



## *Action for Public Health*

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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\* PHOTO ATTACHED \*

### **The “Breath of Life Dorchester (B.O.L.D.) Teens” Accept the *Public Service Award* from Statewide Advocacy Organization *Massachusetts Public Health Association presents award at its 133<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting***

Boston, MA – The Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) has presented its 2012 *Public Service Award* to the B.O.L.D. Teens of Dorchester for their leadership and commitment to improving public health in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

B.O.L.D. Teen Coordinator Ms. Gerlada Sylvain and longtime organizational coach Rev. Bill Loesch accepted the award on behalf of the 14-18 year old teens who were in school during MPHA’s 133<sup>rd</sup> annual meeting on Friday, November 16, 2012, in Westborough, MA. “The B.O.L.D. Teens continue to make changes in their own lives, but more so by helping to make and change policies to improve the agencies and environment around them through prevention and community health.”

In presenting the award, MPHA cited the B.O.L.D. Teen’s work to identify and address safety and health concerns to make their community a more environmentally-just and socially-just place. “We’re thrilled to honor this impressive organization,” said MPHA Executive Director Toby Fisher. “Year after year these teens work to make Dorchester’s Codman Square neighborhood a better place to live, work, play, and learn—and they do it in a way that attracts their younger siblings and friends to carry on,” he added.

The B.O.L.D. Teens began in the 1990s as “Teens Against Tobacco” (funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health) after several youth lost loved ones to smoking-related illnesses. They helped the Boston Public Health Commission to make Boston smoke-free in 2003 and worked with Tobacco Free Massachusetts to ensure the rest of the state followed suit in 2004. Also in 2003 the B.O.L.D. Teens began a multi-year campaign to convince the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) to ban the sale of tobacco in all pharmacies. BPHC instituted this ban in 2009, making Boston the second city in the U.S. to do so.

In 2000, B.O.L.D. Teens began to make the connection between second-hand smoke and the poor air quality in Dorchester and began to address air quality, lead poisoning, energy efficiency, and green space issues.

In 2006, B.O.L.D. Teens decided to expand their focus to address crime and violence by urging peace, in partnership with the Louis Brown Peace Institute in Dorchester and began working closely with the Codman Square Neighborhood Council to develop relationships among families and law enforcement.

In 2007 the BOLD Teens helped start the Codman Square Farmers Market and are still very much involved in making it a weekly source of fresh, affordable food in their community.

In 2012, to help combat heart disease, diabetes, and obesity the B.O.L.D. Teens began co-sponsoring and leading a weekly “Walkers & Talkers” group that does multiple things: (1) the walkers (10 to 12 people each week) get to exercise outdoors and socialize with their neighbors; (2) the walks highlight historical sites in Dorchester to enrich local knowledge and pride; and (3) the walkers shop at, monitor and share ideas with local merchants, and when stores qualify, they receive “Healthy on the Block” posters. More information about the B.O.L.D. Teens is available at [www.boldteens.org](http://www.boldteens.org).

### **Massachusetts Public Health Association**

The Massachusetts Public Health Association (MPHA) is a statewide membership organization that seeks through advocacy, education, coalition-building, and organized action to improve the public’s health, promote the establishment of health care as a human right and secure optimal community, personal, and environmental health. MPHA educates and mobilizes a statewide membership to action for public health, with a focus on prevention. MPHA was organized in 1879 as the nation’s first public health association and has become the state’s leading voice calling for high impact public policy solutions to critical health problems.



PHOTO: From left to right: Ms. Geralda Sylvain, Mr. Toby Fisher, Rev. Bill Loesch  
Taken by David Weed

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