



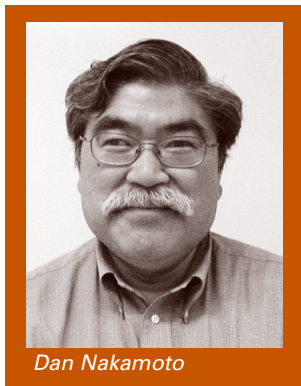
# handsOn

A Newsletter of the  
Boston Building Materials Co-op and  
the Building Materials Resource Center

spring 2005

## Spotlight on Dan Nakamoto

By Sara Harding



Dan Nakamoto

How does one find time to be the Executive Director of an 80 million dollar organization and serve as President of BMRC's Board of Trustees, Treasurer of the BBMC, Board member of the Massachusetts Council of Human Service Providers, and on the Town of Winchester's Personnel Board? Ask Dan Nakamoto, and he'll say, "You make time."

Dan's fast-paced upbringing in Chicago and a stint living in New York City allowed him to realize the number of things he could accomplish when making the most of his time. When he came to Boston in the early 1970s, Dan thought of Boston as "a little town compared to what I was used to." He lived most of his life in cities and enjoyed what they had to offer, always viewing himself as an "urbanist."

Integrating his passion for affordable housing with making every moment count, Dan's experience working with both non-profits and governmental agencies has earned him enormous respect. Melinda Marble, Acting Executive Director of One Family said of Dan, "He is one of the most dedicated, smart, and committed human services professionals I know. For years, he's worked in a variety of roles on behalf of low-income people in Massachusetts. He's always constructive, and he's an amazing manager."

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## A Tour of Doors

By Don Malloy

Wood or metal? How about fiberglass? Raised panel or solid core? Door only or a pre-hung unit? In spite of these variables, thinking about doors does not have to be daunting. In this issue we offer a basic primer on understanding, ordering and installing doors.

### Doors 101

A door either separates one space from another or it separates the indoors from outside. Exterior doors are typically 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" thick, for both security and insulation purposes. Interior doors are generally 1<sup>3</sup>/<sub>8</sub>" thick.

Doors are made from a range of materials, including solid wood, wood veneer, fiberglass, and steel. The majority of all-wood or solid-stock doors

are made from softwoods, such as pine and fir or native hardwoods, such as oak. Of course, other hardwoods such as cherry, mahogany, and maple can and are used.

Wood veneer doors consist of either a solid or hollow core, covered by a veneer surface. The solid core may be made from scrap hard wood blocks (staved core) or particleboard. A "hollow" core door is not actually hollow, but rather has a light-weight, corrugated board center. Hollow-core doors are used exclusively in interior applications, being ill-suited to withstand the elements or provide security.

Molded doors have a durable, compression-molded surface, such as fiberglass or masonite.

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## New and Current Products at the Co-op

### **Steel Security Storm Doors**

We now sell **Safeguard** security storm doors. These security doors are designed to provide a high degree of home security as well as weather protection and ventilation options. These doors offer attractive steel frames in a variety of floral and geometric designs, tempered glass and screen panels, tamper resistant hinges, and locking hardware. Black, white, and colors are available.

### **Garden Products**

**Eco-planters.** Made from recycled materials, these round planters combine the look and feel of terra cotta with the durability, strength, and weight reduction of plastic. The planters and trays come in 14", 18", and 24" sizes. Larger "whiskey" barrels are also available.

**Composters.** Not sure what to do with your garden debris? How about using it to create rich compost? We carry 2 different composters, the **Earth Machine** and the **Brave New Composter**. Both provide effective composting, are designed to be rodent-resistant, and provide a bottomless pit for kitchen and garden waste. They are both sold at a subsidized price. Stop by and look at our display.

### **Toto Toilets**

The Toto toilet continues to be popular with our customers, specifically the CST-703 2-piece toilet, in 10", 12", and 14" rough. The 12" still sells for only \$100 in white. We can order other Toto toilets and products, as well as plumbing fixtures from other manufacturers. Toto's web site is [www.totousa.com](http://www.totousa.com).

