



NORWALK NORWALK HOUSING HOUSING AUTHORITY FOUNDATION

Norwalk Housing Authority's Education Programs for Early Childhood, Elementary and the Bridge to College and Career Program serving our Middle and High School Students and the College Scholarship Program

Housing and so much more

The Norwalk Housing Authority (NHA) maintains an innovative and expansive vision for what public housing should provide, beyond simply safe and affordable living. We actively promote educational initiatives, improvement opportunities, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, and much more. Our broad and innovative educational initiative is made up of: the Afterschool Program for grades K-5 at five Learning Centers located at resident properties, the Bridge to College and Career Program for grades 6-12 at one dedicated Learning Center and the College Scholarship Program.

The NHA provides a comprehensive approach by offering an afterschool experience to complement and align with the Norwalk Public Schools. The NHA Learning Centers are the centerpiece of NHA's Educational Initiative; they have an expectation of college completion/workforce readiness beginning as early as pre-school and kindergarten, our NHA Early Childhood Program.

NHA Early Childhood Program

The NHA has six housing preschoolers in Stepping Stones' **ELLI Lab School**, part of the Early Language and Literacy Initiative (ELLI). ELLI is a partnership between the NHA, Stepping Stones Museum for Children, and Norwalk Community College. It is a high quality, year-round multidisciplinary approach to early childhood education designed to advance the academic, physical and social-emotional development of children ages 3 through 5 through play. Four of those students graduated this past June and will move onto Kindergarten in their district schools in the fall.

Our early childhood parent coordinator administered the **Ages & Stages Questionnaire** to families with children ages 0-5 years old. It is a developmental screening tool that informs parents of where their child is developmentally. It provides sufficient information that can indicate whether the child needs intervention early on in order to decrease any developmental delays. Our focus this coming year is to target those families with children birth to 5 years who are not in an early childhood or preschool program.

NHA Early Childhood continues to provide a **Raising Readers Parent Class**. This class is a nationally recognized family literacy program for parents. It provides opportunities for parents

to practice storytelling, reading aloud and writing in a nurturing environment. Parents took home quality children's books after each session to continue family learning. This program was designed to encourage parents or caregivers to read to their child daily. Parents were given the opportunity to share experiences with the group, learn suggestions for home activities and share their joys for books and reading with their child.

Stepping Stones Museum for Children—NHA is part of Stepping Stones Open Arms program, where early childhood families (birth to 8 years old) take advantage of the exhibits, events and experiences the museum offers at no cost to the families.

- There are also areas for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. All areas and exhibits:
- Encourage moving, crawling, standing, and walking
- Foster early learning
- Promote literacy
- Provide a soothing environment to discover shapes, sizes, memory and emotions
- Stimulate the senses
- Teach good nutrition, healthy living, and proper hygiene
- Get children to explore different sights, sounds and textures while making connections with their senses and emotions through hearing, touching, seeing and smelling.

Bridge to College and Career Program

*The NHA's **Bridge to College and Career (BTCC) Program**, open to all public housing youth in 6th through 12th grades, is a unique and transformative program. We work closely with the Norwalk Public School System (NPS), align with its curriculum, communicate regularly with its faculty and staff, and complement its offerings. We also encourage parental involvement, which is proven to be crucial in a child's educational success.*

Purpose

We work with Norwalk Public Housing residents, their families and partner schools to enable meaningful and positive changes in the areas of academic achievement, life skills and character development in order to compete and succeed in the larger community.

Impact

The NHA target population is 6th through 12th grade students from public housing sites who face multiple barriers to success. The program helps these students by working with their families and schools to improve individual academic performance, develop and strengthen good character, and nurture useful life skills. Results include successful transition into high school, college, and career, and increased ability to be productive and independent young adults.

Recruitment

We direct recruitment efforts towards students, parents and the schools our students attend. There is a formal registration process for middle and high school students wanting to attend the on-site based program at 20 West Learning Center. High school students who request access to computers, assistance with a school project or needing direction and support for college/career applications can stop by 20 West without formal registration. There are monthly workshops that provide information and skill development targeted for students around career and college.

Program Model

The BTCC Program is open to all Norwalk public housing youth 6th to 12th grade as well as public housing college students who need access to computers or support around academics. The program is held five days a week for middle school students and has a special track for high school students who want to attend the program for specific workshops and academic support. In addition, all high school students are invited to attend monthly college/career focused workshops held in the evening that accommodates their work or sport schedules.

Four core areas

- Academics
- Life skills
- Character development
- College and career (teaching about high school, post-secondary education, and career-track requirements and responsibilities).

Within these four core areas our students receive

- Homework support
- Tutoring in math, reading, and writing
- Teaching skills for the transition to high school, college, and career
- Reinforcement of executive-functioning skills
- Enrichment activities to promote character development and provide exposure to 'real life' experiences
- Financial literacy programs
- Unique speakers drawn from professionals inside and outside of the regional community
- Life skills (oral communication, technology skills, leadership skills, teamwork, personal goal setting and achievement)
- Character building (beginning identification of life choices, student strengths, interests, educational and career paths)
- Specialized programs for females
- Field trips to museums, galleries, and other places of interest
- College and workplace tours
- Parent and caregiver involvement
- College preparation
- Ongoing partnerships with artistic organizations such as Music Theatre of Connecticut, New York's School of Visual Arts, and most recently the Metropolitan Museum of Art
- Summer school programs (math literacy, reading, art and other age-appropriate activities)

Middle School Program Goals

- Encourage students to assess their interests, strengths and academic habits.
- Help students understand basic concepts regarding college and career options and financing their education/training.
- Provide template for the college preparatory curriculum that students should plan for high school years.
- Encourage students to understand how they can build a profile and support network that will help them reach their college and career goals.
- Support students in attaining social and emotional competencies in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. (CASEL)

