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ROXBURY

## Donations needed to aid 24 families displaced by Roxbury fire

Posted by Matt Rocheleau November 10, 2011 03:04 PM

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Six-year-old Xavier Lara was carried by a police officer after being dropped from a window into the arms of a firefighter, during a mid-October fire that displaced two dozen Roxbury families.

By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Donations are still “urgently needed” in order to help two dozen Roxbury families forced from their homes after a six-alarm fire ravaged an apartment complex in mid-October, according to the nonprofit development company that owns the badly damaged property.

More than 75 residents were displaced, including around one dozen who were injured, when a Medford man allegedly set off an early morning explosion on Oct. 17 in what authorities believe was a suicide attempt. The explosion tore through Wardman Apartments complex and ignited one of the most destructive fires in recent city history.

While heroic rescue efforts helped prevent fatalities, the affected families are in need of assistance, according to nonprofit housing developer Urban Edge, which owns the apartment complex in partnership with Massachusetts Housing Investment Corporation.

Since the fire displaced tenants that range in age from young children to elderly, Urban Edge has been assisting the 24 affected families with relief and relocation and has established the Wardman Emergency Fire Relief Fund.

The nonprofit’s president and CEO Chrystal Kornegay said today that the fund

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has raised close to \$11,000 to date, but that pales in comparison to the more than \$100,000 already spent on temporarily housing families in hotels underwritten by Urban Edge. Money has also been spent to provide families other basic necessities.

The relief fund has no set goal it hopes to reach because the total cost of aiding the fire victims remains unknown. Kornegay said by phone Thursday she expects it will total in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

“There have also been many thoughtful gifts of clothing and other household items that will assist the families in need. At this time the most important objective is to raise funds to cover expenses already incurred and yet to come,” Urban Edge said in a statement. “The donors’ care and concern for the Wardman victims define our understanding of family and community.”

Donations to the Wardman Emergency Fire Relief Fund, which are tax-deductible, can be made by visiting Urban Edge’s website, [www.urbanedge.org](http://www.urbanedge.org), or by mailing a check to: Urban Edge at 1542 Columbus Ave., Roxbury, MA 02119. Checks should note “Fire Relief.”

Six families have already moved back into their apartments. But, six other families are not expected to be able to return until the calendar year’s end, while a dozen other families will require “a much longer-term solution,” the executive director said.

The fire required immediate demolition of five units in the section of the building where 12 families lived. The other seven units have not demolished but are uninhabitable, according to Kornegay. The future of that 12-unit section of the building remains uncertain, she said.

“The courageous and gracious responses of the residents in alerting and aiding their neighbors at the complex along with the heroic work of the firefighters prevented loss of life from a blaze that could have been deadly,” Urban Edge said in a statement.

The nonprofit thanked first responders, victims, their families and friends for supporting one another, and “for facing this catastrophe with dignity and resolve.” Urban Edge also thanked property manager WinnResidential and two sister housing developments, the Academy Homes I Tenants’ Council and the Theroch Apartments Tenants Association.

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*E-mail Matt Rocheleau at [mjrochele@gmail.com](mailto:mjrochele@gmail.com).*



An explosion and resulting six-alarm fire destroyed a large apartment building in Roxbury last month.



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