

## Residents displaced as fires ravage city neighborhoods

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Staff Reporter

In a period spanning less than a full week, several Boston communities have been hit by a spate of fires leaving thousands of dollars in damage and displacing, at least temporarily, dozens of residents.

On Feb. 25, a four-alarm fire, which began at 7 p.m. inside 39 Columbia Rd. in Dorchester and quickly spread to 43 Columbia Rd., displaced 14 residents and injured three, including one firefighter.

On March 3, a fire that started on the first floor of an Empire Street apartment building in Brighton sent people scrambling into the streets to avoid the flames.

And, last Thursday morning, a family of seven was displaced from their D Street Housing development apartment in South Boston after a fire quickly swept through their residence.

Though all inside the apartment on West Broadway escaped the fire without serious physical injury – the lone person hospitalized from the fire due to smoke inhalation was reportedly doing fine – the damage done to the now-uninhabitable apartment was believed to be somewhere in the \$25,000 range.

The Dinsimore family has since been placed into a smaller apartment in the Mary Ellen McCormack housing development, and through several charitable donations and assistance

from Julie's Family Learning Center – a community based family support and education program – as well as the City of Boston, they are slowly beginning to regain some semblance of the life they led just days earlier.

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—Amy Malkemes,  
Director of Development, Julie's  
Family Learning  
Center

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Already, the family has received several donations of clothing, furniture, and essentials thanks to the lead work of Julie's and other organizations such as the Red Cross, Cradles to Crayons, and the Mass Coalition for the Homeless, though more will be needed in the long and short term.

"More is definitely needed," Amy Malkemes, director of development at Julie's, said. "We have this emergency line item that we can draw from, but there is a need for some specific kinds of items."

Malkemes said that, though

the line item allows Julie's to reach out and provide current and former members - and others - with desperately needed financial assistance and supplies, there is always an opportunity to utilize more donations for people in need.

"We [once] had a suicide happen and the mother had no money to pay for anything," Malkemes said. "We helped to take care of that situation and it was able to happen based on that line item. We were able to make those monetary donations [in that case] and we work with families, but what about other families? We want to try and prevent them from going back into homelessness when [tragedies] occur.

"We can definitely use food and gift cards," Malkemes continued. "We need those store gift cards so that people can buy shoes or food that they need. We're putting that at the forefront more than before. And the families that we're working with know that it's not a handout we're giving them. They know it's helping them and supporting them."

Donations of clothing and small furnishings such as coffee makers, pots and pans, utensils, and bedding can be dropped off at Julie's at 133 Dorchester St., Monday through Friday between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m., or contact Sr. Jean at [jsullivan@jflp.org](mailto:jsullivan@jflp.org).

To learn more about the Mass Coalition for the Homeless visit [www.mahomeless.org](http://www.mahomeless.org).