

Thriving in a home away from home

"The Dowe-Reillys are my best friends," states Justene Salomon, AHS class of 2010. "The ABC program truly gave me a better chance. It not only gave me a high school education so that I'd be in a better position to attend college, but it gave me a family."

She is referring to her Andover host family, which ABC arranges for each of its students. In her case, they were Ian Dowe, an ABC board member at the time, his wife, Allison Reilly, and their three school-aged children.

For Justene, it was a game changer. She graduated from Sacred Heart University with a BA in psychology and women's studies and now lives and works in New York City, where she is preparing for graduate school.

Host families are a cornerstone of the ABC program. Each new student is assigned to a host family in Andover at the beginning of her freshman year. Host families host their students for dinner every Wednesday and one weekend each month while school is in session. ABC students return to their actual families during school vacations.

The host family experience is designed to provide students with a support system rooted in the Andover community, an opportunity to expand their horizons beyond dorm life, and a place to enjoy downtime and a break from the stress of communal living. The host family commitment is a four-year one; often the bond goes on long after graduation.



ABC alumna Jessica Spates, in back, is shown in 2008 with her host family, Dave and Brenda Bryan and, from left, Kai, Flynn, Bae and Gates.

Turalloy Jackson (AHS '09, Villanova '13) remembers fondly the experience of being a host daughter to Beth and Steve Jungmann. "They were very easy to talk to and I could speak to them about everything."

Jessica Spates (AHS '08, Wesleyan University '12) will never forget the first outing that she shared with her host family, Brenda and Dave Bryan. They were enjoying a Boston tradition – the Nutcracker ballet – when youngest daughter Flynn was violently ill during the "quietest time of the performance – you could hear a pin drop," Spates remembers.

During her time with the Bryans, the family grew as they adopted two young children from China. (Spates shared a room...*(continued inside)*)

President's message: *Mixed emotions of hellos and good-byes*



NANCY VOGLER

Arrival of spring means two milestones for our program: interviewing next fall's incoming freshmen and preparing to say goodbye to our seniors. I'm glad they occur simultaneously because it helps to soften the blow of the seniors' departure.

Four years ago, today's seniors went through a rigorous, annual selection process. Our national

organization sorts through thousands of applications and then directs qualified candidates to dozens of U.S. schools – both public and independent.

It's the first step toward providing these promising young students of color a better chance to get a quality education and a chance to be better positioned for college. Our program doesn't just stop there. Our expectation going forward is that our students will lead lives of responsibility and leadership in their communities....*(continued inside)*

Students, friends dig ABC through winter

The winter of 2015 was one for the record books! ABC house manager Susan Connolly spearheaded the tireless efforts of students (in a two-team shoveling rotation), board members and thoughtful volunteers to keep the ABC house from caving under the snow, and the heat and plow bills from soaring. If you were part of the shoveling squads--a big thank you!

In the end, the house suffered no major damage, save for a small pipe-related flood, and the basement stayed "high and dry"!

Some highlights and high fives:

- Although the regular plow service was keeping up, the parking lot was quickly shrinking. Rob Morgan, new friend of the program, came just in time with his front-end loader and scooped the snow into giant mounds on the side to prepare for each next big storm.
- Brian Emmons came over with his snow blower to dig the paths through the waist-high snow to get to the down spouts, fire hydrant and fire exits, and to enlarge the paths.
- Reed Valleau continued to eradicate drafts and find insulation projects around replacement windows and the nooks and crannies of our 1810 house with boulder-walled cellar.



ABC House gets new Resident Director



Karen Spinale

Welcome to Karen Spinale, who has joined our program as Resident Director at the ABC House.

An Andover resident for two decades, she is in her sixth year at Andover High School supporting students in the Special Education department.

"I'm thrilled to be here," she says, "because my ties to the Andover community will be beneficial to ABC and these outstanding young women."

Karen's son Joey, 16, is a junior at AHS. Her daughter, Erika, 21, attends UMass-Amherst, and Amanda, 24, works at Doherty Middle School in Andover. Karen has also enjoyed supporting the students of Andover High School in the role of Costume Designer for their theatrical performances.

