

# Brookview House, Inc.

Winter 2004

## Mission Statement

Helping Families Achieve Personal and Economic Self Sufficiency



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## Brookview House, Inc.

2 Brookview Street  
Dorchester, MA 02124  
617-265-2965  
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## Reclaiming Lives: Renee's Story

I am a mother of 4 with 2 grandchildren. I have a job working with homeless women – I have worked there for 5 years. I live in my own apartment, I am attending homebuyers classes and my goal is to buy my own home. Today, I am a role model for my children and the women where I work, but it hasn't always been that way.

I am a recovering addict. I used drugs for 20 years. I lived to use and used to live until I was sick and tired of using. I wanted to stop but I didn't want anyone to tell me what to do. My life began to change when I found out I was pregnant with my fourth child. At that time the Department of Social Services (DSS) stepped in and took my children into custody. I was alone in my three-bedroom apartment still using, unhappy, confused, and scared. I knew it was time to do something about my life for real.

I called a detox (detoxification) program, received a bed, packed my clothes for 6 months, and got on a Greyhound bus. When I arrived at the detox program, I was very very sick – my blood pressure and pulse rate were low – so they rushed me to the hospital. I went to the hospital 3 times but I was determined to change my life. When I was strong enough to stand and speak, I asked to be put on the list to live in the residential program. Staff thought it was too early for me to make this decision, but I knew this was what I wanted and needed to stay clean. I let them know that I packed my clothes for 6 months and I was ready to stay. I called everyday -- staff was surprised. They told me that anyone looking for treatment that bad deserved a bed and they would hold one for me when I finished detox.

During my stay in the 6-month residential program, I was evicted from my apartment in the projects for non-payment of rent. Nonetheless, I completed the program. When I returned to Boston, I had nowhere to live so I stayed with my niece. Because of my past history, she wouldn't give me a key to her apartment, wouldn't leave me in her house alone, and when she left I had to leave also.

At this time, my DSS worker told me that I should participate in an outpatient drug treatment program. I had to be there Monday through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. I wanted my kids back so I participated and graduated from this program.

I desperately wanted to reunite with my children so I agreed to enter a shelter. I lived at the shelter for 3 weeks when I learned about a transitional house that had a 3-bedroom unit available. My social worker said she was too busy to make a referral. I knew the unit would be taken if I didn't call that day so I pleaded with her until she made the referral. She made the referral to Brookview House.

After my interview at Brookview House, my adrenalin was pumping. Things were happening real fast for me. When they told me I was accepted, I started crying. They were tears full of joy. Moving into Brookview House was a wonderful experience for my whole family who came together to help me move in. My niece was washing cabinets, my brothers and nephews moved my belongings, my mother and sister were cooking supper and watching every

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## On Any Given Night

By Valina Jackson, M.A.  
Clinical Director

On any given night the families of Brookview House assemble to participate in a number of educational workshops and therapeutic groups. As the children are fed and cared for by attentive child-care workers, their parents settle down to a meal and the business of the scheduled group. The topics vary from *Addiction and Recovery, Parenting, Women's Issues, Men's Issues, and Economic Literacy, to Self-Esteem, Massage Therapy and Community Leadership*. There is always a full house and the feedback we receive is tremendous!

One Client said, "*Girl Talk (women's group) was very useful to me and I would like to take it again.*" Another said, "*I have been budgeting and the groups are good.*" Still another said, "*I love Community Leadership and I want to see more of Economic Literacy.*" However, the most touching remark was, "*The Parenting Class has helped me to refocus on many things regarding my kids – it's so easy to get down on yourself and your kids when you are faced with homelessness.*"

In the business world it is said... "a satisfied customer is a repeat customer". We wanted to know if we

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## President's Message

Dear Friends of Brookview House,

Thank you for thinking of the Brookview House families during this holiday season. Your gifts, your donations, and your volunteer time made it special for all of us. This year, more than 150 children received gifts. Our holiday party was larger and more fun than it has ever been. The food was plentiful, the children performed several new dance routines, their parents joined them, and then everyone's favorite person – Santa Claus arrived to deliver gifts.

As you know, the holidays can be stressful. For homeless families, not knowing where they will get money or gifts for their children adds even more stress, tension, and guilt to their already stressful lives. The following is an excerpt from a letter written to staff.

