

Events will honor Andover's support of equity

"ABC is an opportunity for our community to demonstrate whether or not it is prepared to move confidently into the future – a future which must include people of all races and backgrounds if our town is going to provide our children with an environment that is relevant to the world in which they are going to live."

– The Andover Committee for Equal Opportunity, 1967

This prescient quote, from one of the groups of citizens promoting creation of an ABC (A Better Chance) program remains as relevant today. And it is just one of many historical gems being unearthed as ABC combs through its archives and reconnects with alumni in preparation for a year-long 50th Anniversary celebration in 2017.

In March 1967, funding for A Better Chance in Andover was approved at Town Meeting – via secret ballot, the only one in the Town Meeting's history – by 82 percent. This overwhelming support – of a controversial program to bring students of color to Andover and its high school in the midst of post-civil-rights social and cultural upheaval – will be featured in ABC's observance next year.

"We have a theme that will run throughout our events – gratitude to the town of Andover for its belief in the mission of ABC and for its ongoing generosity," states Mary Pritchard, past president and chair of the 50th Anniversary Planning Committee. ABC of Andover has much to celebrate. It is the oldest continuously run ABC Community School Program in the country and has graduated 137 students, with 100 per cent going on to four-year colleges. A majority have continued on to impressive professional careers and leadership positions, says Susan Connolly, board president and head of Alumni outreach.

Take Wildolfo Arvelo, Ed.D., Andover High School '79, the focus of our alumni story (see inside). Born in Puerto Rico, Dr.



Above: ABC's inaugural students in 1967. Below: Today's students.



(from left) Déanna Clarke-Campbell, A'mari Bing-Way, Jenni Nguyen, Leannette Garcia, Nilda Vega, Olamide Olayinka, Mafoudia Keita, Elise Cabrera and Skye Padovani.

Arvelo was one of the early ABC grads, when the program had male and female students. He went on to earn a doctorate in higher education administration. Now president of Great Bay Community College, he has devoted his career to championing access to education and raising money for scholarships.

...(continued inside)



Susan Connolly

Photo By: Robert Huntley

President's view: Excitement pervades the fall term

The ABC house is back-to-school with added excitement as our 50th anniversary awaits on the horizon.

Nine motivated young women enrolled at Andover High School in September. Two freshman students, Leannette Garcia and Mafoudia "Dia" Keita, have settled into the rhythm of the house and school with big smiles and lots of laughs.

Sophomores Olamide Olayinka and Skye Padovani provided the freshmen with an excellent orientation to Andover High, introducing them to teachers, Principal Philip Conrad, and bestowing sage advice learned the prior year.

Elise Cabrera and Jenni Nguyen are solidifying their junior-year academics at the high school while exploring ways to give back beyond Andover.

Three seniors, A'mari Bing-Way, Déanna Clarke-Campbell, and Nilda Vega are working with their college coach to complete and mail their first wave of college applications.

Resident Director Karen Spinale and Resident Assistants Kelsey Crowther and Kelly Mahoney are back this year. House outings provide all forms of enjoyment. Principal Conrad ensured that the ABC students could check off "New England shore supper" on their bucket lists by hosting the students and staff at Woodman's restaurant in Essex.

We expanded the outstanding group of Host Families who host a student each Wednesday night and one weekend per month.

A few highlights of our summer included reconnecting with ABC alumni and founders. Mary Pritchard and I enjoyed a great night out in New York City, reminiscing with a group who graduated from AHS between the late 1980s through 2014.

These young women shared stories of their educational, professional and personal pursuits. Many were drawn to social justice programs, early-childhood and higher education, advocacy, journalism and religious ministry. A common theme in their roles was helping people find their voice and identify their dreams or acting as a voice for others. Like many alumni we speak with, these alumni ... (continued inside)



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AndoverABC.org

Events to honor Andover (continued from page 1)

And then there is Laurin Banner, AHS '72, who went on to graduate from Northeastern University with a BA in Political Science and an MBA in Finance as well as a Master's of City Planning from M.I.T. Currently a senior advisor at Westnet Mid-Atlantic in Baltimore, MD, he also has overseen economic development programs for USAID in Afghanistan and Africa, and been a leader in the fields of female empowerment and micro-finance.

"It's exciting to find our alumni doing amazing things, particularly with social justice and education," explains Connolly. "They are ready to tell their stories and are eager to be involved in our celebration.

"I would love to attend," posted Sheila Wright, AHS '04, currently a nurse at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, OH. "I've been meaning to make it back for some time!" That sentiment was echoed by Shaunte Martin, AHS '09, senior program manager for family engagement at MyPowerLearning, New York, adding, "It's been far too long."

