

Braving the big wait

It was mid-May, 2014. In the homes of most AHS seniors, checks had been mailed to secure spots at college, and graduation celebrations were being planned. At the ABC house, however, only one of the program's three seniors knew which college she would attend in the fall. The two other seniors were still in an admissions limbo that has become all too common for highly qualified students of color seeking financial aid.

"The wait-list season is volatile for us," states Gaby Nossiff, college mentor and ABC board member. "The colleges recognize that our girls are extremely qualified, but admission decisions can be complicated by financial need. Often, the schools need extra time for their decisions."

One of the important roles served by ABC's volunteers is to guide and steady the program's seniors through this crucial but stressful stage of applying to colleges.

Back in September 2014, the three seniors were gearing up for their final year: honing college short lists, visiting campuses, attending multicultural recruiting weekends, getting assistance from ABC and AHS counselors.

One of the most challenging and powerful tasks is the personal essay. "These girls have *such* a story, but sometimes they can't comfortably verbalize it," Julie Ireland Childs, professional college coach and ABC board member, explains. She notes that writing the essay requires a deep trust and a lot of courage. But, she adds, telling one's story often becomes an essential part of not only the college process, but also of the maturation and change in perspective while living four years in Andover, a culture different from the one from which the scholars came.

By January, all three seniors had hit the send button on a minimum of 10 school applications. They also spent



Spring graduate Fatouma Koné (right) is settling in at Franklin & Marshall College, while Xonatia Lee (left) and Ariel Leachman are off to a good start at Barnard College.

considerable extra time tackling the complicated FAFSA (federal financial aid) forms, along with submitting any other necessary financial-waiver documentation.

Then came the Big Wait while their peers at AHS began to receive envelopes, thick and thin.

Senior Ariel Leachman was first at ABC to receive word. She was admitted to both New York University and Boston University, early action. However, an offer from the Arthur O. Eve Higher Education Opportunity Scholars Program at Barnard College excited her the most: a full-ride financial package; Ariel was done.

Fatouma Koné received good news from a smattering of colleges but, unlike Ariel, she would need to wait on financial award letters, which often trail admission offers up to 10 days. She had been wait-listed at Franklin & Marshall College, a top choice. Xonatia Lee was also in limbo, waiting to hear from schools and wait-listed at a number of her top choices, including Barnard College. *(continued inside)*

President's view



Susan Connolly
Photo By: Robert Huntley

During a recent fall holiday, the students and several board members toured local college campuses, including my alma mater, Wellesley College. On the walk through beautiful surroundings, the curious questions from each student reminded me of how unique each is in her potential field of study and

interests. The juniors were narrowing down what they seek in a college experience. The freshmen wondered why they were there, since they are still figuring out Andover High School!

What is absolutely clear is that these young women share a common goal and clearly have their eyes set on the prize of a college education.

Over my last five years volunteering with ABC of Andover, I've looked forward this time of year to seeing our returning

students, orienting our new students, and hearing about our alumni. Our three recent graduates are settling in well at Barnard College and Franklin & Marshall College. Our new freshmen were thoughtfully selected from thousands of other candidates to be part of the Andover program and will join over 14,000 alumni nationally when they graduate.

We volunteers come to ABC through an ever-expanding network of friends and family. Through our work together, we build friendships and are co-laborers in this effort of love. We commit our volunteer and financial resources, and the program couldn't survive without both. Our Board of Directors kicked off the year with a renewal workshop to rekindle their commitment, examine business processes and revisit strategic goals for a sustainable future.

The group remarked on how well the community continues to provide support as tutors, healthcare providers, property managers, and so many other roles.

Financial support is primarily provided by individual donors (72%), with the remainder from grants and community organizations. No financial *(continued inside)*



Giving back in the ABC family

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*More news and photos at
AndoverABC.org*

Ian Dowe, AHS '84, was on the ABC Board of Directors in 2006-09. Later, he and wife Allison Reilly were ABC host parents. Here they look back:

Today, the college process is a complex myriad of determining what you want, fine tuning schools based on your criteria, filling out the Common App, wrangling through the process of financial aid, and ultimately making the right choice. I don't envy the student at Andover High School today. Forget about the academic pressure – to be considered at a competitive school, you have to not only take challenging classes, but you need to balance that with a combination of community service, clubs, athletics, employment and leadership positions.

A Better Chance of Andover helps pave the way for its scholars' college success. When I was in the program, it was the support of many that helped me get to where I am today. Without the encouragement of my host parents, Mark & Marcia Jaffe, I would have not pushed myself academically, and without the fortitude of Dick Collins, I would have never participated in sports (which ultimately led to an academic/athletic scholarship at Holy Cross).