Middle School Program Outcomes

- Attendance
- Completion of grade level Naviance profile for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade
- Results of DAP student surveys (pre and post)

High School Program Goals (9th and 10th grade)

- Instill the belief that college is accessible for everyone
- Build a strong foundation for students by helping them choose a college preparatory or career course schedule in high school and encourage extracurricular involvement.
- Build a students' self-motivation to pursue college or vocational training and help them build a support network of adult mentors to help reach that goal.
- Help students assess their career interests and aspirations and begin to research colleges and technical schools to pursue those goals.
- Support students in attaining social and emotional competencies in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. (CASEL)

High School Program Goals (11th and 12th grade)

- Review a college /career planning calendar for junior and senior year
- Establish personal resumes with each student
- Create/write college essay for college applications
- Support students in attaining social and emotional competencies in the areas of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making. (CASEL)

High School Program Outcomes

- Students prepare academically to transition to life after high school.
- Students take practical steps to transition to post-high school options, including:
 - Campus visits, the college application process, standardized testing , deadlines
 - Requirements for apprentice programs
 - Researching and applying for scholarships, filling out the FAFSA, student debt
- Students apply and are accepted to the post-secondary option of their choice
- Students combine strengths and abilities with professional aspirations and preparation to engage in purposeful life activities.
- Results of DAP student survey (pre and post)

College Scholarship Program

Purpose

The NHA created the Norwalk Housing Foundation (NHF), a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization, to promote and assist educational activities, including college scholarships, for NHA residents of all ages. The **NHF College Scholarship Program** helps housing students of all ages with high school diplomas that attend or want to attend an accredited two-year, four-year, or technical college.

Impact

The scholarship program launched in 1998 with only two undergraduate scholarships and \$5,000 awarded. One hundred percent of NHF Scholarship Program funds go directly to students for college. The program now also serves graduate students.

- 100% of scholarship program contributions go directly to fund scholarships
- 73% graduation rate for four year schools and 52% graduation rate for two year schools
- Since our inception in 1998, the NHF has administered more than \$1 million to 202 students

Recruitment

Outreach propels our impact and success. Each year we work to increase the number of applicants and successful recipients—our goal each year is a 10 percent increase in student participation matched with a 25 percent increase in fundraising.

Program Highlights

- 49 Undergraduate and Graduate Scholarship Recipients for the 2016-17 academic year
- 78% of 2016 recipients attend four-year institutions
- 3 graduate school scholarship recipients (program instituted in 2015)
- 67% of the 2016-17 scholarship applicants are previous NHF Scholarship recipients
- Nearly 100% of our recipients self-identify as African American or Hispanic
- Past recipients have graduated from Gateway Community College, Norwalk Community College, Fairfield University, Rochester Institute of Technology, Sacred Heart University, University of Connecticut, and other prestigious universities
- Largest public housing authority college scholarship program in New England
- Recognized by Harvard University's Ash Center in its 2015 Top 25 Innovations in American Government Awards
- Past winner of National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials' National Award of Excellence.

One important feature of the program is the support structure we provide to try and make certain that scholarship recipients attend regularly, perform as well as possible in school and understand additional avenues of support and financial aid. All recipients are required to participate in a summer workshop led by NHA Staff.

- New college students participate in a workshop that focuses on self-advocacy, time management, and early creation of an on-campus support system including guidance staff and tutors and

establishing positive relationships with professors. Returning scholarship recipients also give advice about what to expect in college and how college is different from high school.

- Returning college students participate in a workshop that reiterates some of the key points from the new student workshop but also highlights areas important to upper class students. Topics include: business etiquette, interviewing skills, identifying a mentor and why internships are important.
- We also encourage students to participate in workshops about financial literacy and other pertinent topics that held by NHA and other partners throughout the year.

We want to prepare students (most of whom are first generation college students) for what they will encounter in college and give them strategies to adapt to their new environment so they can stay on track to graduate. The additional care the scholarship recipients receive creates a bond between the students and the NHF, a connection we hope will carry them through the completion of their degree and beyond.

Program Goals

The NHF Scholarship helps students pay for tuition, books, supplies and transportation so they can focus more on their studies and less on their bills. Our students work hard to earn a college degree so they can better succeed in competitive job markets.

We established three goals for our program:

- ***Serve as many residents as possible.*** Get them into school, matriculate, and do well to earn a degree in a reasonable period of time.
- ***Level the playing field, to afford low-income students the same opportunities that middle-and upper income students have.*** We encourage all scholarship recipients to attend the school that is the best fit for them academically and financially.
- ***Reduce or eliminate student loan debt.*** It's a huge problem nationally, but even a larger problem for low-income students. And it's especially discomfoting here in Fairfield County, the so-called Gold Coast, where the average household income is \$134,337. The average annual family income of our NHA residents is below \$20,000 and below the poverty threshold for a family of four, which for 2016 is \$24,250.

Program Outcomes

- ***Student success***
 - Scholarship recipients complete their semester successfully (12 or more credits/semester)
 - Scholarship recipients re-apply for the NHF Scholarship until they graduate
- ***Graduation Rate***
 - Scholarship recipients to graduate with a college degree
- ***Job Placement After Graduation***
 - Scholarship recipients find jobs that enable them to move towards self-sufficiency
- ***Residents Move Out of Norwalk Housing Authority***

- Scholarship recipients are financially stable enough to move out of Norwalk Housing Authority and be financially independent
- **Program Growth**
 - Increase in the number of residents who apply each year

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