



A Message from the Executive Director


As we say goodbye to winter, we warmly welcome the arrival of spring: a time of new beginnings. JAS is thrilled to be expanding our work to empower our communities. This includes our newly-launched Financial Capability Program, which is underway helping our residents and other low- to moderate-income community members by providing free tax services, avoiding costly tax preparation fees. Additionally, a new grant from the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority will allow us to begin renovations on some of our high-priority affordable housing units. As we embark on new programs and improve our existing ones, I am proud of the positive impact JAS continues to have on the community members we serve.

50 York Street Construction Updates

JAS invites you to follow official updates on the [coUrbanize](#) page on JAS's website ([www.justastart.org](#) and click on the "50 York Updates" button along the top of the home page). We're working hard to replace the 16 affordable lost in the December 2016 fire, and will post regular updates to minimize disruption to the neighborhood. You can also post comments or questions, and you will get a response from a JAS staff member.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Cambridge Fair and Affordable Housing Open House: April 29, 2017, 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM,
Cambridge Rindge and Latin School Main Cafeteria
Includes panel discussions, presentations and outreach. Get your housing questions answered by organizations serving Cambridge, including JAS.

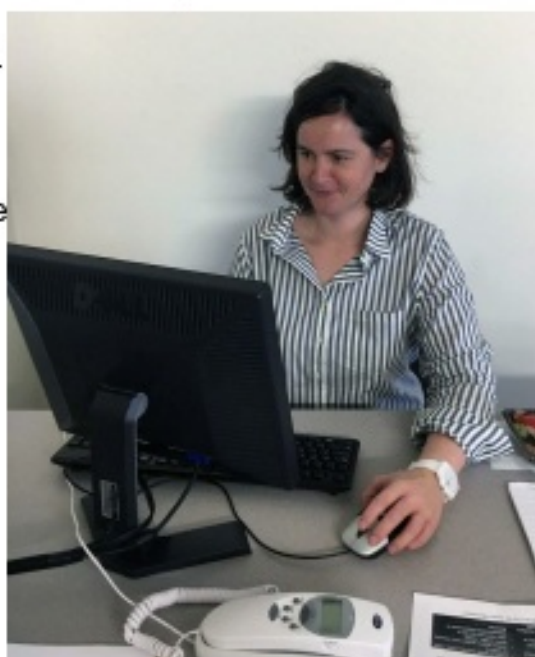
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JAS Offers Free Tax Preparation

JAS's Financial Capability Program is offering free tax preparation for low-income community members. Thus far, we have completed returns for 34 clients and assisted 12 additional clients in gathering the materials needed to complete their returns. Our assistance has helped to secure total refund amount of approximately \$54,000. This service is especially useful to clients for whom language barriers make it difficult for them to access tax preparation resources on their own. This program's success has largely been due to the great work of our seven volunteers, including students from Brandeis and UMass Boston, a retired attorney, and a professional tax preparer who assists with quality review and complicated returns. Each of our volunteers went through the IRS certification process. The Financial Capability Program is funded through the generosity of Santander and Capital One. [Click here for more information on free tax services available to low-income clients until April 18th.](#)

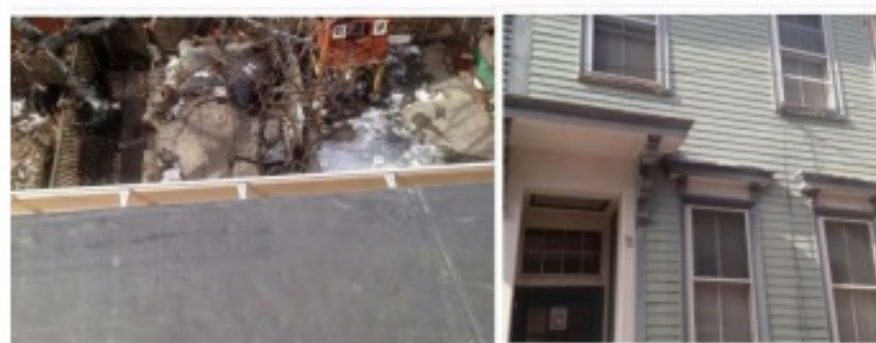


Over \$1 Million Saved by JAS Mediation

The mediation and conflict resolution program at JAS helps resolve disputes between tenants, landlords, homeowners, and others by creating safe, neutral forums for meaningful dialogue. Over the past 18 months, the mediation team has recovered over \$1 million for parties involved in mediated cases which include both landlord-tenant cases and small claims. The funds recovered, however, only reflect part of the value of the mediation. This amount does not reflect the number of no-fault eviction cases where no money is involved; the extended time people may receive to look for alternate housing; referrals to programs to avoid homelessness; or cases in which people who could barely be civil to each other at the beginning of the process end up shaking hands in the end.

Home Improvement Program (HIP) Highlight

Through HIP, JAS provides opportunities and resources to low- to moderate-income property owners to secure and manage financing for housing improvements. This winter, the HIP program was able to assist a Cambridge resident with an emergency roof repair at her home. Her roof had sustained weather damage and she was in danger of losing her homeowner's insurance. Through the guidance of rehab specialist Dave McNamara, JAS was able to help her secure a loan to repair the roof. All work was completed within a 2-week period and the home owner was able to keep her homeowner's insurance.



CRA Invests in JAS

JAS received \$540,000 of funding from the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) for the installation of fire suppression systems in JAS buildings. This sprinkler installation is part of a larger consolidation project which includes the renovation of 96 units and new construction of 16 units at 50 York Street, replacing those damaged by the December 2016 fire. The CRA grant will specifically impact 46 units across 9 buildings. The CRA's willingness to partner with JAS for this critical component of the renovations provides a public safety benefit to both JAS residents and the surrounding neighborhood.

