



A BETTER CHANCE

Andover Committee for A Better Chance

Fall 2013

College preparation is a team task at ABC

The mission of A Better Chance of Andover – to help close the education gap for students of color – depends on many volunteers assisting these students through the complicated process of getting into colleges that best ensure their success.

Our nonprofit program's invigorated focus on college admissions involves a many-pronged approach that employs experienced tutors, SAT prep, college essay development, financial aid know-how, visits to colleges, and a creative use of mentors.

The College Mentor: Each of the three seniors – Jazzare Mays, Deanna Starr and Abigail Awodele – has been paired up since last spring with a mentor who is experienced in college preparation. Each mentor works closely with her scholar, the scholar's AHS counselor and family, and ABC's two resident directors during this high-stakes and high-stress process.

In addition, college-admissions coach Julie Ireland Childs of locally based USA College Bound has provided technical expertise to all the students.

College Visits: ABC arranges college tours ranging from one-day to weeklong so that the students can explore a range of institutions before creating their short wish-list. Without ABC's help, the students probably couldn't take these valuable tours, which are commonplace for most high school students, because their families have limited resources.

SAT Prep: Because of the ABC students' previous environment and their crowded schedules in Andover, preparing them well for the crucial SAT testing is very important.

According to Sue Bergmeier, who chairs ABC's Academic Committee and is an ABC host parent, finding the right programmatic fit for improving scores is key.



Visits to colleges and universities help ABC students focus on those that are best for them. Here seniors Deanna Starr (left) and Abigail Awodele visit Bates College in Maine.

"The quality of SAT prep courses is uneven; we have had inconsistent results from some of the school-based prep programs," she notes. "Our girls are so busy that they need to have flexibility built into the way they prepare."

ABC also believes that its increased emphasis on summer enrichment activities for its students improve their SAT performance. This past summer, scholars attended programs that directly focused on SAT prep and others that included a test-prep component.

Tutors: Experienced coaches in the more *(continued inside)*

President's message: *Amazing growth in four years*



Nancy Vogler

You probably have gone through the college process yourself or have helped your children navigate the process. It's pretty intense, right? Now imagine a house with three seniors applying for college. Well, that's the ABC House this fall!

Since August I've watched a team of dedicated volunteers guide our scholars through the complex college-preparation process. There are application-essays to polish, college visits to arrange and standardized tests to prepare for – all while our scholars maintain a rigorous academic load at Andover High School, extracurricular activities, volunteer work and sports. Somehow, our seniors are juggling all of these commitments, while serving as great role models for our underclassmen.

This year, I've also had the pleasure of welcoming our two freshmen to our program. They made it through our national organization's applicant screening for the brightest, most motivated students of color.

As our freshmen begin their high school careers, I reflect back three years to when our current seniors arrived at A Better Chance of Andover and marvel at how they have grown. They will leave us next spring as accomplished, confident young women, fully prepared to embark on the next stage of their academic careers

I am proud of the academic success of all of our scholars, and grateful for the continued support of our volunteers and donors, who have enabled our nonprofit program to meet its mission since 1967.

Stayed tuned for our next newsletter to find out which colleges our seniors will attend in the fall.



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More news/photos at
AndoverABC.org

Summer offered learning, leadership

ABC helped its students line up many opportunities to broaden their knowledge and leadership during the past summer.

Abigail Awodele, a senior, helped run A Better Chance East Coast Orientation 2013 at Arcadia University as a group leader of 250 new ABC scholars. Her duties included dorm proctor, travel chaperone, panelist, instructor, role model and mentor. She also attended the SAT Crash Course 2013 put on by ABC National in New York City.

Jazzare Mays, senior, became a certified College Access Ambassador through the highly selective NYU CALI (College Access Leadership Institute) held at NYU. Along with other academically strong students from communities that have few students in college, she attended workshops on skills that help gain admission to highly selective colleges.

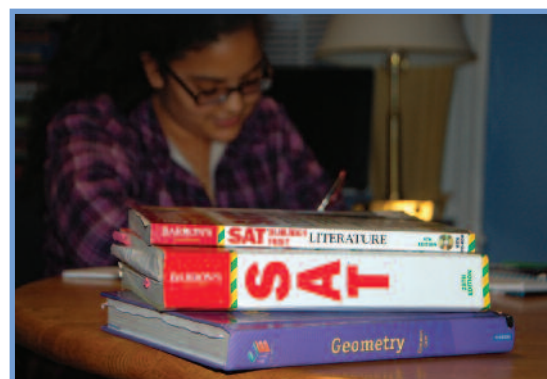
Deanna Starr, senior, traveled to Mexico City and surrounding areas through Experiment in International Living (EIL). In addition to studying the history and culture of the city, Deanna lived with a local family, improved her Spanish and honed her soccer skills with local kids. She also attended the At the Well Leadership Conference for women held at Princeton University.

