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FAYETTEVILLE-MANLIUS
A BETTER CHANCE

Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1974

22

Celebrating 50 years!

Congratulations to the FM A Better Chance Program on its 50th Anniversary!

Written By Barbara Sutton

I love this program. In 1973 I was a member of a dedicated, ambitious, somewhat naive group of the FM community who believed that it could start a Community School Program. The odds were against us. We needed community support: we needed money; we needed a house; we needed a board; we needed host families; we needed teachers, administrators, and school board members to support the program. We needed approval from New York State. We needed to set up a 501(c)3 charity. Once all these were in place, we needed staff, and, most important of all, scholars.

We had help from national ABC, but we had to be able to make it happen ourselves. It was not easy. But we had some of the most wonderfully generous, positive, and hard working folks who jumped in and never gave up. We believed that this program could and should thrive in our community.

So, we had meetings and more meetings. We needed to organize and assign tasks, but we had to hold multiple information meetings to make clear the goals of the program. One important misconception centered around who our scholars would be; not troubled students, but scholars with promise and ambition who wanted to go to college, to have careers.

There were issues, some reflecting the times and the discomfort folks had with diversity in the community. We had difficulty buying a house. We found a few houses that were suitable, but were told they were no longer on the market. We were shocked and disappointed and we almost despaired, until Bob Lyon, one of the founders of FMABC, found the perfect house in a great location and persuaded Josephine Ryan, who was thinking of selling her house, to sell it to us.

Of course, there were lots more issues. Some were kind of fun, such as the major question of whether we would accept boys or girls. Father Morgan Silbaugh, the rector of Christ Episcopal Church next door to our new ABC house, wanted boys. We all suspected his main reason was that he envisioned playing basketball with the guys. Jean Kordalewski headed up the faction that advocated for girls. Jean won. Morgan got over it.

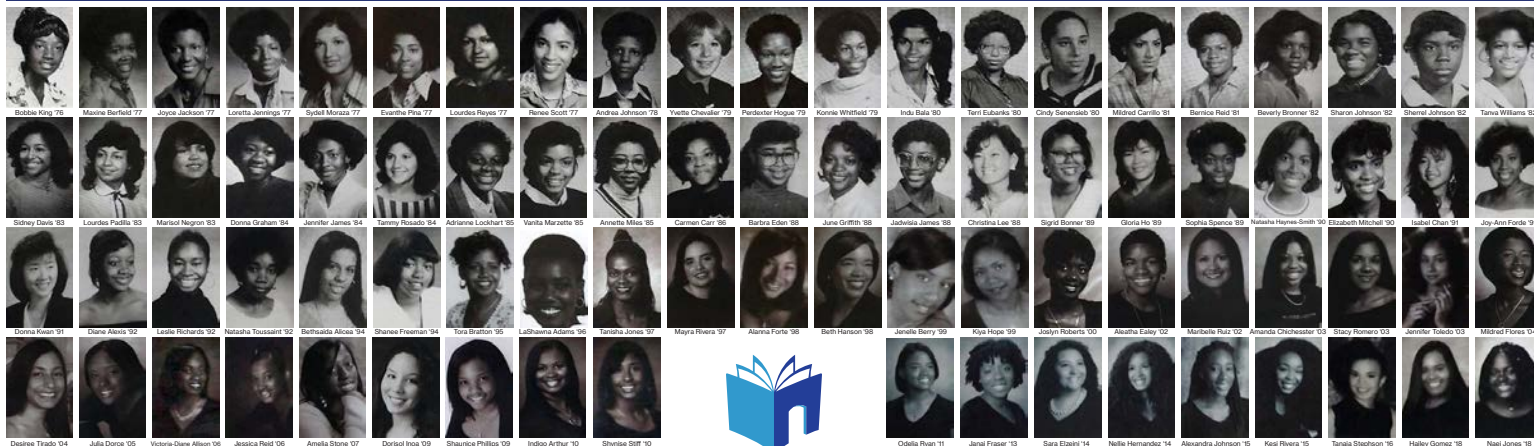
As things came together, we fell to raising money, getting a mortgage, endless cleaning and painting. Many of our young children, my two girls included, pitched in. We added bathrooms and updated the electrical system - kind of. We couldn't afford to buy furniture so people donated their hand-me-downs. There was so much to do to get ready.