She expects to draw on her experiences at AHS and in the arts in her supervisory role at A Better Chance.

Karen succeeds Catherine Okoh and Richard Komeh, who left ABC because of time demands of their jobs.

President's message: ...continued from page 1

When I think of the scores of ABC scholars who have gone on to do just that, I am overwhelmed by the legacy of our program in Andover.

To honor that legacy, we plan to assemble all of our alumni, going back to our 1967 founding, at our 50th year celebration two years from now. From what I've already heard, I believe their stories will provide the inspiration to sustain the program for the next 50 years.

Stay tuned for more information about our 50th anniversary celebration.

In the interim, we return to daily life at ABC House as we launch our three new seniors to college and prepare to welcome our new freshmen class.

See you at our 50th!

All the best,

Colleges will be full-ride

After many nerve-wracking weeks, our three graduating seniors have chosen the colleges that they will attend. **Ariel Leachman** and **Xonatia Lee** will enter Barnard College and **Fatouma Koné** will go to Franklin & Marshall College.

Each scholar has worked hard with her supporters and leveraged the ABC experience into a full-ride financial aid, which can be renewed annually.

ABC applauds them for collectively receiving admission offers from an impressive number of other colleges and universities, including American University, Boston University, Clark University, University of Connecticut, Drexel University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, New York University, State Universities of NY at Binghamton and Albany, Quinnipiac University and Sarah Lawrence College.



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Alumni Focus: Alexis Singh

It was while Alexis Singh, AHS '09, was teaching English in Madrid, Spain that she realized she loved working with teens.



Singh (in 2004)

Singh lived in Spain and taught teenagers for a year after graduating from Ithaca College in 2012 with a BS in public health and minor in counseling.

“I realized that I wanted to learn more about ways that I could improve health outcomes and I needed more skills and experiences to do that,” she says. “It made sense that the next step would be a master’s in public health.”

Singh is currently pursuing her post-graduate degree at the University of Pennsylvania, focusing on sexual and reproductive health as well as maternal and child health.

Moving to Andover for high school from the Bronx (her family is originally from Guyana), has helped her enjoy living in diverse communities, she says. “ABC taught me how to live and work with people from different backgrounds... whether it be in Spain, Ithaca or Philly.”

Singh sees the power of staying connected to her ABC roots. “I have come a long way since Andover High School, but I could not have done it without the opportunities I was given through the program.

“I have stayed in touch with a lot of the [ABC] girls, such as Lydia, Justene, Andrea, Camilla and Ashleigh, and I am very grateful that I created such amazing bonds in Andover. I look forward to seeing everyone at the 50th [anniversary], if not sooner!”



Become “A Better Chance” Dream Builder!

We are looking for a few good sponsors; donors interested in making a bigger and more personal impact on the lives of these deserving young women of color.

As an ABC Sponsor, you will be assigned an ABC student for the academic year. You'll attend a gathering with your student at the start and end of the year. You'll also receive progress reports on her academic achievements and activities. In addition, all sponsors will receive special recognition throughout the year. (Of course, a sponsor may choose to remain anonymous and also to opt in or out of any of the above.)

Sponsorship

Five thousand dollars will sponsor one student for the school year.

We are happy to answer any questions you may have. Please contact Nancy Vogler at ndVogler@gmail.com or watch for upcoming information sessions this fall.

Growing...continued from pg. 1

with Kai, the baby for a while.) Spates enjoyed all of it and remains very close to her host family.

Alexis Singh (AHS '09, Ithaca College '13) remembers many new experiences with her host family, including skiing and exploring Boston. “I also feel like they learned a lot about the Bronx and Guyana from me.” She adds, “It was also amazing that, when I came over on the weekends or Wednesdays, they would always make vegetarian meals for me.”

“My current host family is great,” says A’mari Bing-Way (AHS '17). “They like to get out and do things; we’ve been to the beach, to Boston, to a fashion show.”

Most students agree that one of the most important roles a host family plays in their lives is as a place to unwind. Bing-Way explains: “They have made it feel like a home rather than a place I just visit.” She adds that time away from the dorm is very important. Spates agrees. “It was really important to have a place to go that was away from the program. It felt like a separation even though their house was still in the community.”

