

Getting away for his future

May 05, 2012|By Adrian Walker

THIS STORY APPEARED IN **The Boston Globe**



Dr. Alan Curtis, President and CEO of the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, with Jaime Bobillier.

Jaime Bobillier is a teenager in Dorchester, though not for much longer if he has his way.

Bobillier, a junior in the Jeremiah E. Burke High School, has become a success story, though his is a kind of success that would be foreign, not to mention unnecessary, for most kids his age. He has survived an absentee, drug-addicted mother and an absentee father. He has known the loving embrace of a grandmother who stepped in, but is now too ill to care for him.

And he has had the guidance of a handful of extraordinary adults who became mentors.

But it's his story.

"My grandmother took me in because my mother had some bad habits," he explained one recent afternoon. He was sitting on a couch at the Dorchester Youth Collaborative, the Fields Corner youth center that has become a second home for him. Bad habits? "Like drug use. She's in rehab, and I don't know if it will work this time."

Bobillier was a freshman at the Burke when he caught the attention of the headmaster, Lindsa McIntyre. He drew attention for reasons that were both good and troubling. He was clearly bright and charismatic. He was quick on his feet and thoughtful. On the other hand, showing up for school was not necessarily a regular habit.

It wasn't all his fault, far from it. In his mother's absence, a group of relatives had moved in. Many of them had her bad habit, and others besides. Like stealing. Bobillier reports that a cable box disappeared and an Xbox and eventually practically anything of value. They weren't exactly contributing to the household either. He was left to shoulder a burden that would be beyond virtually any adolescent.

He moved in with his grandmother, an arrangement that worked well for a time. But she suffered an incapacitating stroke, leaving him, once again, on his own.

That's where Greg Hill came in.

Hill is a Burke alum who runs a mentoring program out of the school called Quantum. McIntyre was a teacher at the Burke when Hill was a student there, 15 years ago, and she decided he should go to college, and she picked the school, Johnson C. Smith College in North Carolina. In getting him out of town, she got him away from the low-level drug and gang activity that had come close to ensnaring him.

When Hill came back, he wanted to help kids who reminded him of himself, and she knew Jaime Bobillier was just that type of kid. Hill and Bobillier bonded immediately.

“When I grew up selling drugs was just like joining the Boys & Girls Club,” Hill said. “It was just what you did.”