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SOUTH END

At Cathedral, tenants take initiative on family issues

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When help is offered to residents of the Cathedral housing development, longtime resident Ruth Barkley has noticed that information most often targets teenagers.

Not that there is anything wrong with that. But other tenants could also benefit, said Barkley, a 77-year-old great-grandmother and a resident of the Washington Street development since 1965.

"This is a family development," said Barkley, "so therefore it should be treated like a family."

So Barkley leaped at the chance last year when she saw fliers circulating on the property that urged residents to tap grants when public funding isn't there.

She thought about how she could help parents struggling to raise their young and the elderly battling an assortment of health problems.

Barkley, who heads the tenants' task force, got her chance in October when the task force won a \$3,000 grant from the Partners in Health and Housing Prevention Research Center, based at Boston University's School of Public Health.

With the grant, Barkley and Joseph Jean, another tenant leader, have been running a series of workshops aimed at training whole families. Topics range from elderly health to addiction issues. In the next few months they will hold sessions for parents and their children. A workshop aimed at the elderly was held in October.

To Barkley, the training sessions are well worth it.

"I've seen a lot of Cathedral," she said. "I've watched the hardships of parents here. It's not easy. So as much information as we can bring them, it will help curtail all these extra avenues of burden."

MEGHAN IRONS ■

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