The doors opened to our new students in September, 1974. We had a board, resident directors, resident advisors, and a cook. We were on our way!

There have been so many problems over the years, but the pleasures and successes have been enormous. We're so proud of our alumnae and their achievements. We're proud of the FM community for supporting the program, joining our board, opening their homes as host families, and contributing financially. I am so happy to have been a part of FM ABC for so many years and to have known and loved so many of our alumnae. Their accomplishments are theirs, but ours is the community and the program that helped them on their way.

Here's to the next 50 years.

FAYETTEVILLE-MANLIUS A BETTER CHANCE ALUMNAE



2022

MEET OUR SCHOLARS

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Paul and Susan Muench
Felicia and Jim Sharples

Academic Advisers

Jeni Leslie
Elizabeth Wheeler

Resident Director

La Rae Martin Coore



Name: Serai Williams
Hometown: Brooklyn, New York
Class Year: Junior
Favorite class this year: Global Environment
Last book read: Where The Rhythm Takes You
Favorite movie: Home Alone 2
What I like best about the ABC: I like how I'm experiencing things I would have never thought of myself doing
Something I never did before 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 my friends
This past summer: I worked at a summer camp.
My professional aspiration is to: Go into the medical field
A fun fact to know about me is that: I love to do makeup.



Name: Arianna Duncan
Hometown: Mount Vernon, NY
Class Year: 2025 (Sophomore)
Favorite class this year: Physical Education
Last book read: Concrete Rose
Favorite movie: The Witness
What I like best about the ABC: Being able to hangout and go to school with the other girls in the house
Something I never did before in the ABC program is: Eat Panera Bread
Favorite thing to do with my host family: Hangout
Outside of school, I like to spend time: Relaxing or catching up on shows
This past summer: Traveled to Jamaica
My professional aspiration is to: To become a Pharmacist, Orthopedic Surgeon, or Forensic Scientist
A fun fact to know about me is that: I like to sleep and play Roblox



2022

THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

“

Take comfort in each other. Support and encourage each other.
I hope: For the freshmen, academic and social confidence,
For the sophomores, perseverance and resilience,
For the juniors, serenity and clarity,
For the seniors, leadership and perspective.

— Alanna Forte, 1998.

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“

Remember to have fun.
Savor the moments in the house, school, and with new friends.
Create and maintain meaningful relationships.
Join activities that are meaningful.
Rejoice in your success and your failures as they are powerful learning tools.
Take risks and challenge yourself beyond your comfort zone. Be bold and
always speak your truth.

— Jessica Reid, 2006.

”



“

Never think what you are going through is not conquerable.
There is always a way to solve a problem and problems make us ABC students tough.

— Donna Graham Stewartson, 1984.

”



2022

THE EARLY DAYS OF FM ABC



Founders of A Better Chance of FM ABC (Left to Right) Barbara Lipe, Glenn Brown, Andy Kordalewski, Morgan Silbaugh, Barbara Sutton, Elaine Morris, Jean Kordalewski, Betsy Fairbank

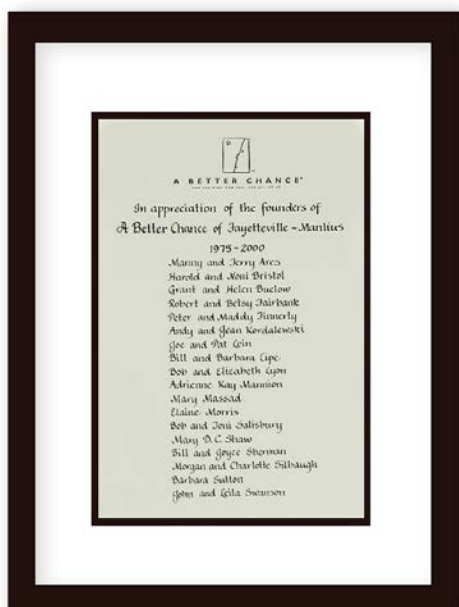
Written By Morgan Silbaugh

I served on the FM School Board from 1969-1972. I ran for reelection in '72 and lost. My great friend Barbara Sutton greeted me with "Good, now we can start ABC. You serve as first Chair, and I will serve as Vice-Chair. When you are ready to step down I will step in." ABC took off from there. We were flying by the seat of our pants but we did fly. Some people in the community were already aware of A Better Chance and others were drawn by the vision of doing something locally—small but specific, toward increasing equality of educational opportunity. I think it was Tom Mikula, head of the Program,