Ariel Leachman, a junior, explored fashion design, creation and marketing at the Fashion Institute of Technology's Precollege Program. She attended a summer reading-and-writing program at Fordham University's School of Professional and Continuing Studies. Capping her summer was the SAT Crash Course 2013 put on by ABC National.

Fatouma Koné, junior, attended the highly competitive At the Well Leadership Conference for women held at Princeton University, where she was awarded the Oprah Winfrey award for her hard work and leadership. (See *Andover ABC students*.) Fatouma also honed her basketball skills while working as a counselor at Hooptown Basketball Camp here in Andover.

Xonatia Lee, junior, immersed herself in the Psychology and Self track at the Notre Dame Summer Scholars program for academically outstanding high school students. She also attended the At the Well Leadership Conference for women, and went to a field hockey camp at Bentley University.

Nilda Vega and **A'mari Bing-Way**, both 9th grade, began their ABC journey in August, attending an ABC math "ramp" program that helps prepare incoming ABC students for one of the more difficult courses at AHS.



ABC gives students tutorial and SAT-exam help.

College prep (contd. from page 1)

difficult AHS courses are available to help ABC students to master challenging parts of their courses in order to build an unblemished academic record. Tutors also meet with incoming ABC 9th-graders to prepare them for AHS-level teaching, which is far more demanding than that of their previous under-performing schools.

The College Essay: A college essay based on the ABC student's unusual experiences can set her apart from her peers at Andover High School. It gives the students an opportunity to land much-needed scholarship money, notes Bergmeier.

This fall the seniors worked closely with their college mentors to develop essays, explains Gaby Hagar Nossiff, Academic Committee member. "The difference from their first draft to their final essay is enormous," she says, noting that the essay process also becomes a vehicle for self-reflection and revelation, as scholars look back on their ABC journey.

"Their stories go untold while they are here," she explains. "There are facets to these girls that we never see. They come to Andover and put on their game-faces to succeed. This [essay-writing] process can be an emotional one."

Financial Aid Team: ABC has put together a team of financial-aid gurus to assist seniors with the many important student-aid forms that come due Jan. 1 and the overall issue of college cost.



Andover ABC students bring awards home

Two ABC students from Andover have received awards for excellence in areas that are ABC hallmarks: leadership and persistence against all odds.

Felicia Reyes, who graduated in last spring, was chosen by the ABC national organization from among graduating ABC seniors nationwide for "exceptional and steadfast determination to achieve successes through perseverance toward objectives in spite of obstacles that may have impeded his or her progress." The other award went to **Fatouma Koné**, a junior this year at Andover High, for leadership qualities she showed during a training program at Princeton University.

Felicia gave an acceptance speech when she received her award at National ABC's 50th Anniversary Gala in New York City.

"Felicia was amazing in her grace and poise as she accepted the award," Mary Pritchard said. "She brings great strength at moments when she knows she is out of her comfort zone... showing all of us the courage that she possesses no matter what life asks of her."

Now a freshman at her dream school, the University of Southern California, with a full scholarship, she said she wants to be seen as "a walking example of how there is hope."

"If it weren't for A Better Chance," she said, "I would not be where I am today."

Fatouma Koné was honored with the Oprah Winfrey Award at the highly selective At the Well Young Women's Leadership Academy at Princeton. The two-week summer program is for high school students of color with leadership and academic potential.

Attending thanks to a scholarship and sponsorship, she was assigned the duty of dorm advisor in addition to the program's main activities. At a closing ceremony, she received the Oprah Winfrey award for demonstrated leadership.

"I learned a lot," she says of the annual program, which encourages critical thinking and problem solving in its classes and discussion groups. "It brought together a lot of cool people from all over the country."

9th-grade students arrive

The two newest arrivals at ABC – 9th-graders **A'mari Bing-Way** and **Nilda Vega** – have similar interests in music and are excited about the experiences that await them here.

