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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Local Residents Encouraged to Be Ready for B.Fit! --Outpatient Rehab Program Launched at The Boston Home--**

Dorchester, MA—Every Thursday morning, community residents arrive at The Boston Home (TBH) in Dorchester, a long-term care facility for adults with physical disabilities, primarily multiple sclerosis and related neurological diseases. They look forward to an invigorating day of rehabilitation and social interaction provided through TBH's new B.Fit! outpatient program. At TBH, which has been licensed by the DPH to provide rehab services, residents join others in the community who have MS and whose needs for therapy and socialization have not been met. Until now.

“B.Fit! fills a void by providing much-needed services to adults with disabilities who are living at home. This program is an innovative response to an inadequate level of community-based services for this population,” says Linda Guiod, RN, VP/Chapter Program at the Central New England Chapter of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society (NMSS), which offers B.Fit! in partnership with The Boston Home.

According to Marva Serotkin, The Boston Home President and CEO, “The waiting list for The Boston Home continues to grow, and it is now at 140. It is important that these and many other underserved adults with MS have an opportunity to benefit from specialized services designed to help them to become more independent and empowered.”

### **Nurturing the Spirit, Stimulating the Mind**

B.Fit! participants have access to structured and customized offerings. B.Fit! includes rehabilitation for physical, occupational, and speech therapy, assistive technology, and exercise. The program involves many ongoing activities provided daily for TBH residents, with support from the dedicated staff of nursing professionals, physicians, and specialists in rehabilitation, social services, wellness, spirituality, technology, and nutrition.

David Young-Hong, O.T., who coordinates the B.Fit! program at The Boston Home, says that the social aspects of the program are as significant as the therapies. “Therapeutic services work on many levels, and we provide the kind of social, emotional, and intellectual support that engages the participants. At the end of the day, they leave feeling more energized. Without this kind of outlet, people with MS can become isolated, and this can lead to depression.”

Social activities at TBH include current events, creative writing, bridge games, entertainment, and cultural outings. B.Fit! also connects participants to the outside world through the “cyber café,” where staff assists residents and outpatients with email and computer programs.

Another key program feature is care management, which helps participants navigate the health and human services network. Also, as needed, the program manager communicates with the participants’ physicians.

“You might say we’re trying to build a community without walls,” says Serotkin. “By offering these outpatient services, we are helping members of the community as well as TBH residents. Both groups have similar challenges, and they have much to share. As far as we know, The Boston Home is the country’s first long-term-care facility to integrate outpatients and residents in this kind of program.”

### **Seeking Additional Support**

B.Fit!, which now runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. every Thursday, offers a sliding-fee scale to individuals based on financial need. Anyone with a progressive neurological disorder can apply. Negotiations are underway to establish contracts with insurance carriers and MassHealth, and TBH and NMSS are looking for additional funding to ensure the program’s continued success.

“We would like to expand the program and continue advocacy efforts,” Serotkin says. “We are hoping to offer B.Fit! five days a week and serve at least 30 outpatients in the first year.”

*Founded in 1881, The Boston Home is a 96-bed, not-for-profit, long-term-care facility that serves adults with multiple sclerosis and other progressive neurological diseases. The only facility of its kind in New England and one of a few in the United States, The Boston Home has earned a national reputation for providing progressive, long-term care. For more information, visit [www.thebostonhome.org](http://www.thebostonhome.org).*

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