50th Anniversary events in 2017

- **Scholars Speak from the Pulpit.** The 50th Anniversary celebration will kick off in January and/or Martin Luther King Day, when ABC Alumni return to Andover to partner with faith communities and thank them for their role in the founding of the ABC of Andover program and their 50 years of supporting our program.
- **Andover Historical Society Exhibit:** In March through early summer, an exhibition entitled "ABC, Yes or No?" in partnership with the historical society will be on display at the society on Main Street. The exhibit will tell the story of ABC, starting with a seed sown by Phillips Academy and other prep schools as a call to arms for educational equity, then to the efforts by a small group of individuals to convince Andoverites to take the historic vote despite controversy, the purchase of the ABC house for \$40,000 in 1967, and finally to today and the impressive and growing outcomes of our ABC alumni.
- **Phillips Academy and ABC Presents:** The two will collaborate to create an educational event for the public on topics such as educational inequity in America, etc. On March 31, Dr. Mae Jemison, the first black female astronaut to travel into space on the NASA Endeavor flight of 1992, will speak at Phillips Academy.
- **Founders Reception:** On April 2, ABC will hold a Founders Reception honoring the courageous individuals who worked to make ABC a reality. This event is scheduled to coincide with the 1967 March Town Meeting, which voted to bring the program to Andover.
- **Andover High School Commemoration:** In September, Andover High School and ABC will honor their partnership with a banner and ceremony at the high school.
- **Alumni weekend and ABC 50th Gala Celebration:** The year will culminate in a fun-filled Alumni weekend – with opportunities for alumni to reconnect with old friends, host families, teachers and fellow students. The weekend highlight will be a gala celebration held at The Barn at Arden for over 200 supporters and alumni.

"Our goal will be, as 2017 wraps up, that every Andover citizen whose life has been touched by ABC in some way – and those who just want to learn more – will have had an opportunity to engage with ABC," states Pritchard. "It's really coming full circle with our alumni and showing our gratitude to the town that took a chance on our these outstanding scholars 50 years ago emulated."

Or, as the Boston Herald put it, back in March 1967:

"Andover's action shows what a small town – a part of affluent America – can do privately and publicly to help fight and improve education. Andover deserves to be congratulated and its example emulated.



ABC alumnus became college president



Dr. Wildolfo Arvelo

“One of my concerns after leaving Andover was how I was going to direct my life to give back,” states Wildolfo Arvelo, AHS class of ’79. “Education was a natural pathway for me to help others because I saw it as a transformative experience in my life.... My experience in Andover was part of that transformation.”

Arvelo has made more than good on his word, becoming a powerhouse for the cause of educational access. Today, as the president of Great Bay Community College (GBCC), he has led the design and construction of the college’s two campuses that educate more than 5,000 students a year. The college works with 50 to 70 companies annually to help meet their workforce needs by designing curriculum or training programs. And finally, he raises close to \$500,000 annually for scholarships.

In 2012 Arvelo was selected as the City of Portsmouth Business Chamber Citizen of the Year, and is a member of the board of directors of United Way of the Greater Seacoast.

It is a far cry from his early years. Arvelo was born in Puerto Rico and moved as a young boy to Spanish Harlem in New York City. A door to opportunity opened when his family discovered A Better Chance.

At the University of Massachusetts, Boston, he earned a B.A. in history, a Master of Public Policy and a PhD in Education Administration. He began his career in 1985 at Bunker Hill Community College. He continued to serve in admissions and managerial positions at additional greater Boston area colleges until 2007, when he joined GBCC.

Today he also partners with the National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health to increase undergraduate research at GBCC and other community colleges in a collaboration with Dartmouth College and the University of New Hampshire.

“A few of us who have come from socioeconomically poor communities are lucky to be exposed to a wonderful education, but many within our communities, even in New Hampshire, still are not,” he says.

So this son of Puerto Rico and Spanish Harlem finds himself enjoying life in semi-rural New Hampshire with his wife, Linda, and Harley, their Jack Russell Terrier. “While there is a bit of me that has always felt guilt about not returning to Spanish Harlem, communities in need exist everywhere and I am fortunate to be a part for creating change in those communities.”

President’s view (cont. from page 1)

emphasized that access to education and professional opportunity were life-changing and that they were considerably shaped by their ABC experience.

We also spent a day with early founder Charles Dey, listening to the fascinating story of how A Better Chance’s community school program was founded in response to John F. Kennedy’s challenge and how the local program was established with overwhelming community support in the town of Andover. Such bold foresight and bravery was shown by the founders and scholars in that first class!

