

# The Boston Globe

## **Multipronged approach is the only way to address homelessness**

MAY 26, 2016

LETTERS

14,800,000 UMV

GOVERNOR BAKER should be commended for following through on his promise to address our crucial problem of homelessness ([“Making homeless families’ lives more stable.”](#) Editorial, May 21).

The administration’s plan to finance development of affordable housing and preserve existing affordable units couldn’t come at a better time, as Boston now has the fourth-highest number of people in homeless families of all cities in the United States.

The governor’s multifaceted approach demonstrates that this crisis must be addressed on several fronts in order to achieve real success and break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. A safe place to live is the foundation, but customized support services, including job training, education, health care, and child care, are also essential. Programs for children, from infants to teenagers, are especially imperative in order to prevent future homelessness.

At Brookview House, we’ve seen the difference that individualized programs make for both mothers and their children. In fact, this week we celebrate one of the children who came through Brookview as she graduates from Boston College. We’re certain her future will be bright.

Deborah Hughes  
President and CEO  
Brookview House  
Dorchester

## Teen Girls At Homeless Shelter Learn To Code, Work Toward Bright Futures

“It is our hope that this confidence will propel them on to a track that leads to college.”

May 24, 2016

by Kimberly Yam, Associate Editor, Good News, The Huffington Post

57,400,000 UMV



### *BROOKVIEW HOUSE*

*Students in the “Girls Who Code” program at the Brookview House.*

Homeless teens are working their tech-savvy sides thanks to a special club at their shelter. Brookview House, a nonprofit that provides housing to homeless women and children as well as other special programs, is also home to a coding club for teen girls called “Girls Who Code.”

The program, which is part of the national Girls Who Code organization, is currently in its second year at the Dorchester Center, Massachusetts, nonprofit, with 15 girls participating.

Brookview House executive director Deborah Hughes told The Huffington Post in an email that the club isn’t just about helping the teens learn a cool, new skill — it’s also about helping them prepare for the future.

“Our purpose is to help them increase their self-esteem and confidence and to prevent future homelessness,” Hughes said. “It is our hope that this confidence will propel them on to a track that leads to college.”



*BROOKVIEW HOUSE Participants in the coding club.*

Hughes told HuffPost that the club members are either middle or high school students. Some of them are homeless and live at the Brookview House while others are at-risk for homelessness and are referred to the program by area schools. Though not all of the teens even own computers, they're able to use devices at Brookview's computer lab.

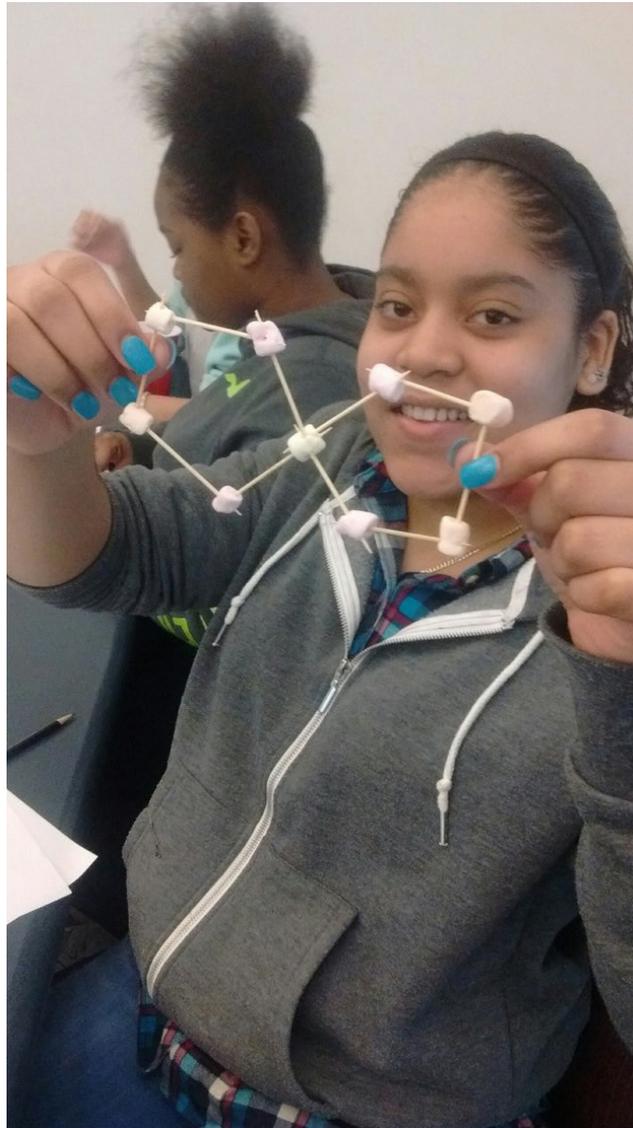


*BROOKVIEW HOUSE A few of the club's participants, striking a pose.*

The club meets every week and the members learn to code through curriculum provided by the national organization. They're guided and coached through different modules by volunteers as well as members of the area's tech companies. They also take time to discuss school or bond over other issues.