### **Flex-Tech Epoxy**

We continue to be amazed at the popularity of the high quality wood restoration material we carry, manufactured by Advanced Repair Technology. **Flex-Tech** is an epoxy material designed to expand and contract with the wood. After removing all defective wood from the piece being restored, a two-part epoxy primer is brushed on. Then a two-part wood filler is mixed and applied to the project. This material's gel-like consistency can be shaped and formed while wet, retaining its shape as it cures. After 24 hours the material can be cut, sanded and planed. Designed for exterior and interior use, Flex-Tech is suitable for restoring doors, windows, window sills, columns and more.

### **Rain Barrels**

Our rain barrel is a great way to save on your water bill and be a resource-wise consumer. The reused 55 gallon barrel is designed to hook up to your downspout to collect rain-water directly. It includes an all-brass drain and optional overflow system, which allows you to send overflow water to your garden, or a second barrel.

### **Landscape Timbers**

Our **XPotential** landscape ties and timbers offer an alternative to real wood in the construction of raised-bed gardens and retaining walls. Both products are made of recycled materials and have a life expectancy far greater than wood, offering a natural appearance at a great price. Available in eight-foot lengths, they come in 3 1/2" x 2 1/2" interlocking "Lincoln Log-style" or 3 1/2" x 3 1/2" and can withstand the harshest elements of nature. Pieces can be stacked and screwed together.

Also available are the new **SmartTimbers** from Smartware. These 5 1/2" x 5 1/2" x 8' lengths are easy to install, will not rot, and are completely resistant to insect

## Welcome Christine

The Co-op welcomed a new retail staff member in July '04. Christine Cipolla joined us and has quickly settled into her specialty — kitchen cabinets. Christine not only had previous experience in retail but also spent time as an Americorps volunteer working with Habitat for Humanity. "The Co-op seemed a great fit for me, the type of organization that makes a difference in people's lives."

We are equally delighted that Christine has been a part of our staff for almost a year. She brings enthusiasm, dedication, and diligence to her job each day. If you haven't already had the opportunity to meet Christine, stop by and say hello. She is here full time!

damage. Their wood-like finish will blend seamlessly with your garden and will retain their solid appearance for the life of the product. These pieces are designed to stack and are held together with 1/2" rebar, also available at BBMC.

## Builder on a Bike

By Beth Ginga

**Question:** What's that photographer-chemist doing with a contractor's cap, riding a bike? **Answer:** Being Milton Trimitsis.

Meet Milton. As a PhD candidate at MIT in 1990, Milton was getting bored. Chemistry was fun, but something was missing. Not knowing exactly what he was looking for, Milton went searching. In 1991, he began a 4-year stint as a housing advocate for ABCD (Action for Boston Community Development). Working with people was gratifying, but being a bureau-

family legacy and he threw himself into learning carpentry. Beginning in 1995, he read about carpentry voraciously, convinced carpenter friends to let him hang around them and ask endless questions, and spent a year in a preservation carpentry program.

For the past nine years, he has worked as a carpenter, contractor, and woodworker doing new construction, additions, custom cabinetry, and restoration carpentry. For the past three years, he's owned and operated his own business. Finally, Milton landed.



Milton Trimitsis and his transportation

photo by Sara Harding

*“The Co-op goes above and beyond in terms of making sure that information and knowledge are as accessible as the materials.”*

cratic mouthpiece wore thin. A stint as a bike mechanic followed that, an interest but not a fulltime passion. Commercial photography came next, but “photographing a roll of toilet paper just wasn’t that exciting.” Milton pondered his next move.

Being a trained academic, Milton rationalized. Since his dad was a confirmed “tool phobe,” he reasoned, he had a responsibility to right the

And he knew it. “Woodworking I loved right away. The feel of the wood, the way things go together...Carpentry is more frustrating. There is a critical mass of information you need just to be able to make the decisions required by each job. There aren’t many dull moments in either trade.”

