



# FAYETTEVILLE-MANLIUS A BETTER CHANCE

Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1974

## VOLUNTEERS ARE THE HEART OF FM-ABC

It's no understatement that volunteers are central to the FM-A Better Chance program. In fact, a signature component of the FM-ABC experience is the relationships developed between ABC scholars and the key volunteers selected to support them during their high school years: their host families and academic advisor.

Serving as a host family or academic advisor is a significant commitment and people volunteer for a variety of reasons: they have children who want to participate, they're empty nesters who want student interaction, or they simply believe in the ideals of the program and want to be a part of it. Almost universally, these key volunteers say they receive much more out of the experience than they give, forming bonds with their scholars that often extend beyond the student's time at Fayetteville-Manlius High School.



Local veterinarian Ann Harris and her husband Larry got involved after their daughter, Lauren Harris, joined the FM-ABC board. "She thought we would make a great host family, so we signed up and Latisha entered our lives," Harris says. "At first, we felt obligated to plan every second of the day when she was with us, trying to entertain her, and at the same time, share our world of experiences in Central New York. As we got to know her better, however, she quickly became like part of the family, and we all went with the flow."

That means if the Harris's have plans to attend Syracuse Stage or the Symphony, Latisha goes along. If she needs to do homework or just wants to nap, she does that. "Our most enjoyable times are around the dinner table, when we have our best conversations and really share," says Harris. "If she has friends here with her, it's an added bonus. We have certainly had fun as her grandparents, as we call ourselves."

Senior Latisha Lubega has also been supported by academic advisor Kathy Deeb, who got involved with the program when she retired after 20-plus years teaching English at FMHS. "I had many ABC scholars in my classes through the years and was always impressed that they could leave home at that young age to come to a community so unlike their urban communities," she says.



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### Academic Advisers

Kathleen Deeb  
Mary Petroulis  
Elizabeth Wheeler



**Mildred Flores '04** shared remembrances of one of her host parents Gary Soule, following his recent passing. "Mr. Soule was one of the kindest and smartest people I knew," she writes. "He also had the best sense of humor and he and I would go back and forth all the time. He knew me better than I knew myself. I thought after high school, I would have this fabulous life as an accountant. He always said that I had too much personality for that career, and when I started taking accounting classes in college, I absolutely hated them. During those classes, he was always in the back of mind. I'm thankful that he and I got to laugh about it when I stayed with them when I came up for the 2014 FMABC reunion. My heart is broken that he is no longer with us, but I will continue to cherish him and this time in my life forever."

**Amelia Stone-Johnstone '07** earned her doctorate in mathematics education in May from University of California-San Diego and began a tenure-track position as an assistant professor in the Mathematics Department at California State University, Fullerton. "I am so excited to continue my work in research, teaching, and mentoring with the next generation of STEM scholars," she writes.



**Shynise Stiff '10** is continuing her work towards racial equity in education through a recent promotion as director, Learning and Development, at Teach for America, along with further building her independent consulting work with the Center for Racial Justice in Education. Over the past year, Shynise reconnected with former FM classmates through a group started by former FM English teacher Laura Iodice. "It felt great to connect with the FM community; we also heard from current students and alumni about their recent calls for change from the school board," she writes. Outside of work, she is living in Brooklyn, NY, and enjoying seeing the city come alive again.

### JUNE COMPLETION OF PATIO BY LANDSCAPE EAST



# 2021

## MEET OUR SCHOLARS



**Name:** Latisha Lubega  
**Hometown:** Secaucus, New Jersey  
**Class Year:** Senior  
**Favorite class this year:** Law Studies  
**Last book read:** *Too Much* by Kate Teneyck  
**Favorite movie:** *The Ugly Truth*  
**What I like best about the ABC program:** My relationship with the other girls in the house  
**Something I never did before I was**

**in the ABC program is:** Go apple picking

**Favorite thing to do with my host family:** Eat dinner

**Outside of school, I like to spend time:** Dancing hip hop

**This past summer:** I traveled to Puerto Rico with Briana Amador '20, a former ABC scholar.

**My professional aspiration is to:** Become CEO of a music label

**A fun fact to know about me is that:** I take a lot of naps and can sleep for more than 12 hours



**Name:** Jeanette Ward  
**Hometown:** Brooklyn, New York  
**Class Year:** Senior  
**Favorite class this year:** Anatomy, Physiology and Epidemiology  
**Last book read:** *Othello*  
**Favorite movie:** *Forrest Gump*  
**What I like best about the ABC program:** The many support systems  
**Something I never did before I was in the ABC program is:** Live

with other girls

**Favorite thing to do with my host family:** Watch movies at home

**Outside of school, I like to spend time:** Having dance parties with the girls

**This past summer:** I played a lot of tennis and went on college tours

**My professional aspiration is to:** Become a pediatrician

**A fun fact to know about me is that:** I'm really good at guessing



**Name:** Serai Williams  
**Hometown:** Brooklyn, New York  
**Class Year:** Sophomore  
**Favorite class this year:** Photography  
**Last book read:** *All of Me*  
**Favorite movie:** *Home Alone 2*  
**What I like best about the ABC program:** The opportunities that are given to me  
**Something I never did before I was in the ABC program is:** Hiking