who came to speak at a luncheon in Syracuse providing inspiration and clarity about ABC. National ABC offered guidance and seed money. Little by little we built the first Board, gathering a diverse group of committed and talented people. Even after all these years, I marvel at the integrity, creativity and vision of that Board. At first we were open to having male or female students. Former FM School Board Chair Jean Kordalewski and I used to joke that we would arm wrestle to see which way we would go. But when we realized that there was greater need for a program for young women, we knew how to move ahead. There was much to do and we did it. We needed to communicate to the wider community that FM ABC would in fact be good for the community, and we had to allay some fears. Keith Morgan was Mayor of Manlius and his support was invaluable. All the pieces that have made ABC "work" needed to be set up, again with guidance from national ABC. High school students away from home would need local host families, an ABC House to call home, resident directors and tutors, strong support from Fayetteville-Manlius High School. Looking back fifty years I marvel and rejoice reflecting on those who made it all happen.

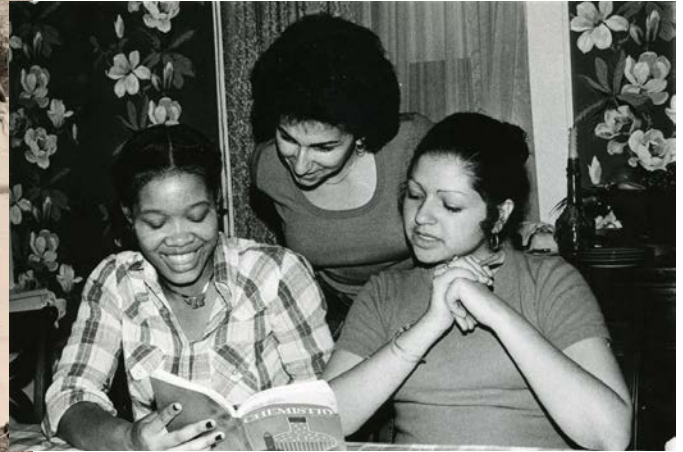
Some specific events stay with me. We found a faculty house that the Manlius School, merging with Pebble Hill in Dewitt, would no longer need. While we were working out financing, the house was pulled out from under us when a person who did not want ABC students living next to his mother found someone with the clout to prevent the sale. As so often happened, good emerged surprisingly: the School house would have been at the edge of the Village. Far better was Ma Ryan's house just down the hill from the High School and right in the middle of Manlius. A Board member whose family business had excellent credit was unable to secure a loan to buy the house. I spoke with Robert Wehrle, head of Marine Midland, who said clearly and decisively "We are aware of our responsibility to the community. How much do you need?" FM ABC paid the \$30,000 mortgage off in three years! We were nowhere near as efficient raising money as the current program. We sorted trash, ground up glass bottles, and the Village hauled the bulk-reduced material to a site in Fulton, sold it, and gave us the proceeds. We piggybacked on Manlius' Fourth of July celebration with a pancake breakfast in the undercroft of St. Anne's church. Auctions at Lipe's barn yielded some income and in those early years a subsidy from ABC helped us keep going. Generous financial support from the FM community was our lifeblood.

Toward the end of My Fair Lady, Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering take credit for Eliza Doolittle's transformation, blind to the fact the SHE is "the one who did it." The brave young women of FM ABC and their families are the ones to whom the most credit is due: they risked much and dared trust young lives to strangers in a strange community. And THEIR achievements merit our admiration. I was absolutely delighted to see that one of our graduates was recently installed in the FM High School Hall of Fame. ABC HAS enriched the FM community even as it has lived up to its name and year after year offered A Better Chance for an astounding fifty years.