These stories, photographs and recollections will be shared next spring in our Andover Historical Society exhibit.

We’re looking forward to celebrating with all of you – students, alumni, volunteers, friends and community!

Susan E. Connolly

Two students join ABC

ABC this fall welcomed two 9th-grade students – Leannette Garcia and Mafoudia “Dia” Keita – into our program.

Leannette, who moved with her mother from the Dominican Republic to the Bronx when she was 5, says she applied to ABC because she “wanted to get out of the city and get a better education, a better life. I knew that Andover would be a better environment for me, more enriched, and that it was a safe place.” As for her AHS teachers, Leannette gives them an A+. “I like the teachers, especially my English teacher because she is very helpful and by the book.”

At AHS she has joined the Dance Club and volunteered at Girls for Girls.

Dia sought out ABC because she wanted to be challenged to “get outside of my comfort zone.” She was born in Guinea, West Africa and coincidentally also moved to New York City when she was 5.

Dia says that, once she was accepted by national ABC, Andover’s program “was my first choice because it was so organized and so welcoming – the community, too.” Already, Dia has volunteered at the Bread & Roses soup kitchen in Lawrence.

Of course, as with Leannette, the move has been an adjustment. While Andover “is very, very different” compared to bustling New York City, she notes, “the [ABC] girls here are the sweetest people ever.”

9th-graders’ hosts

Two families have volunteered to be hosts to the two newly arrived ABC 9th-graders.

Eric and Luiza Pellerin and their young son will be Dia Keita’s host family. Eric teaches English at Andover High School.

John and Sheila Graham will host Leannette Garcia. They have three teen-aged daughters and live in Andover.

For information about becoming an ABC host family, contact Nancy Kendrick, host family co-coordinator, at kendrickn@verizon.net.

Board changes

Nicki Wiggins, a volunteer last year on ABC development-related projects, has joined the Board of Directors. Her professional background is in marketing, sales forecasting and strategic planning, particularly at startup companies.

ABC is a family affair for the Wigginses, since husband John tutors ABC students in math.

Meanwhile, Kate Margolese has retired from the board but will continue to contribute to ABC as a volunteer on the Communication Committee. In addition to filling that role during her five years on the board, she took photographs, created slide shows and led strategic planning sessions for ABC.

Thank you

ABC is grateful to the following companies for services they donated to ABC:

- DS Design Studio of Rockport for designing this newsletter issue.
- Michael R. Pierce C.P.A., P.C.
- Retelle Tree Corp. of Andover for tree care on Mass. Arborists Assn.’s Arbor Day of Service.



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Ex-board member applauds ABC

Editor's note: Marjorie Byers is a former ABC vice president and volunteer.

I welcome this opportunity to express my feelings about ABC because I am very proud to have worked with the many dedicated men and women who have volunteered time and energy to this prestigious and hard-working organization.

Many people, including generous and dependable contributors, deserve praise for the successes that ABC has realized during its 50-year existence.

Thanks to Andover High School teachers, administrators, counselors, staff, and especially local students for serving as host to nearly 150 ABC students so far. As a group, you all have learned much from each other. AHS's academic leadership is the result of academic success, teamwork, acceptance and community involvement. I am pleased that the teachers, in turn, expect the above from all students.

My hat is off to the all-important ABC host families. They have provided a home away home for each ABC girl. They have become part of their immediate family. When necessary, the adult hosts have had that conversation that is important to mutual understanding or to facing problems their host students may be experiencing. The host families often remain in their lives for years after they leave the program.

As for the Board of Directors and house supervisors, each brings to the table a sincere caring for each of the girls and the ABC house. I remember the long, late hours, telephone calls, time spent discussing the issues, and dealing with how to fix the problems.

Working as a team, all of these dedicated supporters have made sure that the program succeeds despite many challenges. The students of color that ABC sponsors come to Andover from minority groups with different backgrounds in many locations to gain a better education than their community's public school offered. They were chosen by the program because of the conviction that they were capable of meeting the program's demands.

ABC enabled them to get into excellent colleges, giving them a chance to become leaders of tomorrow. In today's society, with a college education, one's options are unlimited. That's why ABC graduates return to give thanks for all that they have learned thanks to ABC and for their subsequent successes.

In the words of an African proverb, "To educate a woman is to educate a nation." In that spirit, thanks to you all for all that you do to support ABC's mission.



Marjorie Byers and late husband Carl

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What We Do



A BETTER CHANCE
Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1967

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 for students of color in America. We bring motivated young women of color to live in Andover, where they attend Andover High School to better prepare for college. Thanks to your generosity, we provide the students 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.