

Travel, tours enrich students

Visits to eastern U.S. colleges... to a historic factory site... survival training... meeting Gov. Deval Patrick. These are some of the enriching activities that Andover ABC scholars enjoyed in recent months.

The nine students met twice with Gov. Patrick, a former ABC student himself (Milton Academy '74): when he visited Andover High School and at a fall campaign event for state Rep. Barbara L'Italien. She represents Andover and is a former ABC director.

Summer break brought a variety of new experiences, thanks to donations from ABC supporters:

- The three incoming seniors got an unusual chance to compare colleges and universities ranging from Pennsylvania to Georgia. The tour, sponsored by national A Better Chance, visited 13 schools, including the Universities of Pennsylvania and North Carolina, Duke and Emory.
- Henrica Bresil, now a sophomore, spent three weeks at Philadelphia Outward Bound learning rock climbing (her favorite), survival training and canoeing eight miles. Later she described the experience to Phoebe Minor of Andover, whose late husband, Josh, founded Outward Bound US. (For full story, search AndoverTownsmen.com)
- Camilla Ekokobe, also a sophomore, took a three-week creative writing course at the Gotham Writers' Workshop in New York City, where she lives. Janis Hill, a member of the ABC board's Education Committee, arranged Camilla's and Henrica's training.

In November, a second college excursion was led by Dave Dlesk, whose family is host to senior Alexis Singh. He and the three seniors visited four colleges in upper New York State. For two days, they toured Syracuse University, SUNY Albany and Binghamton, and Ithaca College, where they met with sophomore Andrea Hall (Andover ABC '07). Dave Dlesk encouraged them to take notes and rank the schools as they went.

"They enjoyed it and were fully engaged in the process," he said. "I hope the trip will help the girls as they move through the college selection gauntlet."

Team-building opened the fall at ABC before classes began. Transported to Beverly, the students enjoyed team exercises at Project Adventure. Lessons learned there came up again at meetings throughout the school year.

Later in the fall, the students toured the Boott Cotton Mills Museum in Lowell, where low-paid workers, mostly girls and women, labored long hours in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The tour was led by Nicole Page, an Andover ABC resident assistant for the past two school years.



ABC students with Gov. Deval Patrick at the high school.

President's message

Andover A Better Chance is excited about the growing number of enriching activities and opportunities our students are experiencing this year.

Our thanks go to you, our supporters, for helping to ensure that these promising students learn and grow here in Andover as they prepare for their next major stage in life – college.

Major funding from the Bilezikian Family Foundation, Fairview Capital Partners, Foundation M, Putnam Foundation and South Church have made many of these life-changing experiences possible.

However, during this troubled economy, we depend on you all the more. When the next opportunity arrives to give to Andover A Better Chance, please remember these many ways that, together, we are changing lives, one person at a time.

Amy D. Joyall
President, Andover ABC



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Businesses underwrite tutoring

Andover A Better Chance scholars can get whatever academic support they need these days, thanks to two local businesses.

This fall when a new 9th-grader and two returning 10th-graders arrived in Andover, a math and a science tutor were on hand to acclimate them to their upcoming courses, since they had not come up through the Andover school system.

The tutors – high school teachers Maura Chapman and Cynthea Givens – also sized up their academic strengths, which turned out to be level-1 (honors). They remain available to coach them after school as they become accustomed to the innovative Andover school system.

Throughout the school year, additional tutors will be available to help all nine ABC students do well in class during their crucial climb toward college. It is funded by a grant from Fairview Capital Partners, which has an office in Andover.



Raichelle Kallery of The Saving Bank instructs Alexis Singh (left) and Shanygne Askins.

Another new feature this year is financial-literacy training, which The Savings Bank made possible. (See photo.) At no charge, Raichelle Kallery, the bank's vice president for marketing, is conducting the eight-part seminar at the ABC House on an area that's important to teen-agers: controlled use of credit cards, tips on savings and even a preview of home rental or ownership.

"When I started teaching at Andover High School 11 years ago," teacher Maura Chapman recalled, "ABC students Kristina Lord and Gloria Rosario would come to my classroom after school to ask a math question. The conversations always turned to their world in the ABC house. After being away for several years to raise my own children, I'm back and sometimes I have up to five ABC girls in my class after school reviewing homework and talking about their worlds at the ABC House. I feel very lucky to have the opportunity to work with the girls again."



Maura Chapman

The resident assistants deserve thanks for giving ABC students academic support nightly at the ABC House. Other volunteer tutors, who donate their time, include Martha Grant, statistics; Sheila Zappala, Spanish; and Pam Wilkie and Eileen Reilly, vocabulary enrichment. Peer tutors at Andover High also lend a hand. Joel Parks and Joan Cohen work with the students and their families on the college application process.

This fall, Aixa de Kelley, the high school's head counselor, and ABC Resident Director Sally O'Rourke arranged for the three ABC seniors to attend two sessions of The Academic Advancement Group. They learned the fine points of preparing a successful college application, including the required essay. Andover Youth Services paid their fees.

Review has begun for the SAT and ACT exams for college admission, with teachers Sara Boucher and Maura Chapman, and Eileen Reilly, ABC's academic chair, reviewing specific areas.

"The juniors have begun strengthening their math and reading skills to make them better all-round students," Eileen said, "even before we begin to teach standardized test strategies."

New board members

Four Andover residents have been elected to the Board of Directors.