So when our host daughter, Justene Salomon, needed guidance on her college process, Allison and I began the journey of navigating through College 101 Today. For the ABC student, there is no early-decision process. Choosing a college calls for the right balance of academic interest, right type of college and receiving the right financial aid package. With the help of her fantastic guidance counselor at the high school, Kimberly Bergey, we did our best to guide Justene on what would be "the right" choice for her.

In the end, Justene chose Sacred Heart University in 2010. She worked hard to get in. One thing we have learned about Justene is that when she really wants something, she pursues it until she gets it. Even though a New York state school would have been less of a financial commitment, she wanted Sacred Heart, and she made it work. Her perseverance is something that our whole family admires and aspires to be like.

There have been several moments when I truly felt blessed from having a host daughter, but there are three that have stood out the most: seeing her graduate from my alma mater, Andover



Ian Dowe, an ABC graduate in the 1980s, and his wife, Allison Reilly (right), were ABC hosts to Justene Salomon, Sacred Heart '15.

High School, dropping her off for the first time her freshman year, and seeing her receive a degree from Sacred Heart. And that perseverance is continuing with Justene, she is "giving it back" working at the Department of Social Services in NYC with plans to continue on and get her Masters in Business Administration. You go, Justene!

What We Do



ANDOVER
A BETTER CHANCE
Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1953.

Our mission is to increase substantially the number of well-educated young people of color who are capable of assuming positions of responsibility and leadership in American society.

A Better Chance of Andover closes the education gap facing smart, motivated female students in underperforming school systems by bringing them here to get an excellent preparation for college at Andover High School. Thanks to the generosity of people like you, we provide them with a house on Main Street and a complete network of support and love.

Our 137 graduates have been accepted by highly selective colleges and universities. Many have gone on to get graduate degrees and become leaders in their professions and communities.



Braving the big wait *(continued from pg. 1)*

On May 1, Fatouma sent a deposit to a small liberal arts college in upstate New York that she felt comfortable, if not elated, to attend. (Its financial aid offer fell short of her need.) A week later, she was riding home after basketball-related knee surgery with ABC host mom Gaby Nossiff, when Gaby's cell phone lit up with "Lancaster PA."

Nossiff recalls shaking Fatouma out of her post-op sleep. The Franklin & Marshall admissions officer on the line extended an offer. After a few nerve-wracking days, Fatouma got the news that she would also get a full-ride financial aid package.

Meanwhile, ABC's then President Nancy Vogler and key board members knew that timing was everything for Xonatia; each called Barnard College on her behalf. The third week of May, Barnard College offered Xonatia a spot in the 2019 HOEP scholars program, too.

President's view *(continued from page 1)*

support is provided by the national ABC organization or through government programs. Last fiscal year had its challenges, but funding was focused on the essentials of academics, enrichment, and operating our facility in line with available resources.

Planning has begun to celebrate the 50th anniversary of our program. A remarkable number of people have shared the passion for education that led to the founding of the program and keeps it vibrant today. Outreach to our 137 alumni has yielded stories of achievement and struggle through many different life paths.

The anniversary outreach brings up interesting discussions of societal change over the years but reminds us of why A Better Chance remains steadfastly relevant today. The program creates access to academic and enrichment opportunities – the rest is up to the motivated students who apply and commit to the program, each destined to her own greatness.

Susan E. Connolly

It was finally time to focus on graduation.

"I think ABC's got it right," says Julie Childs when discussing the program's strategy for developing the most promising and authentic of the applicants and then supporting the scholars through what can be a very intense process.

"We start very early; we ideally begin with our freshmen. Our students need to be taking the most challenging courses that they can manage and participating in extra-curricular activities, internships and jobs to get a flavor of the world."

ABC also plans to harness the deep knowledge of board member Linda Griffith, Phillips Academy's assistant head for equity and inclusion, to seek out resources for learning about diversity in admissions.

Says Nossiff: "We need to find the colleges that really prioritize diversity – and are willing to pay up for it."

Arrivals and departures

ABC of Andover welcomes **Carlos Cedeño, Julie Ireland Childs, Lori Barsalou and Lisa Maue** to its Board of Directors.

Cedeño, of North Andover, has a long association with ABC. A graduate of ABC's Longmeadow, Mass., program, he worked in our national office for several years. He and his wife, Ruth, also were resident directors of the Winchester program. Today he is placement counselor for a charter school in Lawrence.

