



When he was homeless, David sometimes slept on this bleacher bench in a local park. He used his backpack as a pillow. (John Kuntz / The Plain Dealer / Landov)

## Homeless to Harvard

David lost his home to gang violence. But he never gave up on his dreams of college and success.

By [Laura Linn](#)



In high school, David Boone often did his homework in a train station. He spent some nights sleeping on a park bench, using his backpack as a pillow. David, now 18, was homeless and on his own.

David stayed with friends when he could. But sometimes, he did not have a home to go to.

Being alone on the streets was scary. One thing kept David going: his **determination** to do well in school. All his hard work paid off. This fall, David began attending Harvard University, one of the top colleges in the U.S.

### HOMELESS TEEN

David is from Cleveland, Ohio. His family had a home there until the summer after he finished eighth grade. That's when a gang attacked his house.

The gang members were mad because David wouldn't join the gang. They shot guns into his house. No one was hurt, but the family had to leave.

Without enough money for a new home, everyone had to split up. David's mom went to live with her boyfriend. His three sisters went to live with friends.

David lived with his friend Eric for a while. But he couldn't stay there forever. Some nights, David had no choice but to sleep on park benches.

### SCHOOL SUCCESS

Even though many things were difficult in David's life, one thing was going very well. David was accepted to a special high school called MC2STEM.

MC2STEM is a public school in Cleveland for kids who **excel** at science. The school turned out to be the perfect place for David. He especially enjoyed having the chance to learn by doing lots of projects.

"I like to mess with things," explains David. "I like to **tinker**. I learn better from projects." At age 6, David took apart his family's TV. He put it back together, and it still worked!

High school wasn't easy. But David says that the school helped him set high standards for himself. Even when he didn't have a place to stay at night, David kept his focus on

While he was homeless, David would sometimes sleep in the park during the day because it was safer. "If you sleep in the daytime in the park, people don't bother you," he says. "You're just taking a nap. It's **acceptable**."

Then David would study through the night. He showered at a friend's house when his friend's parents were at work.

Often, David came to school very early to get caught up on work. The school principal, Jeff McClellan, was impressed. Then he found out that one reason David was coming in early was that he had nowhere else to go.

McClellan and his wife wanted to help David. They opened their doors to the teen. David lived with them for a year, for parts of 10th and 11th grades.

Then, after two years of bouncing between different homes, David got some great news. His mom had finally been able to get a new home for the family.

### COLLEGE BOUND

Last May, David graduated second in his high school class. He was accepted to 22 colleges. He also won a scholarship from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. It will pay for all his college expenses.

David decided to go to Harvard University this fall. "I found the perfect school for me," he wrote in his blog. David plans to study **engineering**.

In the future, David might look for a job at a company like Google. Even better, he would like to start his own company. Says David, "I want to work for myself."

This article originally appeared in the October 8, 2012 issue of *Action*. For more from *Action*, [click here](#).

#### VOCABULARY

**determination:**  
a firm decision to do something or reach a goal, even if it is difficult

**excel:**  
to do very well at something

**tinker:**  
to experiment with fixing or rebuilding things

**acceptable:**  
allowed, OK

**engineering:**  
the science of designing and building things