

Array of activities help students grow

Guitar lessons, crew, martial arts, dance, volunteer work, visits to museums and musicals. For many Andover High School students, these pursuits are a fact of life. For A Better Chance scholars, arriving from urban communities and schools that have few, if any, extracurricular activities, the challenge of “jumping in” – whether it’s into a school club, sports team or music lesson – is formidable but also rewarding.

Khaneisha White, a junior, recalls her first tryout for a musical: “I had a nervous breakdown. No, literally, I cried, I called my mom. I went to the audition without a song.” Khaneisha didn’t just survive, she earned parts on stage or behind the scenes in four of the AHS Drama Guild’s productions, including this fall’s *The Sound of Music*.

For junior Henrica Bresil, anxiety about trying out for the crew team came from a different place. “I can’t swim,” she states wryly. Even so, Henrica completed her second season of crew this fall, rowing in the varsity shell. She retains her passion for martial arts, having co-founded the Martial Arts Club at AHS and is also in the Asian American Club.

“Andover ABC recognizes that activities like these outside of the classroom help develop the ‘whole’ person to compete at the highly selective college level and beyond,” said Lynn Eikenberry, who co-chairs the Enrichment Council along with Mary Pritchard. “That’s why we have a formal program that encourages our eight scholars to build on their talents and interests and to experience the world of arts, culture, history and New England’s unique environment.”

ABC works with each girl to uncover her interests and to develop her talents. This year Daree Colon, a junior aiming for pre-med, will volunteer at the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center, working with young girls in an after-school health program. She is applying to be a Junior Volunteer at Lawrence General Hospital and she is also getting a taste of guitar by taking lessons at Phillips Academy. *(continued inside)*



The nonprofit SHED Inc. is one of the community services where Andover A Better Chance scholars volunteer. Here, sophomore Shanygne Askins plays checkers with a girl at the after-school program.

President's message: Opportunity in Andover

It’s easy to take Andover’s many benefits for granted – the excellent schools, a community tradition of helping others, easy access to interesting activities... a pervading sense of opportunity for all.

But each fall brings a reminder that life is especially good here: that reminder is the return of A Better Chance scholars to the ABC House at 134 Main St.

These students come from urban communities that have very little in common with Andover. Their schools’ meager funding provides the bare classroom necessities, so extracurricular

activities are only a wish. Their communities, where survival is the common denominator, set low expectations and goals for their young residents.

Andover A Better Chance was founded in 1967 to give outstanding students in those neighborhoods a more likely way to grow to their fullest. We firmly believe that they will develop capabilities in Andover that will open doors to otherwise inaccessible colleges and universities as they prepare to be leaders in their professions and communities. And that concept works... but not always without discomfort, as you will see from the article above. *(continued inside)*

Array of activities helps students grow (Continued from page 1)

Felicia Reyes, a freshman, also joined the fall crew team and plans to focus this winter on her true passion for dance at the Paige Conservatory of Dance in North Andover.

Justene Salomon, a senior and president of the ABC house, and Shanygne Askins, a sophomore, have teamed up to volunteer three afternoons per week at the SHED Inc. nonprofit after-school program.

Freshman Laura Molina came to Andover wanting to try everything (almost). She has settled into Freshmen Board of the Student Council, the Gay Straight Alliance and a girls' leadership group, to name a few.

Many other opportunities are available, but they would not exist without support from community residents and organizations, such as the Andover / North Andover YMCA.

The second aspect of enrichment comes via monthly group activities, chosen collaboratively with the scholars. This year's calendar – packed with “definites” along with a few “dreams” – has already included the Freedom Trail, a Duck Boat tour and Chris Rock's award-winning documentary “Good Hair” about African-American hair.

Yet to come are “The Nutcracker” at Phillips Academy, the “Black Nativity” in Boston, the Boston Independent Film Festival, “Dream Girls” through

Broadway Across America, a photography exhibit, a trip to New York City for a Civil Rights / Harlem Renaissance tour, and the 21-mile Walk for Hunger or a similar fundraising walk.

All of these activities – in addition to SAT preparation, tutoring, babysitting, homework, laundry, chores and mandatory participation in Andover ABC events – make life both demanding and full. It is the experience of a typical AHS student and is similar to one offered at a residential prep school.

The new scholars cannot always articulate the benefits of such extensive extra-curricular involvement but as they mature, they begin to see the payoff.

“Just trying new things is the best part,” Daree says with a laugh, adding in a serious tone, “Doing these things allows us to really experience everything and anything, and that helps us understand ourselves and the world better.”



Daree Colon (center) with two other Andover High School student ambassadors

President's message: (Continued from page 1)

Andover and its high school can be overwhelming to a student of color reared in a poor city neighborhood. However, when ABC scholars get more comfortable trying new, sometimes intimidating, experiences and handling a busy schedule outside school, they begin to realize that they can achieve much more.