Childs founded Andover-based USA College Bound and has done pro bono college counseling with ABC students for two years. An Andover resident, she and her husband Tom have three grown children and two grandsons.

Barsalou has a master's degree in information technology and coaches project teams at Progress Software. She also is a volunteer tutor for ABC students. She and her husband Phil have two college-age sons.

Maue has had a small-animal veterinarian practice in Medford for 30 years. She and husband Paul lived in Andover and their two children were educated in the Andover public school system.

Leaving the board

A huge thank you to recently retired board members: Arlene Hawkins, treasurer for four years; Sophia Alexander, a vice president; Robin Gendron, co-treasurer; Dot McGlinchey and Toby Coltin O'leary.

Alumna earns MD

"I've learned over the years if you accept that nothing comes easy, then life is happier," says Dr. Vanessa Monroy Cañas, AHS '04.

This wisdom-to-live-by has served the ABC alumna well. Cañas currently is doing her residency in obstetrics and gynecology at the Detroit Medical Center after earning an MD from the University of Rochester School of Medicine in May. She is a 2008 graduate of Colgate University.

Cañas has another milestone under her belt as well: her first marathon, which she completed in March. In October she completed a half-marathon – after pulling an all-night shift, no less. She plans to run a full marathon again in March with goals of fundraising for charity and trying for a new personal record.

"I got into running during my years before med school," she recalls. "It's my means of finding relief and re-centering."

Thank you, volunteers

The following donated significant time to ABC:

Dr. Mike Vogler, *health care*

Dr. Anthony Broccoli, *health care*

Todd Berberian and Dr. Charlene Glynn of *Andover Eye Care*

Liza Waters, *tutor*

Lauren Brown, *tutor*

Bruce Letwin, *tutor*

Reed Valleau, *tutor/handyman*

Michael Pierce, *CPA*

Newsletter Team

Lynn Eikenberry, *writer*

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Living in Color

All seven ABC students joined forces this fall to bring a groundbreaking new organization to Andover High School: the Living in Color club.

Their reason? "Because living life is living in color," explains an enthusiastic A'mari Bing-Way.

Their goal is to provide an opportunity for open discussion about cultural awareness, to encourage informed dialogue about racism, classism and all other forms of bias, and to break down the barriers of supposed "color blindness."

In addition to the Living in Color club, each of our students is actively honing her talents and skills through a wide range of AHS and community opportunities.

A'mari is now the child-care coordinator for the Gracepoint Community Church.

Déanna Clarke-Campbell, also a junior, earned the role of Abuela Claudia in the high school's fall musical production, "In the Heights." She is also active in Show Choir, Medical Club and Model U.N.

Junior Nilda Vega is in her third

year as a member of the highly selective Schola Choir, the most advanced group of the Treble Chorus of New England. Elise Cabrera, a sophomore, joins housemates Déanna and Jenni Nguyen in Show Choir. Elise is also pursuing volunteer opportunities with the Special Needs club.

Jenni, also a sophomore, is the third of our students in the highly talented Show Choir. She is also a member of the AHS Gay Straight Alliance.

Ninth-grader Skye Padovani is participating in Andover Vocal Music's Cabaret and also following her artistic passion by joining the photography club. She hopes to volunteer at Ironstone Farm, a local organization for people with disabilities.

Olamide Olayinka, who also is in the ninth grade, performed with Déanna in the Andover High School fall musical "In the Heights." She is the fourth of our students in the Show Choir. Last year Show Choir traveled to Branson, Missouri to compete in FAME Branson. We wish them well on their chorale pursuits this year!

ABC's newest students

ABC enabled two students from New York City to enter 9th grade at Andover High School this fall.

Skye Padovani brings a wide range of interests to the program and community, including writing poetry and fiction, and singing. She has joined the AHS Show Choir and signed up for other singing events and would like to extend that talent to programs for people with disabilities. [See "Living in Color" for more about both students.]



Typical of a 14-year old, she is considering many future goals, from owning a small tattoo business to becoming an author. She publishes original poetry and fan fiction on wattpad.com, a literary website, where one of her fan fiction stories has 17,700 reads.

Olamide Olayinka, a native of Nigeria, now calls the Bronx home. At AHS, she has joined the Nothin' But Treble women's show choir. She also landed a part in the Show Choir's fall musical, "In the Heights."



At this point, Olamide considers herself a math person and is taking honors algebra. While her mother would like her to go into medicine, she is considering becoming a psychologist or social worker. She adds that she really is enjoying the sisterhood of the ABC House.