

# The Daily Item

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## Bridgewell gets \$1.7M in new federal funding

By David Liscio/The Daily Item

LYNNFIELD - Bridgewell — the Lynnfield-based organization that assists area residents with developmental disabilities — will receive \$1.7 million in federal funds to rebuild a residential facility in Lynn that was torched in November 2008.

The money from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) will be used to construct nine housing units for nine residents with developmental disabilities or physical impairments at 28-30 Lewis St. in Lynn. A 10th unit will house the resident program manager.

The building, which is currently boarded up will allow the occupants to live independently.

"I'm sure the neighbors will be pleased," said Cari Palmer, Bridgewell director of development, noting the Lewis Street facility opened in 1989.

"It has been closed since the fire. We're hoping to get it up and running again in the fall."

Donald G. Armstrong, then resident of a Bridgewell facility on Paradise Road in Swampscott, was charged with arson in connection with the fire. The six-unit building was fully occupied when the fire broke out. Armstrong was released by the court with stipulations he wears an electronic monitoring bracelet and submit to random alcohol and drug testing. The case is pending.

Once the new units are completed, the state Department of Developmental Services will refer residents for occupancy.

Robert S. Stearns, chief executive officer at Bridgewell, said the grant is the third of its kind that the non-profit organization has received in the past three years. The flow of grant monies indicates the Bridgewell is clearly seen — on both state and federal levels — as a leader in the disabilities arena, he said.

"During these challenging economic times, it's critical that our communities continue to be able to offer affordable housing, especially housing for senior citizens and adults with disabilities," said U.S Rep. John F. Tierney, a Salem Democrat instrumental in obtaining the HUD funds.

Tierney said the money will help Bridgewell build housing for local residents who require supportive services. "It will allow more people with disabilities to lead independent and safe lives in their communities," the congressman said.

Bridgewell was formerly located in Lynn. Known for many years as the Greater Lynn Mental Health and Retardation Association, the organization changed its name in 2005.