

# Brookview House, Inc.

Fall 2009



## Brookview House, Inc.

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[www.BrookviewHouse.org](http://www.BrookviewHouse.org)

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Editor: *Sulai S. Sivadel*

## Mission

*Helping Families Achieve Personal & Economic Self Sufficiency*

Founded in 1990, the agency's mission is to help homeless and at risk families learn the skills necessary to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty. With sites in Roxbury and Dorchester, Brookview House provides a safe, community setting with customized services to give homeless moms and kids the help and skills they need to succeed.

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## YOUTH ACTIVISTS

*By Mayumi Brooks, Director of Youth Programs*

As the Youth Director at Brookview for ten years, I am proud to see one of our long time participants take his life experience to another level. Jason Villalona is only 20 and he is wise beyond his years. Jason is an activist and a member of the Philanthropic Association of Youth (PAY). This year under the tutelage of Dr. Felicity Crawford, a professor at Wheelock College, he joined students from Wheelock and high schools throughout the city to take classes, learn about activism, form PAY, raise funds, post a request for proposals, and disburse the funds to youth organizations in Boston.

In April 2009, as a member of PAY, Jason participated in the American Educational Research Association annual meeting in San Diego. Jason and his peers presented their model of youth activism, philanthropy, and community change. They captivated the adults in the audience with their enthusiasm, powerful presentations and stories of resilience.

Jason was ecstatic to learn about philanthropy and community change because he is a true leader. He has a new view of the community in which he lives and shares this knowledge with the teens at Brookview. Teens who come to our program live in poverty. Guns, drugs and violence are a part of their everyday life. Some are court involved or have been incarcerated. Everyone has a friend or relative who was murdered. They are all concerned about being a victim of violence.

Despite these challenges, Brookview teens have goals and

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dreams. They want to graduate from high school. Many will be the first in their family to graduate. They want a career. They want to improve their community. Their goal is to break the generational cycle of poverty.

Under Jason's leadership, Brookview teens have a new understanding of poverty and its impact on children and youth. They discuss how poverty affects them and what they can do to change their community. This year they joined the Boston Public Health Commission to create a mental health awareness campaign. They created a Youth Council, conducted a community survey to assess teens awareness of mental health issues, developed an informational brochure, and presented at a community forum on children's mental health services.

Next year, they will expand their activism and focus on healthy relationships, violence prevention and substance abuse prevention. At Brookview, teens have the opportunity to change their lives, become activists and create constructive plans for community change. Teens voice their own viewpoint, not through the perspectives of adults.

I will end with this: We must save our children. To save our children we must change social policies.



## Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

This summer more than 100 young people ages 6 to 21 spent their summer vacation with Brookview. We all remember that infamous essay every year when we returned to school about how we spent our summer vacation. For too many kids in our community the answer to that question is: I spent it on the block. They have nowhere to go and they are afraid to venture off the block or out of the 'hood.

This summer our kids went swimming, roller-skating, dancing, hiking and spent the hottest day of the year at Water Country. They went to parks, movies, museums, and other cultural events. They had a fun-filled time at a party sponsored by the Kevin Youkilis Hits for Kids foundation. The party combined all of their favorite things – playing games at an arcade, bowling and eating pizza.

Their vacation culminated with Family Day, a trip to an amusement park where moms and kids spent the day together celebrating the end of summer. As you can see the summer was filled with fun and adventures. We miss all the action. We live vicariously through their laughter and even their tears. Yes, tears. The summer is not without falls, scrapes and other incidents. Our hope is that the kids learn from these spills and their mistakes, pick themselves up, reflect and try again. This time with a positive outcome.

Summer is also about learning. Each activity, each field trip encompasses learning and writing about their adventures. When they return to school they will have lots to write about their summer vacation. They can definitely say that they ventured off the block and out of the 'hood– far, far off the block.

So, in this issue of the newsletter you will get a sample of their writings. You will read poetry written by teens and stories from the kids. You will also read about youth activism and a mother-daughter team helping others through difficult times.

We thank you for your support and hope you had a wonderful summer vacation.

Respectfully,

Ann R. Maxwell



## Understand

By T.D.B.

Can I please have a moment of silence  
I hear it over and over again  
But people only change for the moment  
And I can't remain silent  
While these people stay wildin'

And understand  
I am just a man  
Can't change the world on my own  
Even if I believe I can  
Can't go on believin' I can't  
I must go on  
On my own

Please understand  
I am a man  
I carry the world on my shoulders  
Even tho' it got heavier  
As I got older  
I still carried it alone  
And I haven't and will not ask for help

See I understand  
That this is a cold world that we live in  
With all these senseless killings  
Gotta question  
Wut are we doin'  
And wut are we here for  
On this Earth, destroyin' it  
Do we even care for it

But understand  
If we don't come together  
We're all doomed in the end  
But if nobody cares  
And I'm talkin' to the air  
Wut it matters  
So please understand



## Moms & Daughters

Rachel Klein, a high school senior majoring in dance at Boston Arts Academy (BAA), arrived at Brookview during spring vacation to teach dance to mother-daughter teams. Rachel received a grant from BAA to conceive and implement a project that combines art and community service. The application process was very competitive with only 10 students selected to execute a project.

"I was really passionate about this project and was going to do it even if I didn't receive the grant. I chose Brookview because I know from my own experience that the mother-daughter relationship can be stressful even in the best of times," she says. "I can only imagine how being homeless must add to the tension. I wanted to give these families time to relax and bond."

The goals of Rachel's project were to introduce dance as a means of communication and to enhance family relationships. She wanted to model behavior for the families so she invited her mom Ilene to co-teach with her. "It was a great opportunity for me because of Rachel," says Ilene. "It gives me pleasure to support and partner with my daughter."

The families opened up in a short time and welcomed Rachel and Ilene into their lives. One family created a dance telling a story about their struggles. Another daughter came to the class the first day alone, but returned on the second day after convincing her mom to join. The performance at the end of the week was impressive and emotional. Many in the audience shed tears.

"The experience was life changing," says Rachel. "I always wanted to be a professional dancer and join a dance troupe. But this experience made me reconsider my goals. I now want to explore dance therapy. Because everybody needs time to be creative and express themselves in more than words."



Rachel Klein and Ilene Carver



## First Day of Camp

By: Danasia, age 7

On the first day of camp most of the people I saw I knew because they were here last year. I hugged all the people that were my friend and they hugged me.

## My Community

By: Jade, age 8

My name is Jade and my community is Dorchester. I have been living there for two years. I live in a big house because I have a lot of family members. I like to go to the Above & Beyond program in Dorchester, because we do lots of activities. My favorite of all is swimming. I like going downtown to the movies and hanging with my friends especially in the park. Lastly my favorite place is Chez Vous which is a skating place and dancing place for kids.



# Thank You!

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Union United Methodist Church  
Wheelock College  
Whole Foods

## MY SHELTER

By T.D.B.

I'll keep you in my prayers if nobody won't  
And I'll give u a home if u don't have nowhere to go  
Put ya faith in me  
I'm one u should believe in  
Cuz I was there  
Where nobody cares that ya here  
So if u runaway  
And ya cold and alone  
Jus remember I'll be there  
If u need a shoulder to cry on