Milton is also an active Co-op member. “I shop at the Co-op because I get so much more than just a product. The Co-op

goes above and beyond in terms of making sure that information and knowledge are as accessible as the materials. That’s also why I teach workshops at the Co-op. Plus, I just really like the people.”

from a mid-western bike enthusiast, Milton’s trailer came disassembled via UPS. (The parts were designed to fit UPS specs for shipping.) Milton readily uses his trailer to carry power tools, ladders up to 28’, sheets of plywood, even cabinets. “I have a 500 lb. limit, though,” clarifies Milton. The biggest short-coming? No weatherproofing.

“My business is somewhat shaped by the bike,” Milton confides. “It’s not efficient to move my tools around more than two or three times per year, so I tend to look for jobs that last a couple of months. And it forces me to organize better. I can’t just run to the hardware store every time I forget something. I consider that a plus.”

But a builder on a bike? “I got the bug when I was 12. I convinced my father to let me use his 12-speed. I’ve been hooked on riding ever since.” For more than fifteen years Milton has been car-free, commuting exclusively via bike, year round.

How exactly, one may wonder, does a carpenter move tools and materials to a job site? Answer: on a specially designed trailer. Ordered

Trailer in tow, Milton has landed.

## The BMRC is Growing!

By Matthew St.Onge

This spring, 2005, the BMRC will break ground for a 2,000 square foot addition to its existing warehouse. The continued growth of both donations of materials and customers since the original store opened in 1997 has precipitated the need for more space.

One primary goal of expansion is to construct a separate area within the warehouse to accept, unload and process new donations. Until now, the daily routine of unloading materials has had to occur directly into the middle of our current retail space. This has been a less than perfect arrangement, potentially compromising the safety of both customers and staff, as well as the efficiency of our operations.

In addition to this physical expansion, the BMRC will upgrade technology. The objective is to automate and streamline our donations, receiving, sales, and inventory processes. We have already implemented the donations component of the upgrade project. When a donor visits our website, there is now an added feature of the "How to Donate" selection. A donor is invited to create a user account. Once this account

has been created, the donor's name and address will automatically be filled in during any subsequent visits. So donors such as contractors, who make repeat donations, will save time by only having to fill in the new materials being offered. In addition, donors will be able to see a history of their donations, complete with the market values that we ultimately assign to them.

The other aspect of the technology upgrade includes a computerized receiving, pricing and labeling system that will give us greater consistency in pricing. Once the materials have been processed in the new receiving area, they will be put on the retail floor for sale, each item complete with its own barcode. When purchased, the material's barcode will be read by a computerized cash register, which will automatically tally the purchase amount, eliminating the kind of problems with pricing that we currently experience.

When completed, the BMRC will be more efficient in the donations department, more consistent in the pricing department, and more professional in handling sales and inventory.

# BMRC News

## Welcome Austin

If you've noticed a change in pace around the BMRC, it's probably because of one of the new additions to our staff. Austin Fossey has been the BMRC Donations Manager since September, handling phone calls from donors and scheduling the daily route that our truck makes throughout the Greater Boston area. When Austin is not busy maintaining donor relations, he is helping out in the warehouse and getting to know the people who shop here.

Working at the BMRC seemed a great way to combine his previous experience working with nonprofits and his carpentry background. "I've always been interested in organizations that support our community in such a direct manner," he said. His hearty chuckle and strong work ethic have made him an invaluable addition to BMRC. Welcome Austin.

## Citizen Schools is Looking for a Few Good Volunteers

Citizen Schools is an innovative afterschool program that inspires kids while strengthening community through unique learning apprenticeships. Citizen Schools invites you to volunteer as a "Citizen teacher". Whatever your passion, whatever your skill, share it with a small group of 9-14 year-old kids, a few hours per week for 10 weeks.

To learn more, visit [www.citizenschools.org/Boston](http://www.citizenschools.org/Boston)

## New Member Benefits!

### Z...Zipcar

By Beth Ginga

The Co-op and BMRC are excited to announce a new partnership with Zipcar. Zipcar is a locally based national organization committed to green building — not houses, but communities. Started in 2000, Zipcar's goal is to decrease the number of automobiles that clog our cities' streets by offering an alternative form of transit. Zipcar offers self-service access to cars by the hour or the day. They are located in neighborhoods throughout Boston, New York, and Washington, DC. Members simply reserve a Zipcar online, walk to the car, let themselves in with a Zipcard, and drive away. Anytime a Zipcar member needs a car, one is available. The only thing Zipcar members don't get is the expense and hassle of individual car ownership.

