants by subsidizing a portion of their monthly rent and utilities and paying it directly to their landlords. The assistance provided is the difference between what the tenant pays toward rent (generally 30-40% of the household's adjusted gross income) and the cost of the rent.

Mainely Landlords

Section 8 informational forums in The County draw audiences

More than 75 people who assist lower-income households in the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher program recently participated in MaineHousing's first landlord-property managers' information forums in Aroostook County.

Invitations to attend were sent to landlords, property managers, local housing authorities, caseworkers, legal services, and town code enforcement officers, and all were represented during the four mid-May sessions in Fort Kent, Madawaska, Presque Isle, and Houlton. Almost 60 participants were landlords or property managers.

The Housing Choice Voucher Program (also known as the Section 8 program) was created by the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, as amended, and is funded by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). This

program provides rental assistance to extremely low and very low-income families by issuing vouchers to search for rental property in the private rental market.

More detailed information about Section 8, including roles and responsibilities, determining rents, leases, inspections, the eviction process, and fraud, was covered along with contracts and other documents.

What was emphasized was that each partner – landlord, family, and others – have key to the success of the program, and their roles are defined in federal code and MaineHousing's Administrative Plan. Without the participation of landlords and property owners in providing affordable, decent, and safe housing units to eligible families, this program would cease to exist.

List your rentals for free at www.mainehousingsearch.org

MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability, age, familial status or receipt of public assistance in the admission or access to or treatment in its programs and activities. In employment, MaineHousing does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability or genetic information. MaineHousing will provide appropriate communication auxiliary aids and services upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing will also provide this document in alternative formats upon sufficient notice. MaineHousing has designated the following person responsible for coordinating compliance with applicable federal and state nondiscrimination requirements and addressing grievances:
Louise Patenaude, Maine State Housing Authority, 353 Water Street, Augusta, Maine 04330-4633, Telephone Number 1-800-452-4668 (voice in state only), (207) 626-4600 (voice) or Maine Relay 711.

Photos from the Owner Excellence Program award ceremony



MaineHousing Director John Gallagher with Mary Beth Paquette of Rural Community Action.



MaineHousing Director John Gallagher with John Richardson of Bread of Life Ministries.



MaineHousing Director John Gallagher with Cathie Whitney and Lisa Davies of C&C Realty Management and Tom Donahue of CEI Housing, Inc.



MaineHousing Director John Gallagher with Eric Ross of Community Concepts, Inc.



MaineHousing Director John Gallagher with Kyra Walker, Elizabeth Baranick, and Sara Gaba of Community Housing of Maine.



MaineHousing Director John Gallagher with Suzanne Walsh and Mark Johnson of Gerald Hotel Associates.

Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine earns national HUD honor

MaineHousing congratulates the Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine on its recent honor from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Secretary Julian Castro.

BEC was one of three recipients of the HUD Secretary's Award for Healthy Homes named on July 31. It was recognized for Public Policy initiatives.

"Paramount to the Coalition's mission were the facts that 1) smoke-free housing is much less expensive for landlords than maintaining rental units where smoking is allowed, and 2) providing smoke-free housing is legal in the U.S.," said HUD.

MaineHousing thanks landlords helping nursing home transitions

A huge thank you goes out to landlords that have provided housing to tenants that are transitioning out of nursing homes.

If you have an accessible unit or one that could be modified please contact Maureen Brown at 207 626 4695 or email at mbrown@mainehousing.org.

Home Retro program modifies homes of tenants with disabilities

MaineHousing's HCV and Energy and Housing departments are working to assist HCV tenants that need modifications to their apartment or home.

Modifications must be needed to retrofit the unit for someone with a disability that needs accessible features. Some examples might be the installation of keyless entry options or widened doorways to allow wheelchair entry.

The funds cannot be used in a unit that must comply Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act or for tenants that have funds available under other state or federal programs.

This is a small pilot program and will be offered until the funds are gone.

Please contact Maureen Brown at (207) 626-4695 or email at mbrown@mainehousing.org if you have a tenant that could utilize this program.

Erradicating bed bugs requires more action than spraying pesticides

Continued from Page 6

monthly, inspections, of high risk units. Inspections can be done by yourself or your staff – if educated on what to look for – or hired out.