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THE EARLY DAYS OF FM ABC



Fayetteville-Manlius A Better Chance Girls – Spring Orientation – June 6, 1974

Written By John Kordalewski

My mother always told me I had a role in starting the ABC program. As a loving parent, she exaggerated quite a bit. I did none of the hard work in bringing the program to fruition. There were a number of people in the community who became interested in the program on their own, whose efforts converged. But there is some truth to the idea that her interest in the program stemmed in part from how, as I moved through adolescence, I came to perceive and be troubled by a narrowness in Fayetteville-Manlius. We always talked about whatever I was seeing and thinking. She always lent an ear as well as her wisdom.

It was at a summer program, in 1970, that I became aware of ABC. The town where the program was located had an ABC program at its public high school, and one of the students had stayed around during the summer. I told my parents about it when I returned home. I don't think it was the first time Mom had heard of ABC, though.

Mom was on the Board of Education from 1966 through 1972, coinciding with my junior high and high school years. For three of those years she was the Board's President. I think she could in general be characterized as a consensus builder. While she tended not to be overtly political, she also had an ability take what we would now call "progressive" stances and still be liked and respected by those who thought otherwise (to my recollection ours were the only cars in Brookside with McGovern bumper stickers). Without fanfare or stridency, at those moments when she felt taking a position on an issue was in order, she didn't shy away. I think the same sort of calm resolve was characteristic of the other founders of ABC as well, as the effort started to brew.

Mom became part of the early organizing meetings for ABC in 1973 along with Barbara Sutton, Rev. Morgan Silbaugh, Barbara Lipe, and several others whose names I don't recall. I remember Thomas Mikula from the national ABC office coming to meet with the group, and staying at our house. Mom became involved in the student selection committee, and the question arose as to whether the program should be for girls or boys. This was a moment when she took a strong stance: that it should be for girls. The majority of the ABC programs at the time were for boys. Mom was a proud graduate of a women's college who had taken leadership roles in the community and was always concerned about opportunities for women.

One of the special things about my father was that he did not have the kind of male ego that would make him threatened by, or jealous of, a wife who was more of a public figure than he was. They were a team. He always found a good role in their joint ventures. Young people always were especially fond of him because of his kind nature, and the ABC students were no exception. He was one of the group of community residents who met at Lipes' Dairy every Saturday morning to collect bottles, newspapers, etc. for recycling, to raise money for the program. It was the first recycling effort in the FM area. Later on, Dad became the ABC Board chairman and served for a few years.

It is impressive to consider all the ways that so many people in the community pitched in, to keep the program going and flourishing once it started. Jean and Andy Kordalewski were part of this effort, and I'm very proud to be their son.



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FM-ABC DONORS 2021-2022

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

HAPPY 50TH ANNIVERSARY!

We have decided that this year's newsletter would celebrate the 50 years of our program's existence, which has changed the lives of so many people. We are excited that over 100 ABC scholars have come to Fayetteville Manlius High School because they believed that a better high school education would lead them to better colleges and careers. Our scholars have become successful leaders in society because of the foundation they received here.

So too, we celebrate all the people that have made this happen, a true village over the 50 years, starting with our founders and moving onto all the volunteers. As you read the articles written by Barbara and Morgan, we understand the many hurdles and obstacles that they had to overcome to get this program started, they all knew, just as we do today, that this program not only would benefit many young women, but it would enrich the entire FM community.

We want to continue the vision of these founders, so we look to you for your financial support to sustain and help our program succeed. Our community is the base of our financial support and we rely 100% on it.

Volunteers are at the core of our success. If you are interested in becoming involved as a board member, host family, academic advisor, driver or so many other things, feel free to reach out to me. Being a part of this program has enriched so many people's lives.

After 50 years the mission is still true. The need is still strong. Your support is still needed.

Thank you.

Nancy Durkin

Chair, FM AB Board of Directors

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Dana Pierce
In Honor of all the Amazing ABC Scholars
Doug & Lynn Scharbach
In Honor of Carol & Bob Cranston

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A BETTER CHANCE

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