A'mari Bing-Way is very creative and loves every form of art, from food creation to architecture. She has joined the AHS crafts club, is taking violin lessons and is getting involved at the Essex Art Center in Lawrence.

At her middle school in Waldorf, MD, she was on the girls 4x100 track team that won first place.

One of her initial reactions to Andover was that "kids are very laid back... and even wear sweats to school!"

A'mari's host family is Mary Ellen Janeiro and children.

Nilda has joined the AHS Treble Chorus of New England. She also is volunteering at New Horizons for Youth.

At her middle school in New Haven, CT, she founded the school's Student Council and discovered that it helped her push past her fear of public speaking.

Nilda's host family is Jim and Robin Buhner and children.

She is excited about her new homebase, saying that "the ABC house is amazing!"



A'mari Bing-Way

Nilda Vega

Alumnae graduate

Two ABC students from the AHS class of 2009 received college degrees last spring.

Turalloy Jackson graduated from Villanova University. Her application to the Teach for America program was accepted and she is teaching in the Baltimore area.

Alexis Singh was awarded a degree in public health by Ithaca College. Currently in Spain with a short-term teaching job, she plans to return to the U.S. in the spring.

ABC Open House

Come and meet our students and leaders at an open house on Sunday, Dec. 8.

Tour ABC House at 134 Main St., Andover, during the 1-3 pm event and enjoy seasonal refreshments.

For Patriots fans, the game will be on the house TV.

Items Needed

Our nonprofit program needs many new or used household items and supplies. We can often make good use of your used or extra items. Donations may also help a scholar explore a new hobby or sport. If you can donate any of the following, please tell **Susan Connolly** at seconn@bellsouth.net.

- Cleaning supplies and paper goods
- Barbeque gas grill
- Bike lock... chain or cable
- Sports gear: reflective running vests, elastic work out bands, small weights, jump rope, medicine ball, women's health and fitness magazines

Thanks to these supporters for previous donations. Individuals: Clive Bolton, Emily & Kevin Donovan, Lynn Eikenberry, Lynn Hook, Jennifer Luxa and Mary Pritchard. Businesses: Andover Small Engine Service and A.J. Cavallaro.

More about A Better Chance of Andover

Stay current with A Better Chance of Andover by checking our website occasionally at www.AndoverABC.org.

The site contains the latest news, information and photos of the ABC students, our nonprofit's mission, past newsletters, how to volunteer or contact us, and more.

Kimberly Bergey hails ABC

I have had the distinct privilege of working with ABC scholars, who took the enormous risk to leave their homes across the country and move to Andover in pursuit of a better education and future.

These young women have an exceptional work ethic and genuine love of learning, and thrive in Honors and AP level courses, immersed in critical thinking across the disciplines. They are enthusiastically engaged at AHS, and also the community, in athletics, music, theatre, clubs, and community service.

ABC scholars graduate ready to be active leaders in college and eager to make a positive

difference in our world. With unique ideas and talents to share, their contributions to AHS and the Andover community have certainly made a positive difference in so many of our lives already.

Thank you, A Better Chance of Andover!

*Kimberly Bergey,
AHS Guidance Counselor*



Leadership changes

Nancy Vogler is the new president of A Better Chance of Andover. A board member for three years and a former host parent, her professional career has been in pediatric nursing. She succeeds Mary Pritchard, who remains on the board's Executive Committee as advisor.

Becoming treasurer is Noreen Marton, who is an accountant for a local company. She succeeds Arlene Hawkins, who continues on the board.

New board members are Sophia Alexander, a corporate HR manager and owner with her husband of a small business in Andover; Sue Bergmeier, who has a long career teaching physical therapy; Clive Bolton, owner of a local engineering company; Cheryl Todisco, health teacher in Andover elementary and middle schools; and Michael Todisco, Cheryl's husband and a CPA with a career in public accounting.

New host parents for ABC students are Lynn & Bruce Hook (Lynn is also on the board), Mary Ellen Janeiro, Robin & Jim Buhner.

ABC's leaders and students are grateful to Chris Grant, Eileen Reilly and Pam Rosenberg, who retired from the board after long and valuable service to our program.

Looking for missing ABC of Andover alumni

As we begin to plan for the 50th anniversary of A Better Chance of Andover, we want to regain contact with any of our graduates with whom we have lost touch. If you know of ABC alumni who do not receive postal or e-mail from us, please let us know at info@AndoverABC.org how to reach them.



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