In the long run, inspections pay for themselves because pests are much easier (and therefore, less expensive) to combat when there are less of them. Also, inspections allow you to discover and manage problems that could lead to infestations such as hoarding situations or improper food storage in a unit.

Monitoring can easily be done with the proper monitoring equipment. Receptor cups, glue boards and mattress encasements all allow you to find signs of pests before they become an out of control situation. Visit pestprotect.us or another similar site to purchase quality equipment.

Treatments

Of course there are times bed bugs or other pests are going to be reported or found and it is time to call in the professionals. Integrated pest management



is not about not using extermination methods. There are very definite circumstances where chemicals and/or heat are called for to fight bed bugs.

Integrated pest management is about using the proper method for the situation. Building structure, tenant lifestyle, cost effectiveness and other factors should be taken into consideration. But you will know exactly how to consider those factors – because you started your IPM program back at "education," right?

A note of caution

Integrated pest management has recently become a buzz phrase in the pest control

industry. You will be hard pressed to find a website that doesn't tote the latest "IPM METHODS".

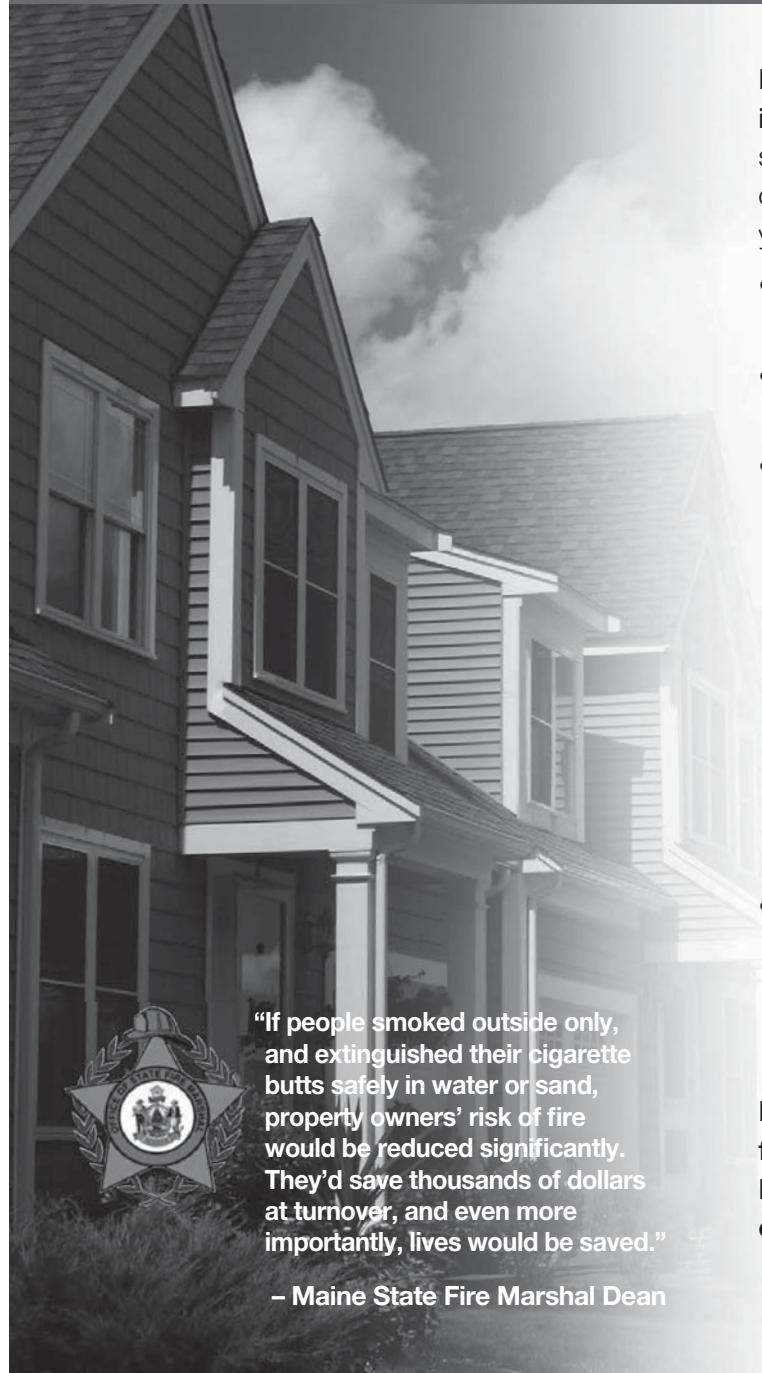
Unfortunately, true IPM may not be what is offered. Using the least amount of chemicals needed or the greenest chemicals available is only one part of integrated pest management. If you and your tenant are not involved in the solution being proposed, IPM is not being conducted.

