

## Why this program is needed today

Andover A Better Chance is in the right place at the right time to meet the needs of its talented scholars, judging from recent comments by educators.

This past October, Massachusetts Secretary of Education Paul Reville argued that solving the academic achievement gap is essential to improving the American economic climate. He was referring to the disparity in academic performance between student groups based on gender, race/ethnicity and socio-economic status.

Speaking at a nationwide educational colloquium at Harvard, Columbia University Teachers College professor Michael A. Rebell concurred: "That which we ought to do morally becomes coincidental with that which we need to do economically."

Earlier this year, Bob Herbert, New York Times editorialist, stated that "the most pernicious and challenging educational issue of our time is the academic achievement gap."

New research shows that the determinants of the educational gap are embedded in culture, not income. For instance, a study conducted by the Century Foundation in Montgomery County, Md., showed that students who come from low-income families and are enrolled in affluent elementary schools did much better than low-income students in schools in higher-poverty areas in the same county.

Herbert said, "Students benefit from a more affluent environment, which means better teachers, fewer classroom disruptions, pupils engaged academically, parents more involved."



ABC scholar Jazzare Mays (center), a sophomore at Andover High School, plays with two children while volunteering at the Memorial Circle after-school tutoring program in Andover.

Andover A Better Chance has been successfully harnessing this approach since 1967 as it gave academically talented students who had been wasting away in poorly supported high schools a chance to discover their full potential at Andover High School.

ABC alumna Nacasi Green, a Loyola College senior majoring in Global Studies with a minor in International Business, explains. "The competitive nature of [AHS] was....(continued inside)

## President's message: Our students' potential comes alive in Andover



Mary E. Pritchard

This fall, a group of fired-up young women have things buzzing at Andover A Better Chance's house on Main Street. There is such promise in this high-achieving group of ABC scholars.

As one of our former presidents, Joel Parks, once said, "ABC is organized not to save the unfortunate, but to enable the gifted to exercise their potential."

This dynamic has resumed every fall since the beginning of this program in 1967. Each and every one of our scholars is here to exercise her full potential by having access to a quality of education that is unavailable to them in their urban neighborhoods. It is nothing short of a transformative experience!

Watching these girls launch themselves into their studies and activities reminds me that our educational nonprofit program is

as timely today as it was when it was launched 44 years ago with the overwhelming support of the local Town Meeting.

When our eight scholars aren't at Andover High School or doing homework, they are hustling from one activity to another – volunteering as tutors in after-school programs, participating in sports, continuing with dance lessons, and doing odd jobs to raise spending money.

Last year, our students chalked up an impressive 3.7 grade average in their courses, some of which were advanced-level. This year's students are working just as hard and carrying a full load of honors classes.

The transition to AHS for our new students is a difficult one. They must adjust to a more demanding curriculum and also catch up on the concepts and terminology that they missed in their underperforming neighborhood schools. Despite this disadvantage, our experience tells us...(continued inside)



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More news/photos at  
AndoverABC.org

**Why this program is needed today** (Continued from page 1)

always a driving factor in succeeding, as there are no low expectations. Independence and self-assertion were core skills that helped because ultimately each of us had been dropped off by our parents and the path to success was our own to make."

AHS junior Monique Lopez Espinoza, an ABC scholar from Garden Grove, CA, points to peers as a key influence. "Nobody cares about school where I come from—not even parents," she says. "To see people pushing themselves, it makes you want to be a part of that."

Being removed from home helps in other ways as well. "Also, I don't have to worry about the other stuff that's around [back home]," notes Abigail Awodele, a sophomore from Bridgeport, Conn. "The courses are harder, the curriculum is harder. I have more hours of homework than I would at my school back home." The community of Andover has had an impact on her as well. "It is very dif-

ferent from Bridgeport. People are nicer here.... and it is also very competitive; it makes me want to compete."

The Campaign for Educational Equity at Columbia Teacher's College states that closing the academic gap requires both educational opportunities provided in formal school settings and a range of educationally relevant "out of school services." These include "after-school, extended learning opportunities, enrichment, health care and familial support."

The Andover ABC program provides a long list of these enriching activities: health care advocacy, tutoring, enriching after-school activities, a competitive academic curriculum and growth-enhancing relationships.

It is indeed a snapshot of an approach that confirms quite powerfully what we believe: Andover ABC--now more than ever.

