

2017



FAYETTEVILLE-MANLIUS A BETTER CHANCE

Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1974

ABC HOUSE CELEBRATES NEW YEAR WITH NEW SPACE

Over 44 years, the ABC House in Manlius has been home to more than 80 brave and determined scholars who left their families and home communities for a better educational foundation and the future that could provide.

The goal of the program—to provide a support system for success in a nurturing home—has not changed through the years. Until recently, neither had the house itself.

On October 22, the FM-ABC program held a ribbon-cutting and open house reception to celebrate the completion of an addition to the back of the house, new space that doubled the size of the resident director's apartment. The addition is the latest in a series of renovations that updated the house, which had largely remained unchanged since it was purchased in 1974.

The first wave of renovations, funded solely through foundation grants, focused on upgrading the space used most by students, including total kitchen and bathroom renovations, a technology upgrade to the study room, a new furnace, and new furniture throughout.

Spurred by the success of that fundraising effort, the board set their sites on the next obvious need: the resident director apartment.

In the early years, the resident director was typically a young, single woman, but more recently, the position has attracted married couples. Since 2011, the resident director has been La Rae Martin-Coore, who lives at the house with her husband, Zaire, and son, Jalen.

"If we want to attract and retain the outstanding staff we've been lucky to have, it was important to provide a more adequate living environment," says Nancy Durkin, president of the FM-ABC board of directors.

It wasn't a hard sell, says board member and former president Erica Rube, who spearheaded the fund drive. In total, \$147,000 was raised for the project from a combination of local businesses and foundations, a few individuals, and Hayner Hoyt, who not only served as contractor but also made a large in-kind donation to bring the project together.



The 2017-18 FM-ABC Scholars and staff pictured at the entrance to the new resident director apartment.

The new apartment features two bedrooms, a full bathroom, and a living room, with hardwood floors and lots of windows throughout. The location at the back of the house offers more privacy and easier access. The previous apartment space will be repurposed for communal use.

"My family and I are very excited about the new addition," says Martin-Coore. "The board worked very hard to make this happen. It truly makes me feel that what I try to contribute to the management of the program and the success of the scholars is valued and appreciated."

The FM-ABC board is appreciative as well. "We are grateful to the Syracuse community for their support of our program," says Durkin. "The 2017-18 school year is truly a fresh beginning at the ABC House."



MEET OUR SCHOLARS

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Hailey Gomez is a senior from the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan. She loves travel and learning about new cultures. Her family is of Dominican heritage and she loves her Hispanic culture. Hailey plans to study management and finance in college to prepare her for a career in international business. Her favorite classes this year are AP Spanish with Senor Welfling and SUPA Statistics. Outside the classroom, Hailey served as an orientation leader for Link Crew and participates on step team. She spent much of her summer recuperating from surgery, which gave her plenty of time to read, one of her passions. She really enjoyed *The Handmaid's Tale* and re-reading *The Giver*, among others.

Naej Jones, a senior from the Bronx, is interested in pursuing a career in architecture. She spent her summer working on the Alzheimer's/dementia unit at a nursing home, where she enjoyed interacting with the residents. She is serving as a teaching assistant for the Rhetoric of Race course this fall and also really likes her Law Studies class. Naej is a member of the step team, participates in Relay for Life, and black history month programming. She also enjoys shopping, singing, and reading and recommends *Let the Great World Spin*. Fun fact: Naej is her father's name (Jean) spelled backward.



Christelle (Kiki) Pompee, is a junior from Brooklyn interested in medicine and cultural studies. Her favorite classes are chemistry and AP biology because she loves the labs. Kiki's parents are originally from Haiti and she spent part of her summer participating in a community group called Making the Impossible Possible (MIPO), where she packaged kits of school supplies and toiletries for people in Haiti, as well as helped to pack and move her sister to college. At FMHS, Kiki participates in black history month, step team, chemistry club, and volleyball. She can speak conversational Creole, French, and Spanish.



