

Hopeworks N' Camden 2014

Hopeworks' mission is to use education, technology and entrepreneurship to partner with young men and women as they identify and earn a sustainable future. Together we seize the opportunity to heal and thrive in the midst of violence and poverty. We work in Camden, NJ our nation's poorest and most violent city. Add to that the fact that almost 50% of Camden is below the age of 25 and a high school dropout rate of almost 70% at its two major high schools and you are left with children here living in a world without any hope and a population that is paralyzed by the trauma it faces every day - the trauma of violence, poverty and neglect. Hopeworks exists to heal communities by creating safe pathways through which we own our histories and discover new choices. We do this in many ways, however at Hopeworks, each encounter with a youth is done with empathy and respect, though the lens of trauma informed care.

Hopeworks was founded in 2000 by the pastors of three churches in North Camden. Youth who are no longer in school enter our Day Training program and students in grades 8 and up enter our Hope Through School (HTS) after-school program. They participate in our technology-based training curriculum which utilizes state of the art equipment and technology. They practice accountability and exercise responsibility. Youth who complete training then have an opportunity to earn a job in one of our four businesses – Web Design, GIS (Geographic Information Systems), Video Production and Salesforce Administration – where they create websites, videos and maps for clients in a professional environment.

Beyond our technology training and job opportunities Hopeworks also addresses the housing, education and personal development of our youth. We have a full-time Formation Director who works in partnership with trainees -to help them prepare individual DREAMS Plans. He then meets with each youth individually every week to review their progress and to hold them accountable for making progress. Our Academic Success Director helps the youth get back on track with daily one-on-one instruction. This has the dual effect of boosting their confidence and bringing them quickly to a literacy level that enables them to benefit from the full range of Hopeworks programs. The C.R.I.B. (Community Responding In Belief) residential program offers advanced Hopeworks youth a supportive community and a place to live while they complete their Associates Degree at nearby Camden County College.

Hopeworks intends to completely redesign and overhaul its curriculum in order to meet the rapidly changing world of web development and content delivery. However, this extensive upgrade will be more than updating the computer coding content, this breakthrough curriculum will become more focused on job readiness, it will incorporate the latest trends in gamification theory and it will also integrate our academic success values into the reading, language, comprehension and math application aspects of its design. Finally its presentation and content will be structured in a way that synchs with S.E.L.F. (Safety, Emotions, Loss and Future) and the best practices of trauma informed care.

From our beginning Hopeworks has had an early and continuing commitment to program evaluation. Ongoing data analysis, that leads to program evaluation and outcomes measurement are critical components of Hopeworks efforts to develop and sustain innovative and relevant programs for the youth we serve. We are a leader among community organizations in recognizing the importance of data to inform program development, both to document effectiveness, and drive organizational decision-making. Our commitment to overhaul and redesign the most basic tool of our training, our online curriculum, and integrate it closely to our academic program and goals, to our work readiness program and goals, and to the principles of our model of trauma informed care, will improve the number of youth who are able to take advantage of our opportunities and make real progress toward a successful future for themselves. We will partner with the knowledge leaders in innovative cross platform curriculum design to create a learning tool that works for our target population and one that will be replicable as Hopeworks grows into the future.