Additionally, you need to note that it is integrated pest management. It is not integrated make-all-the-bugs-magically-disappear. There are 200 million insects for every human on this planet. Pests are not going anywhere. An IPM program will set you up to fight the battle in the most prepared way.

In summary

You may be thinking this IPM stuff sounds like a lot of work. In the beginning it will take some effort on your part. However, compare that effort to the work and involved with a bed bug infested building. Be proactive and not reactive.

Your rental property is an investment. Don't let it go up in smoke.



"If people smoked outside only, and extinguished their cigarette butts safely in water or sand, property owners' risk of fire would be reduced significantly. They'd save thousands of dollars at turnover, and even more importantly, lives would be saved."

– Maine State Fire Marshal Dean

In Maine, seven out of ten renters want to live in a smoke-free environment. By not allowing smoking in your building, you're giving them the clean environment they want, and protecting yourself from risk of fire.

- Prevent smoking-related fires in your building by making it 100% smoke-free indoors.
- Enforce your smoke-free policy as you would any other rule.
- If you choose to allow smoking outdoors, follow these safety tips:
 - Do not allow smoking near bark mulch or planters.
 - Any smoking should be at least 20 feet from entrances, doors, balconies, windows and air intake vents.
 - Require cigarettes, cigars, and other tobacco products to be properly disposed of in a non-combustible container with water or sand.
- Maine law requires property owners and managers to disclose, in writing, if and where smoking is allowed on a rental property (Maine PL 2011, Chapter 199).

For help implementing a smoke-free policy for your rentals, contact the Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine at (207) 874-8774 or info@smokefreeforme.org.



Save money and lives by adopting a smoke-free policy. It's a win-win for you AND your tenants.
www.smokefreeforme.org



Higher profits. Happier tenants. A healthier apartment.

The EPA has classified secondhand smoke as a class A carcinogen—the most toxic class of chemicals. The U.S. Surgeon General stated in a 2006 report “that there is no risk-free level of exposure to secondhand smoke.”

- There are no federal, state or local laws that prohibit a landlord, housing authority or condominium association from adopting a 100% smoke-free policy.
- Smoking is not a legal right as smokers are not a protected class under any state or federal law. Smoke-free policies do not infringe on the legal rights of individuals. Smoke-free policies are like any other lease provision, such as trash disposal or pet restrictions.
- Landlords and property managers who adopt smoke-free policies can save two to seven times the amount on the turnover of a unit.
- Under 22 M.R.S.A. §1542, the common areas of apartment and condominium complexes must be smoke-free. Secondhand smoke particles infiltrate everywhere, due to up to 65% of air exchange between units. Ventilation systems are designed to remove odors, not cancer-causing toxins in tobacco smoke. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating & Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) issued a position statement in 2005 that read, “At present, the only means of effectively eliminating health risks associated with indoor exposure is to ban smoking.”
- The Maine Human Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act prohibit discrimination in housing based on disability. Persons with respiratory disabilities may file suit to force landlords to make "reasonable accommodations" under the ADA if they are suffering from conditions exacerbated by involuntary exposure to secondhand smoke in a building that is not smoke-free.
- A Belmont, CA city ordinance now requires multi-unit residences to be entirely smoke-free. In other states, tenants have filed successful claims against landlords or other tenants using common-law theories such as trespass, breach of the warranty of habitability, breach of the covenant of quiet enjoyment, negligence and nuisance.