Satya Brandon, a sophomore from Brooklyn, enjoyed her first year as part of the ABC program so much she spent her summer working as an orientation group leader for ABC national in New York City, hoping to pass along a positive experience to incoming scholars. Satya's greatest passion is dance. At home, she is part of the Victory Music and Dance Company. In Manlius, she dances at the Elevation Contemporary Dance Studio. Satya's favorite subjects are math, science, and Spanish. She is fascinated by the brain and would like to become a neurosurgeon or neurologist. She is the fourth of five children, and because her dad is from Suriname, a Dutch colony, she can speak some Dutch.

Briana Amador, a sophomore from the Bronx, is interested in a legal career and spent two weeks shadowing at two law firms in the city. She was also selected to participate in the Olin Fleisher Scholars Program, a week-long residential program at Washington University in St. Louis, designed to expose students to leadership, business, and entrepreneurship. It was a wonderful experience. Briana loves all her classes and teachers at FM this year, particularly Rhetoric of Race and English. She is a member of the mock trial and softball teams, and this year has gotten involved with the Positivity Project. Briana's dad is from the Dominican Republic and she grew up speaking Spanish at home so that she would be bilingual.



Ijeoma Okoh, from Cambria Heights, Queens, is the newest scholar to join the house and the only freshman. Among the highlights of her summer were attending a beach volleyball camp and a writing program at St. John's University. Ijeoma loves new experiences and so far FM has not disappointed. She has had no trouble adjusting to a new community and school. Her favorite classes are math, biology, and Spanish. She joined the Positivity Project and step team and hopes to get involved with dance troupe, cheerleading, and/or volleyball as the year progresses.



2017

NEWS AND EVENTS

A New Addition



In addition to welcoming a new scholar, the ABC House added a new resident director apartment to the back of the house.



Thank you to the volunteers from Anaren, who spent a "day of service" helping clean the ABC House and yard this summer.



The scholars and resident director La Rae Martin-Coore manned an FM-ABC table at the Fall Festival in Beard Park in September.



Board President Nancy Durkin cuts the cake at the ABC reception celebrating the completion of the new addition.



ABC scholars with Edie Lindabury, recipient of the Alex Johnson Scholarship, at the year-end potluck dinner last spring.



Scholars, board members and other ABC volunteers enjoyed reconnecting at the annual Welcome Back picnic at Mill Run Park.





1996

Jenelle Berry Cook has had a whirlwind year, welcoming twins Stokely and Miles, and then packing up and moving cross-country to Oakland, California. Having three small children and no family in the area is not without its challenges, but she and husband Michael agree that having Napa essentially in their backyard is “a parent’s gift from God!” As a family, they have enjoyed spending time exploring outdoors--hiking, playing in the sand, picnicking, or discovering new things at any of the many farmer’s markets in town. After taking time off with her kids, Jenelle says the move opens up a new set of career opportunities for her in Silicon Valley. She is in the process of retooling and researching opportunities of interest. “I am definitely looking forward to this next chapter ahead,” she says.

2002

Maribelle Ruiz Hernandez and her family have returned to the U.S. after three years stationed in Italy. They are living in Virginia, outside of Washington, D.C., which is the closest they’ve been to their families in New York for 11 years. Maribelle was selected for a commissioning program and is in school full time until she heads back to training again next summer, followed by a new base assignment. “We’re hoping to stay in this area but who knows what the military has in store for us,” she says. Husband Chris is working on his master’s and building a business—they are working together to develop an all-inclusive road trip app called Trip Commander. “It’s so exciting to work on this venture together and the future is looking very promising,” she says. Marquise (14) and Cassidy (7) are growing and learning with each passing day.



2004

Mildred Flores recently purchased a new home in Rockland County, New York, with her boyfriend Fritz. She also started a new senior management position as Director of Affordable Housing Marketing and Compliance at a nonprofit that handles affordable housing lotteries for many New York City developers. Son Jason started middle school and is taking swimming lessons. “He’s so fearless and determined; his instructor thinks he can really be an Olympic swimmer,” she says. “This has been a great year.”

Mildred is volunteering at the upcoming ABC interview day in New York City. “I hope to interview applicants and share my experience,” she says. “I’m truly grateful for my time at FMABC and look forward to paying it forward.”