And the sessions seem to be paying off.

“I learned how to debug programs and also learned how to change x and y coordinates,” one 16-year-old participant named Alexis told HuffPost of the club. “I’m learning to make websites, video games and apps, and I also learned to add, multiply, divide and subtract variables on this program.”



*BROOKVIEW HOUSE Members of the coding club.*

In addition to gaining knowledge, Hughes told HuffPost that she’s also noticed other positive changes in the teens since joining the club.

“They arrive apprehensive and introverted — often with behavior problems in school,” Hughes said. “After a few months in the program, they find their voice. They demonstrate more confidence, increased self esteem and improved behavior in school.”

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/brookview-house-girls-who-code\\_us\\_57433242e4b0613b512ade23](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/brookview-house-girls-who-code_us_57433242e4b0613b512ade23)

August 18, 2016 10:35 AM

## Formerly Homeless STEM Student Excels

*Mentoring relationship one more way her future looks bright*

by [Robin White Goode](#) Posted: August 4, 2016



(Image: Mauricette and Francois Charles Hiller)

This is a remarkable story about how homelessness led to a mentoring relationship between a scientist and innovator and a young bioengineering major. Moriah Wiggins, a rising junior at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, once resided at Brookview House in Boston, a nonprofit that provides emergency housing to homeless women and their children. When she was 6, Wiggins lived there with her mother for a short time.

According to a [report](#) recently released by GradNation, only five states report high school graduation rates for homeless students or students who have ever experienced homelessness. In all five, graduation rates for homeless students lag behind those of their peers in stable housing.

The report says that children who experience homelessness often struggle with behavior problems, absenteeism, and low scholastic achievement. Few become bioengineering majors at top schools.

But Wiggins attributes her success to the life-changing supports at Brookview, where she is remembered as a “very shy, introverted, and studious little girl who wanted to be a designer when she grew up,” recalls Deborah Hughes, Brookview’s president and CEO. Through Hughes, Wiggins was connected to a mentor who works in bioengineering.

### Serving Moms by Meeting Their Kids’ Needs

Brookview’s programs aim at breaking the cycle of homelessness and poverty by providing practical training and support to its residents.

“The majority of homeless families in the U.S. are headed by women,” Hughes says. Brookview provides “education and training, workforce development, and behavioral health programs that address the trauma of homelessness and domestic violence.”

The nonprofit also provides “a full set of services for children ages 6–19,” Hughes says. “We have youth development programs, after-school, a full-day program in the summer, and an outdoor adventure program.”

It was the rich programming at Brookview that inspired Wiggins’s continued participation long after she and her mother moved into permanent housing.

“I was very involved,” Wiggins says. “Until about age 13, I was in the after-school and summer programs. They gave out awards for being the best in math. It was a little bit of a competitive atmosphere that made you want to be the best,” Wiggins says.

### Scientist Mentor

While attending the Massachusetts Conference for Women to receive its [2014 Be the Change Award](#), Hughes met scientist, innovator, and mentoring devotee Jeri’Ann Hiller, Ph.D., who was speaking at the conference.

“Deborah met me and connected my passion for mentoring with my achievements as a scientist,” says Hiller. “She thought I’d be a great mentor for Moriah.”

Hiller earned both a B.S. and Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She’s been at Boston Scientific for 10 years, where she now manages a team of scientists in medical device development.

But Hiller sees her day job as only one way that she’s accomplishing her goal of helping to improve people’s lives. The other is by mentoring.

“Having a real-life example of someone who is doing what you’re dreaming of and modeling the qualities you’re trying to develop,” Hiller says, “I’ve found to be powerful in advancing along my own path.”

Hiller hopes the mentoring relationship with Wiggins—which is fleshed out in monthly phone calls, in-person meetings, and e-mails—will help the young woman tap into her potential. “I hope it will help her find the unique way that she can bring her creative contribution to science and engineering.”

Hiller sees the relationship evolving as Wiggins’s needs change. “I’m thinking about future internships and ways she can shadow me at work in the coming year.”

In addition to mentoring Wiggins, Hiller mentors two protégés at Boston Scientific and enjoys having a mentor herself. She says each of us has the potential to mentor.

“It comes down to investing the time to understand what you’ve learned and how you’ve succeeded, and extracting the wisdom from your challenges and from what you’ve accomplished—and then being intentional about sharing it.”

#### RELATED STORIES

[South Central Scholars Support STEM Success](#)

[3 Reasons You’ll Always Have Time for Community Service](#)

[Mentoring Just Got Easier for Small Business Owners](#)

[Critical Mentoring Is Critical to College Success](#)