For more information on smoke-free housing policies, visit the Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine at www.smokefreeforme.org, call (207) 874-8774 or e-mail info@smokefreeforme.org

Eliminating pests takes integrated approach

By Jennifer Vella and Bob Lista

Prep Clean

Maybe it has already happened to you. That message from a tenant. That message that goes something like:

“Hi. It’s your tenant Jane. Timmy was sent home from school today because the school nurse said the bites on his arms are from bed bugs.”

You Google pest professionals in your area and pick the one with the best ad. He comes over and sprays chemicals in the unit (probably three times). You hand him your check and breathe a sigh of relief. You dodged that bullet. Or so you think. Then a month later your voice mail gives you these messages:

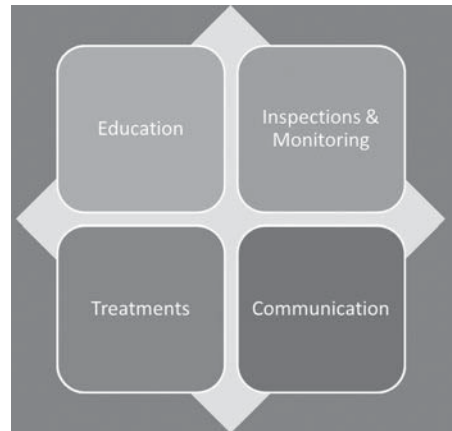
“Hi. Jane here. I saw new bites on Timmy this morning. I think the bed bugs are back.”

“This is Mrs. Smith. I live next door to Jane. I noticed some insects on my couch over the weekend. My son says they are bed bugs.”

“Mr. Jones here. I have heard there are bed bugs on the second floor. I’m just warning you that if I find any in my apartment I am calling HUD. You better be taking care of this!”

We could write a whole different article on what may or may not have gone wrong. What we would rather do, however, is inspire you to implement an Integrated Pest Management Program to protect yourself, your staff, your tenants, your building, and your wallet.

Integrated Pest Management, or IPM, is a fancy way of saying “think first, spray last” when you are dealing with pests in your home or business. It is a common sense, proactive approach to pest management that focuses on creating an unfavorable environment through elimination of their food, shelter and water. IPM combines education, communication, inspections and monitoring, and treatments to combat pest problems in a way that considers the



Integrated Pest Management System

health and welfare of people and the environment. And, probably of most interest to you as a landlord, IPM has been proven to be very cost-effective when implemented properly and conducted faithfully.

A side note: This article will focus on using IPM in connection with bed bugs. However, integrated pest management works for all pests and in all situations. Whether you have mice in the country, roaches in the city, or head lice in a school, IPM is the sensible approach.

As we mentioned, IPM results from the combination of education, communication, inspections and monitoring, and treatments.

Education

Education refers to teaching yourself, your staff and your tenants about bed bugs, how to look for them, and how to prevent them. There is a wealth of information on the internet, and I would recommend checking out the site: www.stoppests.org. In addition, my company, Prep-Clean, LLC, as well as several pest professionals, offer seminars on bed bugs, other pests, and related topics.

Why is education important? To begin with, teaching your staff and tenants on how to look for bed bugs gives you an army of in house inspectors to catch

infestations early, when they are easiest to treat. In addition, your tenants are required by law to comply with measures to manage bed bug activity – but they cannot comply with what they don’t know. Education helps to put some liability back in the tenants’ hands. And, the even better news is, we have found, educated tenants are naturally more vested in their personal roles of pest management.

Education for yourself allows you to make more educated decisions about what actions to take and where to most effectively spend your pest control budget. Compare it to having work done on your car: if you know nothing about cars, you have to trust the mechanic’s evaluation and pay the corresponding costs. However, if you know about car engines you can have an educated discussion with your mechanic to decide the best option – for performance and budget concerns.

Communication

Communication refers to yourself, your staff, your tenants and your pest professional exchanging information on a regular basis. Emails, telephone calls, reports – it’s all communication.

Open lines of communication tend to occur naturally after some education is offered. The stigma associated with bed bugs begins to fall away and people are more likely to talk about what they know and find. This leads to several positive results, such as: the reporting of finding bed bugs so that combative efforts can begin; less accusations among tenants and more constructive conversations; and team members share information to approach infestations in a more efficient manner.