- **Arlene Hawkins**, who also becomes assistant treasurer, is director of finance for a production company in Watertown. She also volunteers at South Church, where she is involved in the Graduates program for members 50 or older.
- **Janis Hill** serves on the Academic Committee and led efforts to find enriching summer activities for ABC scholars. In addition to helping her husband, Ron, run a local financial advisory firm, she has taken part in a number of school-related activities. She currently serves on Andover's Scholarship Committee.
- **Mary Pritchard**, a long-standing supporter of Andover ABC, is focusing on encouraging our scholars to take a greater role in community service. She has volunteered in a wide range of local activities including The Pike School, AVIS and the after-school program at the Hancock Court Housing Project.
- **Louise Valleau** and her husband were ABC host parents for Tyina Cuevas, who graduated from Andover High in 2002. She will draw on that experience as our new Host Parent Coordinator. Professionally she is an occupational therapist with the Lawrence school system.

Retiring from the board are Erlinda Parks, former Host Parent Coordinator; Nancy Zemlin, who arranged many of the program's major events; Heather Bond, former assistant treasurer; Lori Busick, events; and Pam Wilkie, events.

ABC grads complete college

Three Andover ABC alumnae received their college diplomas last spring.

- **Vanessa Monroy ('04)**, of Staten Island, graduated from Colgate University and plans to enter medical school. She currently has a research job at Weill Cornell Medical Center. Her Andover host parents are Fran Baker and Scott Peterson.
- **Ivelisse Ramos ('04)** was awarded her degree by Fordham University, where she majored in sociology and minored in science. I've currently lives in Brooklyn. Her host parents from her days in Andover are Gerry and Mary Gustus.
- **Sheila Wright ('04)** graduated from Ohio State University with a BS in Human Ecology with emphasis on family counseling. Joan and Paul Dollard were her host parents.

The Dollards contributed this report on Sheila and her graduation day:

"It was eight years ago we met Sheila, a spunky teenager who had come to Andover from Canton, Ohio to go to school through the ABC program. We had volunteered to be host parents, but had no idea what to expect.

"On that first meeting, we made small talk and learned that Sheila had been raised by her mother, Shirley. We found that all we had in common was that one of us had been raised in the Midwest and said 'pop' for soda.

"Through the four years that Sheila grew in knowledge, maturity, understanding and compassion, she also shared us as an adopted family – a brother, Chris, cousin Rob, sister Aimee and a Grandpa that she had never had. We watched Sheila mature as she coped with challenges of being a teen in a community that was very different than her home city.

"How proud we were when she made honor roll at AHS and performed on the basketball cheerleading squad. We watched as she grew to be a beautiful young woman.

"About six months ago Sheila asked us to attend her graduation. We were honored and thrilled to share that great day. We sat with her family and proudly watched her (and 10,000 other graduates) receive her diploma. We knew she was on her way to a bright future.

"Sheila remains in Columbus and is a case manager with a counseling center. She helps and directs families in crisis with a variety of needs.

"Sheila is a great example of those who successfully complete the ABC program and give back to those communities who supported her in her time of need."



Sheila Wright

What is Andover ABC?

Since the 1967 founding of Andover A Better Chance, our mission has rested on a single goal: to substantially increase the number of well-educated minority youth capable of assuming positions of responsibility and leadership in American society.

Our nonprofit organization offers exceptional students from under-performing urban high schools the chance to attend Andover High School. An overwhelming majority of our alumni go on to graduate from highly selective colleges, graduate programs, and professional schools and include community leaders and professionals in business, law, medicine, government, education, and the arts.



Election Day 2008 was an experience the ABC scholars probably won't forget.

ABC Board member Mary Beth Nason took several of them to watch the bustle at the polls while she voted. At dinner Resident Co-Director Brian O'Rourke and Resident Assistant Aiko Onishi led a discussion of issues and crucial states in the presidential race.

Here is Aiko's report on Election Eve at the ABC House:

"The campaign party included blue, red and silver star-shaped balloons, party hats, whistles and beaded necklaces in the colors of America for all to wear.

"At the moment Barack Obama was announced as our next President, an exhilarating cheer rose and the girls jumped up and down in a huddle. Then the phone calls started and tears fell as they shared their joy with their friends and families back home. Some held silent, hidden tears as they stepped out of the room to take in the enormity of the moment in solitude.

"As Ashleigh Baker (junior) watched Obama speak to the world, she whispered as if to herself, 'It's hard to describe, but I just feel like I don't have to prove myself anymore just because of my race.'

"The group, being girls, had a lot of ooohs and aahs for soon-to-be-First-Lady Michelle Obama and what an incredible and classy role model she is.

"Alexis Singh (senior) commented that, although disagreements sometimes arise in the ABC House, "Obama's victory was something that all the girls agreed on."

"For Justene Salomon (junior), 'It was so nice to be able to be with each other.'

"Outside it was very quiet on our street, but that night our house was filled with hope, empowerment and unity."

Newcomer to ABC

Shanygne Askins is the newest arrival at Andover A Better Chance. The 9th-grader came from the same KIPP school in the Bronx that junior Camilla Ekokobe attended. In another link to Andover, she learned about our program from 1990 graduate Shaunte Martin, now a counselor at KIPP Bronx.



In the classroom, Shanygne's favorite subject is math. As for sports, she is trying her hand at something new: volleyball. She played on an Andover High team this fall and hopes to join the Andover Volleyball Club to sharpen her skills during the off-season.

Shanygne (pronounced shan-YEA) also is a member of the Speak Up Club at AHS, specializing in Step, a percussive dance form.

During her free time, her thoughts sometimes turn to the art of cooking. After completing college, she says, "I want to be a chef."

Jim and Patty Gillette and their three daughters are her host family.



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