**Favorite thing to do with my host family:** Baking

**Outside of school, I like to spend time:** Listening to music and spending time with the girls in the house

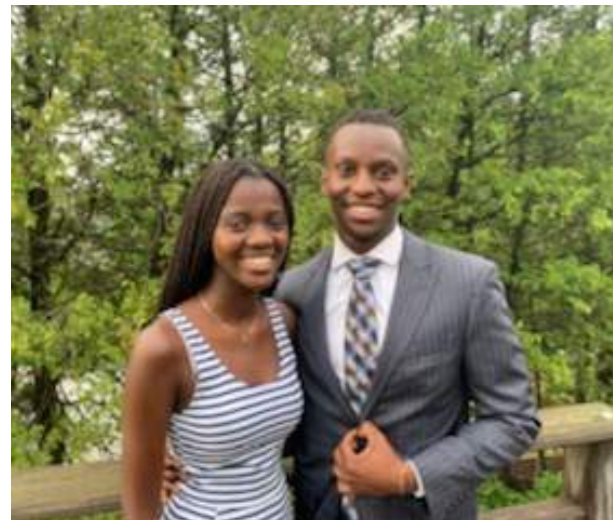
**This past summer:** I taught swimming lessons

**My professional aspiration is to:** Be somebody who saves lives (medical field)

**A fun fact to know about me is that:** I love to sing



# 2021



# 2021

## EAST AREA YMCA SUPPORTS ABC PROGRAM

One of the many FM-area resources valued by ABC scholars is the East Area YMCA. Scholars have long made use of both the Manlius and Fayetteville facilities to work out, attend exercise classes, play tennis, and to take advantage of tutoring and test prep services offered.

Now the ABC program is able to make YMCA membership available to scholars and ABC staff members at no charge to the program, thanks to the generosity of the East Area YMCA. "Their donation of memberships to our scholars and staff saves the program more than \$1,000 a year," says Nancy Durkin, ABC board chair. "We are deeply appreciative."

According to Corey Wilcox, membership director of the East Area YMCA, support of the ABC program is a reflection of the East Area YMCA's strategic priorities to support youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.

"At the Y, we measure our success by how well we engage communities in our three areas of impact and one of those is Youth Development—nurturing the potential of every child and teen," says Wilcox. "We are pleased to help support A Better Chance program to give opportunities to those who may not have the means to access our programs and services."

### Volunteers are the Heart of FM-ABC (continued from page 1)

Deeb has so enjoyed the experience that she recruited former FMHS colleague Elizabeth "Biz" Wheeler when another academic advisor was needed. Wheeler was no stranger to the program. When she was in middle school, her family served as an FM-ABC host family. Wheeler served as a host mom herself from 2011-2016. "ABC is part of the fabric at FM, and I want to help continue to make the program as successful as it has always been," she says of her role as academic advisor to sophomore Serai Williams.

Wheeler advises Serai on her class schedule and assists with things like study habits, creating a schedule for herself, "and being there for her when she has questions about school, the house, or just needs an ear and someone to talk to," she says.

Considering that Serai was just 14 when she came to FM in the midst of a pandemic, that job was tougher than is typical. "Serai was able to navigate her way successfully through one of the hardest school years anyone has known in a long time," says Wheeler. "To watch her do that and thrive despite the challenges is an absolute joy."

FMHS librarian Mary Patroulis also became familiar with the ABC program through her tenure at the high school, as well as her own daughter's close friendship with two ABC scholars while she was in high school. "I have witnessed firsthand what an impact this amazing program has on the scholars and on FMHS. It's mutually beneficial," she says. "My kids are grown now so I'm excited to advise rising scholars."

As academic advisor to senior Jeannette Ward, Patroulis has enjoyed serving as her advocate and helping her brainstorm for a range of essays for study abroad programs, scholarships, and college applications, as well as taking her on college visits. "I have found it so rewarding to watch Jeannette grow as a scholar and person over the last four years," she says. "She is so self-directed. I can't wait to see where she lands next."

For many of those that have volunteered, serving as a host family or academic advisor has been a life-changing experience. Harris says she recently asked Latisha what she thinks makes a "good" host family. She replied, "It's where you really feel at home and are a part of that family's lives."

Says Harris, "I think being a good host family is opening up your heart and home to a total stranger with the benefit of growing intellectually and emotionally as a human being."



# 2021

## FM-ABC DONORS 2020-2021

Dear Friends, Neighbors, and Supporters of the FM-ABC Program,

Despite challenges posed by the pandemic, we are excited to report that the FM-ABC Program is healthy and getting stronger. Our scholars are vaccinated and back at school, attending classes, and becoming involved in many different clubs and sports. They continue to astonish us with their flexibility, maturity, and stubbornness to succeed in these still uncertain times. The ABC house, overseen by La Rae and Yesenia, has continued to be a haven where our scholars have grown academically, matured, and felt safe.

Our scholars continue to attend high-ranking colleges and pursue careers to become successful leaders in society because of the four-year foundation they have received here.

We literally couldn't do it without your support. The FM-ABC program is 100-percent donor funded. Last year was financially challenging for us. This year we look more than ever to the community to help us get the financial support we need to keep the program continuing and strong.

We also are looking for volunteers to become a part of our program. Host families, board members, and academic advisors are among those who make this program a success. If you would like more information, feel free to reach out to me.

Our mission has always been to give our scholars a quality education. With your support, the FM ABC scholars will continue to have A Better Chance.

Sincerely,  
Nancy Durkin  
Chair, FM ABC Board of Directors

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# 2021

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2021

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And on Instagram at [fmabchouse](https://www.instagram.com/fmabchouse)

Find out how you can get involved in our many volunteer opportunities and help provide A Better Chance to our scholars by visiting us online at [www.fmabetterchance.org](http://www.fmabetterchance.org), where you can also make a secure donation via PayPal.



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