Inspections and Monitoring

If, as a landlord, you decide not to adopt any other aspect of IPM, we urge you to implement regular inspections and monitoring of your units. Consider bi-annual inspections of units with no risk of infestation; consider quarterly, or even

Continued on Page 7

Smoke-free housing can save money, lives

By Nancy Laite

Knox County Community Health Coalition

Smoke-free housing is a smart business decision, and the right decision for the health and well-being of your tenants. Many in the rental housing industry, both in Maine and across the country, have learned that adopting a smoke-free policy for their buildings is a win-win situation.

According to The Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine (BEC), the majority of Maine multi-unit housing residents would prefer to live in smoke-free housing, and 43% state that they would even be willing to pay more to live in a smoke-free environment.

In addition to supporting happier tenants, smoke-free housing policies reduce the risk of property damage and lower unit turnover costs. On average, it costs 5-10 times more to turn over a unit when smoking has been allowed than if the property owner/manager had adopted a smoke-free policy.

Disclosure law - smoking policy

Maine’s latest disclosure law requires landlords, property owners, and managers to notify tenants, in writing, about where smoking is allowed, if anywhere, on the property. This requirement is similar to other Maine disclosure laws around lead paint, bed bugs, and energy efficiency.

In 2011, Gov. Paul LePage, signed LD1067, An Act to Improve Awareness of Smoking Policies in Maine Rental Housing (PL 2011, c. 199), into law. To comply, landlords, property owners, and managers must provide written notification, either as a provision of the lease agreement or as a separate written document, of the current smoking policy to tenants entering into a rental agreement.

This law does not require landlords to adopt a smoke-free policy, simply to educate tenants about whether or not they may be exposed to secondhand smoke.

For More Information

Contact Nancy Laite, Knox County Community Health Coalition, a local Healthy Maine Partnership, at nllaite2@myfairpoint.net or (207) 236-6313, Ext. 2 for sample smoke-free housing policies and guidance on how to go smoke-free.

The Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine also helps landlords, property managers,

and owners. Learn more about the case for smoke-free housing, view template policy language, tips for policy implementation and enforcement, and support for smoke-free housing through their program, The Smoke-Free Housing Coalition of Maine, at www.smokefreeforme.org or (207) 874-8774.

Ensuring that tenants are aware of the smoking policy of a given property is beneficial to landlords, property owners, and managers as it can help reduce complaints by tenants.

Fire hazards

Did you know that smoking is a leading cause of residential fire death? According to the Maine State Fire Marshal, “In the U.S. and Canada, 25% of fatal fires are attributable to improperly disposed smoking materials. In Maine, at least 30% of fatal fires are related to tobacco products, and it may be as high as 40% because not every cause of fire can be determined.”

In 2015, there have been more than 14 deaths caused by fire in Maine. The majority have been either smoking or tobacco-related.

- In 2011, there were an estimated 90,000 smoking-material fires in the United States. These fires caused 540 deaths, 1,640 injuries, and \$621 million in direct property damage. *
- One out of four fatal victims of smoking-material fires is not the smoker whose cigarette started the fire. *
- Most deaths result from fires that start in bedrooms (40%), or in living rooms, family rooms or dens (35%). *

* Source: NFPA’s “The Smoking-Material Fire Problem” report by John R. Hall, Jr., July 2013.

Tenant demographics

The Breathe Easy Coalition of Maine also have some interesting facts out tenant preference. If you think that you might lose out on tenants and rental income if you go smoke-free, think again. Here’s why:

- 82% of Maine adults are non-smokers. (*Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System Survey Data 2009*)
- Recent Maine public housing surveys indicate that as many as 78% of tenants would choose to live in a smoke-free complex.

Smoke-free housing policies are legal:

- There is no legal barrier to enacting a smoke-free policy. People who smoke are not a protected class under Maine or federal anti-discrimination laws.
- You can make your entire property smoke-free, including all apartment units and outdoor spaces.
- Change the language of the lease to include a smoke-free policy. When new or renewing tenants sign, the policy will be clear.