## Teens Win 1st Prize

Teens from the Above and Beyond Program submitted presentations to the Reflection in Action: Building Healthy Communities contest. Their presentations centered on the subjects of homelessness and domestic violence. They received awards at a ceremony sponsored by the Harvard Medical School Office for Diversity and Community Partnership on February 4. The ceremony was dedicated to honoring and celebrating everyday heroes from the past and present who have demonstrated a commitment to building healthy communities. The full day of events integrated lunch with keynote speaker Julian Bond, Chairman of the NAACP and panels on civil rights, social justice, and health disparities issues.

The following is their skits.

### **FACES: Homelessness/Normal**

What I face is homelessness.

I face homelessness everywhere I go. I see homeless people asking for money. Some of them sleep outside on the ground or find a house that is broke down and nobody lives there. They are dirty all over and they don't have any clothes to wear. Like all of us we have a family and a roof over us.

But homeless people, they don't have a family to care for them or a roof over their heads. That's why if us kids stay in school and get an education, we will not end up homeless.

You guys need to appreciate what you have. Every time I see a homeless person and I have money, I give them some money. I am a person that can't stand to see people hurting or people that don't have money and live on the streets, hungry, everyday.

So if you don't finish what you're eating, save it because there are a lot of homeless people that can't afford to eat like you. So you need to think a minute before you throw away food. So you people that only think about yourselves, you need to stop and think about others.

This is what I face.

### **FACES: Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence is what I face today being "beaten to a pulp". Nobody enjoys it you know. Why? Because it's not fun to see people cry.

The pain that you hold in from being beaten all of the time. Love isn't the reason to fight. Nobody can take violence anymore, including domestic violence. The more you get hit the less you can live your life.

Don't let them hold you and them. It's my life and I'm going to live it how I want to. No more yelling for help. I'm just going to live my life.

What I felt about when I witnessed the problem is that in a way I felt kind of sad. But when I found a solution I would talk it out with the people who would hit me.

I would like adults everywhere to find a very good solution to their problem. Like I talk to the people who beat on me almost all the time. If you find a solution to your problem you can live your life.

**Moral:** Domestic violence is not the key to Love.

## A Message from the Above & Beyond Programs



By Mayumi Brooks  
Director of Youth Development Programs

### Children

*Our eyes tell you we see you, our hearts tell you we care, our patience earns your trust and our consistency earns your stability.*

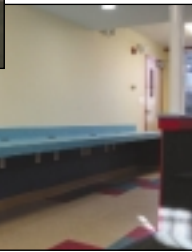
As many of you know, we have youth development programs at two sites – Brookview House in Dorchester and Moreland Affordable Housing in Roxbury. We provide a space where children can learn new skills and avoid high-risk behavior. Recently, the Youth Program at Moreland Affordable Housing was closed due to a renovations project. The renovations were made possible by a grant from The Facilities Initiative, a project of the Child Care Capital Investment Fund and Parents United for Child Care.

Because the program was closed, I decided to take a vacation. I went away the week of Christmas and returned after the New Year to the best gift ever – the completion of the renovations. Designed by Kang Associates, the space

is attractive, well lit, child friendly, and spacious.

### The Renovation Results

A new wall was built to close off the kitchen area; a door, new range top and a serving window were installed to enable staff to serve snacks. Computer Stations were built to allow the adolescents access to computers in their own space. This piece of work eliminates splitting computer time between the teens and the adolescents. The aqua blue and white, marble-like computer counter top is very engaging and child friendly.



A new sign-in desk and new entrance were created for the convenience of the children, parents and staff. The new entrance and sign-in desk permits after school staff to see children enter and exit at all times, parents can now sign students in and out of the program, and it eliminates interaction between non-after school staff and the children.

Our favorite alteration is the increased lighting and the carpeted seating area. The increase in lights makes a tremendous difference in the environment. It highlights the new soft yellow paint on the walls and the colorful matching tiles. Wow!

The carpeted seating area enhances the curriculum and daily activities. The area can be utilized based on the daily schedule as a storytelling area, a reading area, drama area or games and puzzles area.

I would like to give a special thank you to all who made this possible: The Facilities Initiative, the Board of Directors of Brookview House, Executive Director, Clinical Director, the Above and Beyond staff and families.

I also want to thank Charles Arsenault, Project Superintendent at Commodore Builders, for completing a high quality job on time and on budget.