**President's message: Our students' potential** (Continued from page 1)

that these students will catch up and will succeed at AHS. Currently, our new students are meeting with teachers after school and working with tutors at the ABC House to bridge that academic achievement gap.

Our two graduating seniors not only caught up to their AHS peers, but went on to graduate with 4.0 averages. Most importantly, they achieved our program's goal of helping talented scholars of color to study at some of the nation's most competitive colleges and then become leaders. This fall graduate Dareé Colon is a freshman at Clark University and Henrica Bresil has begun studies at Providence College, their scholarships totaling \$75,000.

I attribute our continuing success to many factors. For one, Andover High's interim Principal Thomas Sharkey, teachers and counselors give our scholars a top-rate education along with crucial support.

Solid donor support despite the bad economy, a key to our success, is needed more than ever because four new students—a 33% increase—joined the program this fall. Newly designed orientation programs have helped them to get acclimated in Andover.

ABC is grateful to a team of skilled, volunteer tutors who assist our scholars outside school when they encounter difficult stretches in courses. Other volunteers help upperclass students prepare for PSAT and SAT exams. Their preparation for college begins early in their high school years and ranges from sessions on how to cover soaring college costs to actual tours of institutions that interest them.

Support like this has sustained the Andover A Better Chance program for more than four decades as it joined the nationwide effort to close the academic achievement gap. I hope you will help, too.

*Mary E Pritchard*



## Four new scholars arrive

Andover A Better Chance welcomed three new 9th-graders and a 10th-grader this fall, expanding the nonprofit program from six to eight scholars.

For **Fatouma Koné**, coming to Andover High from a small Catholic school in Harlem, NY was a culture shock. Here, she says, big classes mean “the responsibility is on the student to seek help and get noticed.”

The 9th-grader sees Andover ABC as a first step into a future in pediatric medicine or law. “I’d like to go to Harvard, or one of the best law schools,” she states with quiet determination and a fierce twinkle in her eye that leaves little doubt of her ability to achieve her goals.

Outside class, Fatouma has her sights set on basketball, hoping to play for the AHS freshman, JV and eventually varsity team. “The competition is very tough. Kids have been playing since they were five-years-old,” she notes.

Fatouma also would also like to get involved in the Andover Youth Services, specifically on projects that provide job and leadership experience.

Born and raised in the Bronx in the shadow of Coop City, 9th-grader **Ariel Leachman** has been pleasantly surprised by the number of people at Andover ABC who are eager to help her if she needs it.

She came to ABC to help prepare for the rigorous academic journey necessary to fulfill her dream of working in pediatric medicine or law. She was inspired partly by her godsister, who is currently in her residency in pediatric medicine.

Ariel was surprised by the size of AHS and the number of students per class, which is a change from her previous school. “You don’t get the individual attention; now it’s really up to me to get help.” But, she adds, she feels like she knows how to do this.

Ariel recently joined Andover Youth Services and looks forward to helping with fundraising efforts, especially its annual fashion show.

Ariel wants to get involved in community service, particularly service with kids, which would build on her past experience in tutoring and running arts and crafts programs in an after-school program at her church.

**Xonatia Lee** comes to Andover ABC from Brooklyn with a diverse set of career goals: she is very interested in forensic science and crime-solving, but on the other hand, she would love to be a professional ballet dancer.

The Jamaican native, who moved to Brooklyn when she was six, has wasted no time getting acclimated to AHS. She has joined the cross-country team to build



This year’s ABC scholars and supervisors are (seated, from left) senior Monique Espinoza, sophomore Abigail Awodele, 9th-grader Xonatia Lee, resident assistant Kristen Bresse, and (standing) RA Paige Bonitto, sophomore Jazzare Mays, RA Angelica Coleman, junior Felicia Reyes, sophomore Deanna Starr, 9th graders Fatouma Koné and Ariel Leachman, and resident director Audra Reilly.

on the running skills she developed on the track team at her previous school. “The first day I was really sore,” she exclaims, noting that cross-country is different from track. “It’s really tiring.” She is taking ballet classes at the New England School of Ballet and also would like to become involved in the video and film production at the school.

Xonatia says ABC provides “an environment where everyone is really nice and willing to help.” But she finds the high school so large and fast-paced that it has been challenging to find the time to make new connections. Given her many interests and outgoing nature, that isn’t likely to be a challenge for long.