The environmental benefits of Zipcar are enormous. Estimates are that each Zipcar on the road replaces 20 personally-owned vehicles. Zipcar members report driving less after becoming members while increasing their reliance on public transportation, biking and walking. Fewer cars

have the obvious benefit of decreasing greenhouse gas emissions and fuel consumption. But it also means fewer public and private resources needed for parking and traffic management infrastructure.



Zipcar was founded on the same principles as the Co-op: Use collective cost sharing to members' advantage. Now, Co-op and BMRC members can benefit even more when joining Zipcar. **Instead of the usual start-up costs of \$175, up-to-date members of either organization can join Zipcar for only \$25 (annual fee).** (Rates for car usage are between \$8.50 - \$12.50 per hour or \$60-\$90 per 24 hours. Gas, insurance and parking are all included. Zipcars include VWs, MINIs, pick-up trucks, BMWs and more.) And it's easy. To join, go to [www.zipcar.com/bbmc-bmrc](http://www.zipcar.com/bbmc-bmrc) and follow the prompts. Then, sit back and enjoy the ride!

## Good News for Deconstruction

By Beth Ginga

Could the wrecking ball that turns buildings into a pile of rubble become a thing of the past? That's exactly what many deconstructionists hope will happen. Across the country a new method of demolition is taking hold. Rather than crushing an entire building and carting the whole mangled, co-mingled pile of debris to a landfill, there are companies that specialize in manually dismantling buildings.

This practice, known as deconstruction, has the benefit of reclaiming the reusable elements of a building, from kitchen cabinets and electrical fixtures to dimensional lumber and wood flooring. Additionally, all the other "non-reusable" components can easily be source separated, i.e. materials such as roofing shingles and drywall can be collected separately, and sent to recycling facilities. Some materials cannot currently be re-used or recycled, but the landfill becomes a last resort, rather than the first and only.

With construction debris accounting for the second largest source of landfill waste, Massachusetts is at the forefront of a movement to ban five of the major materials used in construction — asphalt, brick, concrete, metal and wood. While there are many issues yet to be worked out before deconstruction becomes a mainstream practice —

not the least of which is its current, higher costs, the restriction of these items from the waste stream will hopefully encourage the development of new markets and/or recycling capabilities for these materials.

### SPECIAL THANKS. . .

to Norfolk Hardware for their donation of sheetrock, joint compound, joint tape and corner bead for our Sheetrocking and Taping Workshop. Norfolk Hardware is located at 981 Morton St. in Mattapan.

## Think Clean, Act Green

By Beth Ginga

On Friday, May 20, the Building Materials Resource Center and the Boston Building Materials Co-op held our 27th annual meeting. The theme this year was “Thinking Green, Building Green: A Homeowners Guide.” In that spirit the gathering was held at the George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center (GRWECC), located on the 67-acre wildlife sanctuary of Massachusetts Audubon’s Boston Nature Center. The GRWECC is the first municipal green building in Boston, heralded by Mayor Thomas M. Menino as the “building that teaches.”

This remarkable 10,300 sq. ft. building employs strategies to minimize its impact on the environment.\* The building’s orientation on the site maximizes the availability of natural daylight. It utilizes renewable energy technologies such as geothermal heat pumps, photovoltaic roof shingles, and a solar hot water system as well as green building materials such as advanced insulation and high-performance glass. Even the finish details matter. Interior walls are trimmed with wood from certified, sustainably-harvested forests, while carpet and ceramic tiles contain 50 – 100% recycled content. The result is a visually stunning building that is beautiful to behold and a delight to work in, with higher-than-average air quality and climate control.

The more than 50 members and friends who joined us were also fortunate to hear from our guest speaker, Barbra Batshalom. Batshalom is the founder and Executive Director of The Green Roundtable, Inc., an independent nonprofit organization whose goal is to promote and support sustainable building and development through outreach, education, policy advocacy and technical assistance. Batshalom spoke about how green design can be used to address dysfunction in traditional building and construction processes to improve profitability, safeguard public health and generate natural resources. Batshalom calls this the “triple bottom line,” making design and building decisions based on ecological and societal considerations, as well as cost.