For that reason, our program is striving – within an extremely tight budget – to provide our students with more enriching activities outside class to augment the fine education they get at Andover High School. These outside activities help to develop the “whole” person and reveal the many opportunities that the future holds.

We can't do it alone, and that's where the Andover community shines.

- Andover families raise their hand to be host to an ABC scholar during her four years in Andover. They invite the student to their dinner table once a week and take her each month on family outings that often are new and enriching.
- Organizations such as Phillips Academy and the Andover / North Andover YMCA offer activities that ABC students probably won't find back home.
- Individuals and institutions contribute the funding that we need to provide these enriching experiences.

As you read further, you will learn about other benefits these deserving scholars gain from our program and our community. We are grateful for the wide network of support that enables Andover A Better Chance to change lives, one person at a time.



Amy D. Joyall

- Amy D. Joyall



Some summer lessons

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AndoverABC.org

Andover A Better Chance arranged and helped pay for summer activities that led three of its students in very different directions: to a volleyball court, the wilderness and the stage.

Henrica Bresil's odyssey took her to the Delaware Water Gap in August for two weeks of canoeing, hiking, camping and, for two scary days and nights, surviving on her own.

Now a junior, she combined an essay and an interview to win a place on a seven-member team in the Youth Leadership Corps, sponsored by Outward Bound Philadelphia. The team members shared tasks that enabled them to complete a canoe trip on the Delaware River the first week and 27-mile hike the next in remote parkland that borders the river.

"I loved the program, especially the time spent with the group," she recalled. "But it also was extremely stressful at times – trying to get [to campsites] by nighttime, carry a 70-pound pack, not starve.... We handled it with humor."

But the two days and nights alone weren't very funny, especially when a staff member arrived to warn her of a bear sighting in the area. After a thunderstorm and two sleepless nights with only a tarp for shelter, she was glad that part was over.

"It's cliché," she said, "but I learned that, as hard as it is, I can get through it."

Andover ABC encourages its scholars to take on these summer activities to expose them to new interests and acquaintances, as well as to enable them to pursue their passions, explains Janis Hill, the ABC board vice president who oversees the expanding summer activities program.

"Summer opportunities help promote our scholars' personal growth and confidence, while enhancing their college applications," she added.

For junior Khaneisha White, winning admission to the Summer Youth Music School at



Felicia Reyes, an incoming student, experiences the thrill of a rope swing during an outing at Little Lake Sunapee.

the University of New Hampshire enabled her to sharpen musical talents that she has been developing in Andover.

The vocal demo CD she submitted to UNH won her two weeks in late July in the Musical Theatre program, with stage and classroom training by three college professors.

"I learned to be more comfortable when performing on stage," she explained.

What's more, she took lessons on the trumpet, African drums and – a new experience – the piano. She also sampled life in a college dorm.

Overall "I really enjoyed meeting and becoming friends with other people with musical interests," she noted.

Volleyball camp sponsored by the New York YMCA enabled Shanygne Askins to learn techniques from experienced coaches, some of them from other countries. She won a camp scholarship that paid half the expenses while ABC covered the rest.

During the week at the lakeside camp in Port Jervis, NY, Shanygne took part in other camp activities. "It was lots of fun," she reported.



New scholars settle in

Say hi to Felicia Reyes and Laura Molina, students who became A Better Chance scholars and 9th-graders at Andover High School this fall.

Felicia comes from across the country in Anaheim, California. Laura becomes the second scholar in the program from Philadelphia.

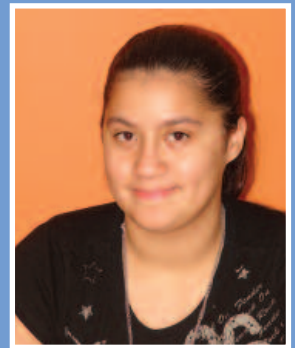
Traveling to high school from the West Coast was a big step for Felicia, but the new 9th-grader says Andover High and ABC make it worthwhile. "It's a big change but I'm getting along with everyone and I like my classes and teachers."

She especially enjoys World Civilization class and Project Challenge, a team-building exercise in gym. Trained in ballet, she is excited that Andover ABC has matched her up with a local dance program after school. Meanwhile, she has been pulling her weight in a sport that's new to her: crew.

Laura, a KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) middle-school graduate, is enjoying her new school, too. World "Civ" is also one of her favorites, and she has joined the Freshmen Board of Directors and Gay-Straight Alliance.

Although both 9th-graders are a bit young to plan for careers, Laura wants to learn more about being a doctor, lawyer or tri-lingual translator (English, Spanish and sign language). "My father taught me that they always will be needed," she notes.

Laura is fluent in Spanish and both girls have joined Amigos Unidos at the high school. In fact, one of Laura's goals is to live in Puerto Rico one day.



Laura Molina



Felicia Reyes

Graduates enter Villanova, Ithaca College

The three ABC scholars who graduated in the spring from Andover High School are now hitting the books at college and loving it.

