



City setting sights on lead poisoning in kids

Liz Hoffman

When Taina Polanco bought her South Dorchester home in February of 2006, she worried about plenty of things: her job, improving her English, and making sure her 3-year-old daughter brushed her teeth in the morning.

But while chatting with a friend in a local beauty salon last April, Polanco learned about something that had never crossed her mind.

"My friend had bought a house but couldn't live there because it had lead paint," said Polanco, who was five months pregnant at the time.

"I think, 'What if my house has it, too?' I never worried about that before. It's scary when you worry about where you live."

As it turned out, Polanco's house did have lead paint. But thanks to a refocused citywide campaign, Polanco, her daughter, and her now-5-month-old son can all sleep easy.

Polanco benefited from the out-

reach, testing, education and financial resources of the Boston 2010 Project, a collaboration between city agencies and nonprofits aiming to eliminate childhood lead poisoning in the city by the end of the decade.

Two years after its founding, the initiative has refocused its efforts to target several neighborhoods, like

Dorchester, that have lagged behind the monumental drop in cases citywide.

"The numbers are down overall, but this is definitely part of the story of health disparities," said Robert Pulster, executive director of Ensuring Stability through Action in our Community (ESAC) and head of the

2010 project's outreach committee. "Poorer neighborhoods have bigger problems with this, and children are still at risk."

Children's bodies absorb lead more easily than those of adults, and because their brains are still developing, the effects are far more damaging. Elevated blood lead levels can

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Children from Roxbury, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan and Roslindale enjoy teddy bears and help showcase the annual Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD) Toy Drive at a holiday party for Jamaica Plain Head Start children at

sponsor Wainwright Bank last week. The ABCD Toy Drive serves children from low-income families in every Boston neighborhood. To find out how you can help, call 617-348-6559 or visit www.bostonabcd.org. (Photo courtesy of ABCD)

A hunger to serve

For clients of Community Serving, the path to health goes through the stomach

Victoria Cheng

From succulent peach cobbler to hearty macaroni and cheese or spicy Spanish beef, there are certain foods that just always taste like home. These are the dishes Community Servings is intent on delivering.

The organization, originally based in Dorchester and now located in Jamaica Plain, was founded 18 years ago as a program to provide home-cooked meals to Boston residents diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. From an original clientele of 30 people who received three meals a week, the service has since expanded to include individuals with any illness, from cancer

to kidney failure, and now provides 700 people from Lynn to Lawrence with three squares a day, five days a week.

As the only program of its kind in New England, Community Servings also operates on two unusual principles, said executive director David Waters.

The range of available options caters to the sensitive needs of the organization's clientele, many of whom have very little appetite due to their medication, according to Waters.

"We have 22 different medically tailored diets, including diabetic, bland, low-fat [and] vegetarian; we chop the food if you can't chew; and just a year ago we started a kids' menu," he said.

The program also addresses an

often-overlooked facet of food: what he called "the emotional aspect."

"When you're sick or perhaps dying, you're reverting back to your childhood," said Waters, "and we all have food from our own cultures that remind us of our childhood."

These foods, he explained, not only provide motivation to people with illnesses to eat despite their lack of appetite, but also, by creating a nostalgic memory of youth, can make them feel safe.

Bodies struggling with illness need nutrients for survival and recovery. This was a key impetus for the creation of Community Servings, especially in the program's early years, before the development of effective treatment for HIV/AIDS, when an HIV-positive diagnosis was a summary

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Hub nonprofits cultivate small business owners

Michelle Sedaca

These days, sunshine greets Yvonne Jones as she enters her recently opened Hali Day Spa & Salon in the Crosstown Center in Roxbury.

A self-described "sunny person," Jones says her business's bright, golden logo reminds her "to stay bright and think positive." Inside, cheerful orange walls and meditative music create a sense of serenity within the 2,100-square-foot space.

The days used to bristle with tension for Jones, who worked as a property manager for private and public housing developments in Boston for the past 20 years. Through her spa, she now provides release for others with a variety of tempting choices including Swedish, hot stone and deep tissue massage.

"It was my lifelong dream to open my own business," said Jones, a longtime Boston resident originally from Jamaica. Her journey towards realizing that dream and opening Hali — which happens to be her daughter's

middle name and means "original, precise, exact" in Swahili — began after attending the Massage Institute of New England in 2001. Working at a day spa for five years helped her hone her massage skills.

In addition to massage, Hali offers a wide array of pampering treatments such as facials, manicures, pedicures, waxing and hairstyling. The spa's small staff includes four massage therapists and a manicurist/pedicurist. Also on board is Jones' longtime friend Zory Jenkins, who serves as a hairstylist and cosmetologist, providing waxing and nail services to customers.

Jones' experience in the spa industry before starting her own business was key, according to Deidra MacLeod, a small business technical assistant at

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Members of the red-hot Boston Celtics recently stopped in for a recent visit at Children's Hospital Boston to bring smiles to patients and their families. New superstars Ray Allen (left) and Kevin Garnett were joined by Tony Allen, Glen Davis, Kendrick Perkins and Eddie House as they went room to room, giving out autographed shirts, taking pictures and dropping off gift donations. Here, Allen shakes hands with Julissa Lagos' son Ashon. (Photo courtesy of Children's Hospital Boston)

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