From the number of questions sparked by her talk and the lively discussion that followed, it was apparent that many homeowners are eager and interested to learn more about green building and design.

*\* Information for this article was obtained from “Green Building Case Study,” Mass Energy Consumers Alliance*



photo by Sara Harding

*The entryway to the new, green, George Robert White Environmental Conservation Center with solar collector for area lighting.*

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### Spotlight on Dan Nakamoto *continued from page 1*

Indeed, Dan’s tenure with the BMRC began when he helped create the organization some 15 years ago. He and fellow founder John Rowse were socializing at their local pub when the conversation turned toward the topics of affordable housing and the burden on the environment created by construction waste. Dan and John envisioned a reuse center for building materials targeting homeowners whose lack of financial resources made home repair a luxury. The rest, as they say, is history. The BMRC was born. It is currently the only re-use program in the country dedicated to serving a low and moderate income customer base.

Currently, Dan is Executive Director at the North American Family Institute, Inc. By day, he is responsible for the administration and financial operations of this leading

human services organization that works with state and local agencies in the delivery of human services programs. By night, he’s happy to go running, play golf, catch up on a science fiction or history book, and proud to encourage his two children on their journey through higher education.

Being a well-rounded individual with such a diversified yet focused past, immersing himself in so many activities, and positively impacting the lives of so many, Dan has inspired the BMRC and BBMC staff alike. Matthew St. Onge, Executive Director of BMRC, reflects the general sentiment when he states, “Dan is my role model. Although I hope someday I can be as helpful and dedicated as Dan is, I don’t harbor any illusions that I’ll ever be able to achieve that. He’s just an incredible soul who has figured out how to do so much.”

## A Tour of Doors *continued from page 1*

They are shaped to resemble wood, imitating the grain patterns of real wood and panel designs. Steel doors are made of heavy-gauge, galvanized steel over a core of rigid foam.

### Purchasing a Door

Besides new construction and replacing damaged or deteriorated doors, homeowners purchase new doors to restore the original door design to the house. Wood 2-panel, 4-panel, 5-panel, and 6-panel doors are styles commonly found in older housing stock in this area. Most standard sizes of these styles are readily available. Doors are sized in 2" increments widthwise, e.g. 2'2", 2'4", etc. Standard heights are 6'6" or 6'8." However, custom door options abound, including many other wood species, sizes, and panel designs. Longer lead times and higher costs may result.

When purchasing a door, another consideration is "pre-hung" or "door only." A pre-hung unit, as the name implies, includes a door already mounted into a frame (jamb). Doors can be hinged either on the left or the right. A door that opens toward you and has a knob on the right is a right handed door. For exterior doors, the unit contains an integrated threshold (sill), and is tightly weather-stripped. Pre-bored holes for deadbolts and knobs are optional. Both interior and exterior wood

doors can also be ordered as doors only (slabs), with no framing. These doors can then be planed in order to fit the existing jamb opening. Since it is not realistic to trim stock from metal or fiberglass doors, doors made from these materials are almost always ordered as pre-hung units.

### Installing a Door

Basic carpentry skills are required to hang a door regardless of its configuration. Hanging a slab in an existing door opening entails notching out the new door to accept hinges, trimming it to fit, and boring out a hole for a knob and/or lock. While pre-hung doors are already assembled in the jamb, the door opening in the wall must be exposed down to the studs. Removal and re-installation of the trim (casing) on both sides of the door is also necessary. (Note: Video tapes on door installation are available for rent at the Co-op.)