**Deanna Starr** hails from Manhattan, where she lives with her mother and older brother, a student at Alfred University. Now a sophomore, she spent last year at an ABC program in Manlius, NY, outside Syracuse.

Deanna loves sports and played soccer for five years. She is now launching into crew for the first time, and it is obvious that she is someone who is willing to risk trying new things.

She has made productive use of her summer vacations as well. Three years ago she participated in a dance program with the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, and the next year undertook a summer program in law. Last summer, needing to earn money, she had a paid job.

Deanna loves math, the history of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Andover ABC is fortunate to have such an enthusiastic and well-rounded scholar.

## Our ‘needs list’

Have you upgraded your toolbox, completed a home renovation, or plan to move? We would appreciate donation of any of these second-hand or leftover project items that you no longer need. To do so, please contact:

Susan Connolly at  
seconn@bellsouth.net.

- Vacuum – canister-style with hoses, attachments
- Household repair tools (e.g. screwdriver, wrench, hammer)
- Masonry blocks, masonry cement, wire mesh
- Power pressure washer
- Gas stove
- Perennial plants (e.g. from thinning an ivy or daylily patch)
- Insulation batting or boards

## More on website

Our redesigned AndoverABC.org has more news and accepts online donations. Thanks to Matt Russell and his son, David, for creating it. Watch for news there about our winter auction.

## Business supporters

Andover ABC and its scholars want to thank the following businesses for contributing their services to our nonprofit program:

- Andover Cosmetic Dental Group (Dr. Richard Miller)
- Kevin Bagnall, DDS, Nancy Bagnall, RDH
- DS Design Studio
- Forever Green Lawn and Landscape
- Free Christian Church
- Greater Lawrence Community Rowing
- Latitude Sports Clubs
- Dr. Lois Lombardo, DMD
- Merrimack College
- North Andover Pediatrics (Drs. Mike Vogler, Megan Evans)
- South Church of Andover
- Tucker & Samuels (Dr. David Samuels)
- William K. Lawrie Painter

## How To donate

Donate online or mail to Andover ABC at P.O. Box 212, Andover, MA 01810. Stock donations and contributions made in someone’s memory are welcomed.

# New members strengthen Board of Directors

Five women with strong ties to Andover have joined the Board of Directors, bringing valuable strengths to our nonprofit program.

New board member **Diane Costagliola** also chairs the Andover Youth Foundation. She has worked with youth in many other capacities, including Town wide PTO as chair, PTO/PAC executive board and Mother Connection, and has volunteered with the Trauma Intervention Program of the Merrimack Valley. She and her husband have two children.

**Kate Margolese**, who has worked for and consulted with high-tech companies, is a volunteer foster-care reviewer for the Department of Children and Families and runs the book fair at Wood Hill Middle School. She also was on the Andover Fund for Education board and the Andover Public School's Technology Pinpoint Committee, and has been a Girl Scout leader. She has two teenage daughters.

**Cynthia Uppendahl Marsh**, formerly a corporate manager for business planning, volunteered at Andover ABC last year. She has filled various roles for

the South Elementary and Doherty Middle School PTOs and Andover School of Montessori Board of Directors. She also has raised funds for Andona Society and Phillips Exeter Academy and interviewed Middlebury College applicants.

**Lani Peterson** has a doctorate in psychology and is a public speaker, personal coach and award-winning storyteller specializing in leadership development. She also is a member of the National Speakers Association and chairs the Executive Committee of the Healing Story Alliance. She and her husband have four teenaged children.

**Pam Rosenberg** brings experience as senior vice president for business development at Eliza, Corp. Her volunteer work includes fundraising and recruitment for a major City Year event. In addition, she brings to Andover ABC experience helping companies at the startup stage make the most of limited resources, time management, hiring and generating income.

Leaving the board are former presidents Candy Dann and Joel Parks, Lynn Eikenberry, who also was a long-time

member, as well as Joan Cohen, MaryAnn Comparato, Jackie Hesketh, Joanne McConaughy and Beth Prawdzik. We thank them for their valuable service.

## ABC Booster



"Andover A Better Chance is a remarkable program that has touched hundreds of lives—lives not only of the students who come to us from the deepest pockets of American poverty, but also of Andover students who are enriched by the diversity ABC brings to this community. After years of involvement in human service and education programs in the Legislature, I believe that ABC is a wonderful model that deserves the financial and volunteer investment of Andover residents."

*-former state Sen. Sue Tucker*



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