Turalloy Jackson is off to a good start at Villanova University. "I LOVE Villanova," she writes. She also plans to return to Andover during the holidays to visit her host family, Beth Clough, Steve Jungmann and their children.

Alexis Singh and Ashleigh Baker ended up accepting offers to attend Ithaca College and are roommates.

Alexis finds the classes challenging, physics especially, but feels that the AHS physics course she took prepared her well. Her Andover hosts were Judy and David Dlesk.

Ashleigh said that Ithaca initially seemed too small. But after gaining many new friends and discovering more resources, she has settled in at Ithaca for the long haul. The similarity to Andover is comforting, she adds. In Andover, her hosts were Sue and Dan Farrell.



Resident directors: "This is it!"

Five new faces awaited the scholars when they arrived at the ABC House this fall.

In the Resident Directors wing are husband-wife team Audra Reilly and Jon Trebilcock and sons Noah, 3½, and Jake, 1½, who were immediate hits with the girls.

They succeed Sally and Brian O'Rourke. Andover A Better Chance thanks them for all they contributed during their two years as RDs. Sally is still in regular contact with the scholars as an Andover High School counselor.

Resident assistant Paige Bonitto has joined the staff of live-in tutor/supervisors. Returning as the other RAs are Amber Edwards and Jeanne Murray.

The new resident directors bring valuable experience to their new roles. Audra grew up in Groton, Massachusetts, graduated from Emerson College and recently worked at two schools for teenagers with special needs. Jon, a native of Los Angeles who graduated from Sound Master Audio/Video Institute and attended UC Irvine, has wide experience in film/movie production, sales and management. The grandson of college professors, he also enjoys tutoring the ABC scholars. Audra and Jon met while they worked in the entertainment industry in LA.

The two hoped to find a resident-supervisor position linked to education because Audra plans to begin work for a master's in special education in the spring. When they learned about the ABC job, Audra said, "This is it!"

"Supervising eight teen-age girls is a ton of responsibility," she added, "but I like that."

After getting acquainted for a couple of months, the RDs are settling in with the ABC scholars. "There's never a dull moment. They are eight distinct personalities," Jon said. "Even better, they all have taken to our boys."

New directors

MaryAnn Comparato and Dot McGlincy have joined the Board of Directors of Andover A Better Chance.

MaryAnn is an independent sales consultant, long-time Andover resident and supporter of the Andona Society, Esperanza Academy and other community activities. She and her husband, Frank, have two children in Sanborn School.

Dot has supported Andover ABC in several roles over the years. She is an environmental consultant, a licensed geologist, and a Massachusetts Licensed Site Professional. Dot and her husband, Robert Graham, have a son who is in college.

Directors who have retired from the board are Ian Dowe, Lanita Foley, Joseph Smith and Gloria Wager. Ian and his wife continue to provide personal support as host parents. Lanita remains a link between the program and Phillips Academy. And Gloria now directs an ABC fundraiser – a bed and breakfast program for visiting PA parents.



Host families



Two Andover couples and their children have volunteered to host the two ABC freshman scholars. Catherine Giles Stecher and Scott Stecher have welcomed into their home Felicia Reyes while Nancy Bergeron and Phillip Green have become hosts of Laura Molina.

Catherine Giles Stecher, an educational psychologist and aerobic-dance instructor, said she and her husband, a biotech company manager, welcomed the role because "it seemed to be a perfect way to have a positive impact and share our love."

They have a list of interesting destinations on hand for Felicia and their two children, Soshia, 9, and Wilson, 7, to experience during the year, she said.

Nancy Bergeron, her husband and their children, Hadley, 16, and Sophie, 7, offered to welcome an A Better Chance scholar in their family life because, as Nancy put it, "We felt we wanted to do something that involved all of us."

The family enjoys outdoor activities and would like to take Laura on their outings. Professionally, Nancy is an independent salesperson and Phil is chief technology officer for an information management company.

Board member Louise Valteau, ABC host-family coordinator, thanked the two families for taking part in the program that helps the students feel more a part of Andover.

"All the host families are excited and enthusiastic about the students they have welcomed into their homes," she said. "We're off to a great start this fall."

Each ABC scholar is paired with the same host family during her four years in Andover. Scholars visit their hosts once a week for dinner and one weekend each month.

Requests for more information about the host family program may be sent to the Andover A Better Chance address below.

Andover A Better Chance thanks supporters.

Andover A Better Chance is deeply grateful to the individuals and institutions that enable the program to exist this year, especially Fairview Capital Partners and Foundation M, donors of our two largest grants.

During the current economic crisis, contributors will be pleased to learn that this organization is one of the most efficient nonprofits that they could support. We are financially self-sufficient, and all of our income supports our program of providing lodging, tutoring and enriching experiences for our scholars.

Contributions, which are tax-exempt, can be sent to us at: PO Box 212, Andover, MA 01810. Donations of stock or gifts given in someone's memory also are welcomed.



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