



## HCCCI ZYAN MELVIN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Since 2002, HCCCI's Computer Clubhouse provides a safe environment for children and enables them to work with cutting edge technology in creative ways. Formed by the Boston Museum of Science and the M.I.T. Media Lab, which modeled the program after similar Computer Clubhouses around the world, this Harlem-based after school program gives young people the chance to work with advanced software and digital audio/video equipment, which most of the children do not have access to in their homes and schools. With over 150 kids currently enrolled, HCCCI's Computer Clubhouse is a free after school program open to children ages 10 to 18.

Zyan Melvin discovered the Clubhouse completely by accident. "The first time I went to the Clubhouse, I actually thought it was a library," said the towering 14-year-old. "Little did I know that this place was known for its projects and I had to be a member in order to use the computers."

Zyan turned an initial desire to learn Adobe Flash into his passion and he has a natural talent for it. His sketchbooks, overflowing with characters like Sonic the Hedgehog, Quartz and an array of others, are now subjects in many of his original animated cartoons and films. "I use it because I saw some YouTube videos created with Adobe Flash and I thought they were cool."

Sandra Melvin, Zyan's mom, appreciates that the Clubhouse is conveniently located in her neighborhood. "My son is in a safe place," she said. "He's doing what he likes to do--computers, art, etc. He's not out on the streets getting into trouble."

Fred Riedel, Coordinator of the Computer Clubhouse sees great potential in Zyan. With his help, Zyan was accepted into the competitive High School of Art & Design. According to Riedel, "Zyan's portfolio included original animation characters he created in the Clubhouse using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop."

The Clubhouse recently expanded their mission in order to reach children younger than 10 years of age. "We've partnered with the Minisink Power Academy, who offers standard after school homework help at their location, in order to provide younger kids with an opportunity to engage in some kind of technology-based STEM learning."

While many of the Clubhouse regulars are using more advanced programs like Logic Pro, Adobe Photoshop and Final Cut Pro, according to Riedel, the Digikids program is especially designed for younger children.

M.I.T. Media Lab programs such as Scratch and Makey Makey give Digikids the ability to create their own animated stories, music and art. "Makey Makey is an electronics board that bypasses your keyboard, allowing you to connect any of the wired connectors with alligator clips from their board to anything that is conductive (water, graphite, etc.)."

Digikids has about 30-35 kids that are split into three groups which rotate each week. This program meets at the Clubhouse every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon, from 4:00-5:00. It is led by Luther D. Isler, a tech instructor at the Minisink Power Academy who worked closely with Riedel to create the Digikids model.

