When David was homeless, he distracted himself with schoolwork. Now he attends Harvard.

Homeless to Harvard

Discover how a teen boy went from sleeping on park benches to attending the nation's top university.

By Sarah Rehman

David Boone was 13 years old when neighborhood gang members attacked his home. Thankfully no one was injured, but the incident forced his family out of their home.

Fearing another attack, David's mother knew she had to get her family out of the neighborhood. However, she had little money, and couldn't afford to pay for a place where they could stay together. As a result, they had to split up.

"I was left to fend for myself," says David. "I stayed at friends' houses or sometimes at my grandma's, but she really couldn't afford to take care of me."

Soon David found himself sleeping on park benches when no one could take him in. He would use his book bag as a pillow, stacking textbooks on the bottom for height and papers on top for padding.

"Sometimes, I would stay up at night, because I knew that sleeping in the park was dangerous," says David.

Turning to School

When David stopped to think about his living situation, he became depressed. He needed to focus on something else. So, he turned his attention to school. He attended all of his classes and studied hard. He also made sure to do

his homework every night—even if it meant writing papers in a transit station, which was heated and open late.

"I didn't know what the results would be," said David. "But I knew that studying would give me options down the road."

Opportunities Arrive

The principal at David's school was impressed with his performance. Still, something seemed wrong. David always looked tired, and he appeared unhappy. When the principal discovered what was wrong, he decided to do something about it. He invited David to stay with his family. In addition, he gave David a book that would change his life.

"My principal had given me a book called *A Hope in the Unseen*, which is about a man's journey from the inner city to the Ivy League," said David. "That story gave me the courage not only to apply to college, but also to aim for the toughest schools."

David was now more determined than ever to use education as a way out of poverty. He continued to study hard and get good grades.

When the time came to apply for colleges, David sent applications to 23 top schools in the country. He was accepted to 22—including Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Brown. As for tuition, he wouldn't have to pay a cent. He was offered a full scholarship by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation!

In the end, David chose to attend Harvard. "It wasn't easy," said David. "It was a lot of hard work—but the payoff was worth it. Now, I feel I can make anything happen!"

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