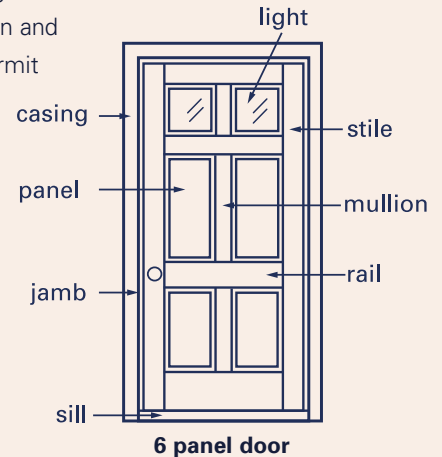
### Storm Doors

Another consideration is whether to include a storm door as part of an exterior door system. The two primary functions of a storm door are ventilation in the warmer months and weather protection, both buffering the door itself and the home's inhabitants from exposure to the elements. If the door is not exposed to a great deal of weather, and ventilation is not a priority,

## A Word About Panel Construction

Panel construction allows for wood's natural tendency to move. Panel doors are referred to by the number of panels they contain; a five panel door has five panels. Panels may be flat or raised. Panel doors contain a framework of stiles — the two vertical members that run top to bottom on both the left and right sides — and rails — the horizontal components that connect the stiles top, center, and bottom. Any dividing members that run parallel to the stile are called "mullions." In between the framing is the panel, which is set into grooves and sized to allow for expansion and contraction. To permit

entry of natural light, glass can be used in place of the panel. Glass (tempered for safety) may be clear, leaded, etched, beveled or ornamental.



then a storm door is optional.

Storm doors are also made of materials other than aluminum. Wood storm doors are popular, and add interesting architectural detail to a house. Steel storm doors are available for applications where security is a consideration. They include heavy-duty locks, and have attractive but strong grates.

For an existing door that is functional but drafty, there are a variety of door weather-stripping systems that are as effective as a storm door in stopping drafts. These sell for about \$15, versus over \$200 for an aluminum storm door. Of course new, pre-hung door

units all have weather-stripping integrated into the frame at manufacturing.

Most of the primary and storm door products discussed above are available through the BBMC, either as stock orders or as custom special orders. Let us help you choose the right door at the right price. Please note that many door companies have websites which can be accessed from our website, [www.bbmc.com](http://www.bbmc.com).

*Don Malloy is Shop Manager and Window & Door Specialist at the Co-op. Look for other helpful "Ask Don" tutorials on a range of subjects on our BBMC website at [www.bbmc.com](http://www.bbmc.com).*



# handsOn

*HandsOn is the semi-annual newsletter of the Boston Building Materials Co-op and Building Materials Resource Center.*

The Boston Building Materials Co-op is a member-controlled not-for-profit building materials retailer and technical assistance provider. Founded in 1978, we specialize in cabinets, counters, windows, and doors. We offer a range of affordable homeowner support services, including in-home consults, educational workshops, a Tradesperson Referral File, a lending library, and a Saturday morning window and screen repair clinic. You don't have to be a member to shop at the Co-op, though members get product discounts and other benefits. *If you are not sure of your membership status, give us a call to check!*

**Contact the BBMC at:**

100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120  
**phone** 617.442.2262 • **fax** 617.427.2491

**email** info@bbmc.com • **web** www.bbmc.com

The Building Materials Resource Center is the nonprofit spin-off of the Boston Building Materials Co-op. Founded in 1993, the BMRC is a building materials re-use project that accepts donations of new and used building materials and distributes them to homeowners, non-profits, and small businesses. Anyone may shop at the BMRC, with special discounts offered to lower-income individuals and families. Many of the homeowner support services of the Co-op — in-home consults, classes, window repair — are also available to BMRC customers, with a discount for income-eligible customers.

**Contact the BMRC at:**

100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120  
**phone** 617.442.8917 • **fax** 617.427.2491

**email** info@bbmc.com

**web** www.bostonbmrc.org

Beth Ginga, *HandsOn* Editor

**The Building Materials Resource Center is a nonprofit building materials re-use project. Your tax deductible gift will help us divert perfectly good building materials from landfills and deliver them into the hands of needy homeowners and nonprofits.**

**Yes**, I would like to make a contribution to the Building Materials Resource Center. Enclosed is my tax deductible gift of:

\$500    \$250    \$100    \$75    \$50    \$35

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please mail your check to: **Building Materials Resource Center**  
100 Terrace Street, Roxbury, MA 02120  
**Thank you!**

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