### Volunteer Opportunities Available

Brookview House, Inc. is recruiting individuals to volunteer at our programs. Daytime and evening hours are available. Training is provided. We are recruiting:

- Board Members
- Committee Members
- Teachers

- Mentors
- Motivators
- Activity Leaders

To volunteer, contact us:

**Phone: (617) 265-2965**

**E-mail: [apolk@brookviewhouse.org](mailto:apolk@brookviewhouse.org)**

Make a difference in the life of a homeless family. Join Us!



### The Kids Touched Me

Mary Jane Brennan Sangiolo came to the After School

program at Brookview hoping that she could help the kids at Brookview. What she hadn't bargained for was how they would change her life. "The kids taught me so much, they made me feel like I was doing something important, they made me feel good about myself."

Mary Jane, who is currently a Business Analyst at John Hancock Financial Services where she has been for over 30 years, first became interested in volunteering when she attended a program at John Hancock that talked about the Horizons program. Horizons trains volunteers and matches them with children's programs such as Brookview.

Mary Jane has loved every minute of her four years of volunteering at Brookview. "I remember one family from the Dominican Republic that had five children. When they first arrived, they spoke very little English and it was hard for them to interact with other people. But, during their time at Brookview, I watched them grow, learn English, engage with the staff and other children and really blossom. It was such a treat to watch their transition."

She strongly encourages other people to get involved and to volunteer. "It is a great way to give back to the community, and you get so much back yourself, especially from the kids. I was at the Brookview House Christmas party and a boy I had known four years ago remembered me as the lady who had painted Christmas trees on her teeth at my first Brookview Christmas party. It was wonderful to see how much he had grown and changed." "We will really miss her," says Mayumi Brooks, the Director of Youth Development programs. "She has been a wonderful and faithful volunteer for four years who has come every Tuesday from 5:30-7:00 to help our kids and they have loved having her here."

It is through the efforts of volunteers like Mary Jane that Brookview can make a difference in the lives of homeless children. While a recent move has meant that Mary Jane is no longer able to volunteer at Brookview, the kids will remain in her heart for a long time to come.

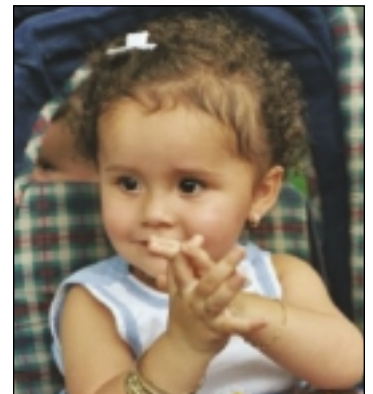
*Renee's Story ... continued from page 1*

one's kids, my daughter and young sister were there to help also. They all helped to make my new place home. The next day my DSS worker came and gave me my baby back.

My life changed completely while living at Brookview House. They had so many resources. The Housing Advocate helped me to make payment arrangements for the past due rent on my last apartment. I sent payments every month. Another Advocate from Brookview House went with me to the courthouse because I had 4 outstanding warrants. Because the court officers could see that I was changing my life, I received probation, some fines, and was selected to attend a program called Creating Lives Through Literature at Boston College. I attended 2 days during the week and Saturdays, graduated from the program, and received an achievement award.

After completing the Boston College program, I knew that I wanted to continue my education. The Advocates at Brookview House connected me to the Alcoholism & Chemical Dependency Treatment Services Program at the University of Massachusetts-Boston. The course was 3 semesters long and it was tough because I had not been in school for 25 years. I completed my internship at a local detox program. After completing my internship I stayed at the detox program for 1½ years as a volunteer counselor. I was determined to get a job as a counselor in the substance abuse field so I struggled and refused to give up and the job I have today came through. That was 5 years ago.

My life changed completely while living at Brookview House and today I am helping others to change their lives.



*Having fun at Above and Beyond.*

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*"Helping Families Achieve Personal and Economic Self Sufficiency"*

**Holiday Donors**  
Let us be grateful to people who make us happy; They are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom;  
-*Marcel Proust*  
Thank you to all of the individuals and businesses who made this holiday season special for the families of Brookview House, Inc.  
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Ludwig Alban  
Joel Aronson, C.P.A.  
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Diane Bigda  
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