The host daughter experience has impact well beyond the high school years. “I learned to be myself [with my host parents] and to be comfortable in my skin even as I was growing into my own. I learned how to expose my flaws and accept the consequences of that exposure because it made me learn more about myself,” reflects Jackson.

Says Singh, “This past summer I attended the wedding of one of my host sisters and I had a great time reconnecting with them. I hope that I can go see them this summer if I am not too busy with my job and classes.”

Salomon admits that, “after seven years it’s no longer really ‘hosting,’” but says that she makes several visits to Andover each year and always returns, for Christmas, to the Dowe-Reilly house. Or as she has come to think of it, home.

Alumni update

Abbi Awodele, who graduated from AHS last spring, performed with a choir during a memorial service in March for Fr. Theodore Hesburgh, former president of Notre Dame University.

Abbi is a member of the Voices of Faith Choir at Notre Dame, where she is a freshman. The choir provided inspirational music during the service in South Bend, Ind. Many notable figures honored Fr. Hesburgh, a world figure in his day, at the event that was covered by national media.

Abbi is expected to return to Andover this summer, volunteering at the Boys & Girls Club of Lawrence as part of a service program sponsored by Notre Dame, according to program leader Ted Gorrie.

Volunteers needed

Do you have time for a volunteer project? If you are willing to help with one of these ABC tasks, please e-mail us at volunteer@AndoverABC.org

- Organize historic archives and files
- Assist with a mailing
- Cook Saturday breakfast for 8 students
- Track down contact info for alumni
- Paint a room

What we do



The mission of A Better Chance of Andover is to close the education gap for students of color in American society.

We bring smart, motivated female students here to attend Andover High School and become better prepared for college. 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 134 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.

For more info, go to andoverABC.org or follow us on Facebook.



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Student activities: singing & service

One ABC student went on a house-building trip, while two others traveled to a national choir competition. These are highlights of our scholars' many activities in recent months.

Xonatia Lee, a senior, traveled to South Carolina with 45 other student volunteers on a South Church of Andover youth mission trip. They spent long but rewarding days working on house-building projects for poor families in the John's Island area.

"I am so thankful to have this opportunity," Xonatia reported. "I didn't think I would ever do something like this."

This year's good-will project sponsored by the church performed maintenance on a number of



Xonatia Lee washes the wall of a needy family's house.

dwelling to ensure that the needy occupants have safe shelter.

Accompanying Xonatia were her ABC host family, Brian and Carol Carmichael as chaperones, and their two daughters.

Meanwhile, junior Déanna Clarke-Campbell and freshman Elise Cabrera were in Branson, MO with the Andover High School Show Choir.

Déanna's solo kicked off the choir's performance, entitled "Nothin' But Treble."

The event was the FAME Branson Competition, a qualifying event for the National Show Choir Finals. Chaperone Annie Gilbert noted, "None of the Andover groups won awards, but the competition was the best we've encountered in the four years we've competed at this level. The kids were fabulous!"

Mitchells: 'An incredible time'

With the 50th anniversary around the corner, Doug and Pam Mitchell enjoy looking back on their memorable experiences with the ABC program.



Doug and Pam Mitchell

"Our involvement with ABC began in 1972," says Mitchell, a former president, "and soon led to fundraising for the program with Margot and George Bixby, Bill Washburn, Leonard Kent and others.

During those transformative years, the program acquired a second house for female-scholars who were added to the all-male program, then consolidated into a male-female house and finally switched to all-girls.

"Our 13 years as host family to a series of five outstanding young scholars was an incredible time for the two of us and our kids, especially

for our daughter, who was quite competitive with her new friends," notes Mitchell, who served on the ABC board for 26 years.

"We recommend the experience of hosting an ABC student to younger families in town. It is a unique chance to get to know and appreciate people from different walks of life."

The Mitchells look forward to the 50th anniversary in 2017 as a much-awaited opportunity to share memories with many of the young friends they made back in those days.

Attention: Facebook users

Follow us on Facebook, where we post news and photos of all the latest events as they happen! Follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ABCAndover