2006

Victoria Allison is in her seventh year of teaching. She and her husband welcomed a new baby, son Alexander. Daughter Isabella started kindergarten at an independent school, having participated in a program similar to A Better Chance, but for kindergartners.



Jessica Reid says that after taking time off to focus on her health (she has Lupus), she is glad to feel back to normal, thanks to great care and dietary changes. She is now working on an advocacy project for black women in the workplace, a digital community (visit www.shequippedhr.com) that will be ready for launch next year. She sees her FM classmate Victoria often; she’s godmother to her son and sometimes picks her daughter up from school.



2017

November 7, 2017

Dear Neighbors, Supporters, and Friends,

The Fayetteville-Manlius A Better Chance (FM-ABC) program provides academically talented and exceptionally motivated young women of color access to a quality secondary education and the opportunity to fulfill their potential.

For 44 years, the FM-ABC program has supported approximately six scholars annually, who leave their home communities to attend Fayetteville-Manlius High School. They live communally at the ABC House, supervised by a resident director and two resident advisors, and are supported by a cadre of host families, academic advisors, board members and friends.

During their four years here, these girls become part of the community. They join clubs, play sports, get jobs, and in the process, help break down racial barriers and socioeconomic stereotypes.

All of our scholars come from neighborhoods where access to a quality, safe, college preparatory public high school education is extremely limited. Our program seeks to rectify that. The FM-ABC program has graduated 79 scholars from FMHS. These girls have gone on to attend colleges including the University of Rochester, Cornell, Notre Dame, Wellesley, the University of Virginia, and Emory, and have established fulfilling careers in a multitude of fields. The success stories of our alumnae fuel our commitment.

The FM-ABC program is entirely donor funded and nearly 100 percent volunteer supported. Once a year we ask for your financial support to keep this life-altering program flourishing. Your gift to FM-ABC truly can change lives. With your support, our scholars will unquestionably continue to have A Better Chance.

Thank you,

Nancy Durkin
Chair, Board of Directors
Fayetteville-Manlius, A Better Chance



2017

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In Honor of:

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Carol Ginsky's 80th birthday

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**Tanaja Stephenson's
high school graduation**

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**Support TopSpin!**

FM-ABC is fortunate to benefit from proceeds of TopSpin, an annual ping-pong tournament fundraiser held in New York City. TopSpin 2017 will be held December 6. To buy tickets or make a donation, please visit topspincharity.org or www.facebook.com/TopSpinCharity. Remember to select FM-ABC as your beneficiary.



2017

ALUMNAE NEWS



2007

Amelia Stone is now Amelia Stone-Johnstone, having married Preston Johnstone in June. After taking a leave of absence from her doctoral program in mathematics, she spent some time doing college teaching, where she discovered a passion for higher education. This fall, she became a student again, enrolled at the University of California, San Diego, pursuing a PhD in math and science education.

2010



Shynise Stiff graduated with a master of education from Southern Methodist University in June. She decided to return to Brooklyn to work with children from her old neighborhood and now works in school operations for a charter school network. "Although I do not work directly in the classroom anymore, it has been great learning about the logistical side of running a school," she says. She also enjoys being closer to her family.



2014

Nellie Hernandez is a senior at Emory University. She spent her summer as an intern at Google, which took her to Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and Colorado, and culminated with a job offer to join the company full-time after graduation. She is studying abroad in London this fall and enjoying traveling throughout Europe.

2016

Tanaja Stephenson is a sophomore at the University of Virginia, which is still reeling with the aftereffects of white supremacy marches in Charlottesville in August. "We are all learning to heal and come together," she says. Tanaja has declared a double major in African American studies and women, gender, and sexuality, and hopes to use that combination to foster social change in the world for the better, with a specific focus on minority youth. She is an executive board member of Fashion for a Cause, an organization that produces a fashion show and donates the proceeds to a different local charity every year. She is also involved with an organization called Sisterly Love that mentors high school girls in the Charlottesville community. Classes are more difficult this year but she is working hard to maintain or improve her 3.5 GPA.



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2017

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E-mail address: fmabetterchance@gmail.com Contact us to find out how you can get involved in our many volunteer opportunities and help provide A Better Chance to our scholars.

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