A Better Chance

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FALL/WINTER 2015

A BETTER CHANCE OF NEW CANAAN ▪ 64 LOCUST AVE., NEW CANAAN, CT ▪ WWW.ABCHOUSEOFNC.ORG

The Stars at the Top of Our Tree

The Hallowed Halls of Northeast Universities– Each year ABC New Canaan arranges for a series of college and university visits to socialize our scholars with the best academic institutions across a range of geographies. The trips are an outstanding opportunity for the boys to get a first hand feel for the many schools that are high priority destinations. Early this fall, host Marty Shannon chaperoned the boys on a whirlwind tour of Boston College, Harvard and UConn. These trips offer critical context and experience for each scholar as they seek to narrow their target schools or to establish an academic star to steer by – using the school as motivation to help maintain a critical GPA or academic prerequisite so they might keep that door open. It's so inspiring to see kids this motivated to learn and to move ahead into the next phase of their academic and personal transformation.

The start of the adventure at the T-station in Boston on Saturday morning. (left to right:) Ryan Hernandez, George Wang, Chris Roman, Josiah Jones, Rajon Mitchell, Kai Clancy, & Marty Shannon

Helping An ABC Scholar Make A Difference

Marvin Olasky, long-time adviser to George W. Bush, was influential in the President's adoption of the slogan "compassionate conservatism." In the foreword to Olasky's book "Compassionate Conservatism", President George W. Bush (then Governor) explained, "We are a wealthy country, but we have too many needy citizens. There are still too many for whom the American dream is distant. Compassionate conservatism is a conservatism that cares about them, and makes a concerted effort to help them bring lasting change into their lives." We are a town anchored by conservative values and an open heart that seeks to offer a hand to those who can and will help themselves. I simply cant think of a better program in this community that embodies the essence of teaching a man to fish and trusting that he will in turn, pay that skill forward. WE recognize that you have a number of competing obligations. However, take a moment to see how well ABC New Canaan aligns with those principles and values you hold dear and seek to promote in your daily lives.

Self-sufficiency, mutual accountability, commitment, hard work, sacrifice, stewardship and engagement are all part of the DNA of a successful ABC scholar. What's most impressive is that we have been doing this in New Canaan for over 40 years supported by a generous safety net of financial donors, educators, host families, ABC alumni, board members and friends of the program. **Please take a minute this holiday and make a donation to ABC House New Canaan and contribute to a legacy that clearly improves our community, the world and lives of those around us.** To know these scholars is to understand what it means to truly have a chance to succeed despite your circumstances.

(left to right): Resident Director John Walsh, Resident tutor Ellen Berube, Chris Roman, Rajon Mitchell, Ryan Hernandez, Josiah Jones, Kai Clancy, George Wang, Brian MacCalla, Resident tutor Tony Adams, and Resident Director Laura Walsh

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ABC Gala Light at New Canaan Country Club Shines Bright

Saturday October 3 saw torrential rains early in the day, but the skies cleared for the annual fundraising dinner at the Country Club of New Canaan. The group enjoyed a wonderful evening of cocktails, dinner, and music as a reunion of new and old ABC supporters, alumni and guests celebrated the program's continued success. The highlights of the evening were the speeches by alumnus Jason Land and NCHS seniors Brian MacCalla and Chris Roman. Jason's host Mom Jane Arestia and host brother were in attendance and heard Jason describe the positive impact that the ABC program has had on his life. Jason grew up on Long Island and attended small schools as a child. New Canaan was another world for him. He credits his experience in the ABC program with establishing positive self-esteem, lifelong healthy habits and the resolve to prepare for college. Jason spent several years in social work in the Philadelphia area and is currently a student in the Yale Graduate Divinity program. Jason also spends time assisting with the Congregational Church Youth program in New Canaan. Not to be outdone by Jason, our two seniors brought laughter and tears with their humorous yet heartfelt comments about the program. While they have yet to embark on their college experience, they certainly have healthy perspectives on the value of the ABC program and its transformational role in their lives. Both boys have been active in sports and other activities at the high school and have given as much as they have received through friendships, achievements and social service.

ABC Scholars and President Mike Curran

ABC Alumnus and Gala Speaker Jason Land

The evening concluded with our traditional auction of amazing prizes donated by ABC program Board members, host families, and local supporters. Winning bidders will be attending Giants, Knicks, and Patriots games; playing golf at New Canaan Country Club, the Westchester Country Club, Oyster Harbor on Cape Cod and Shelter Rock in Rhode Island; visiting places as close as Cape Cod and as far away as a safari camp in Namibia (we think having coyotes in Waveny Park is exotic). The crowning event was our raffle of two beautiful rings donated by host parent Claire O'Hare of Livewell Designs.

We thank the Gala Committee and all our attendees, including Selectmen Rob Mallozzi, Nick Williams, and Beth Jones, as well as Superintendent of Schools Bryan Luizzi and NCHS Principal William Egan, for their unwavering support.

In Memoriam, Howard Freeman

Normally, the Fall newsletter is an opportunity to summarize highlights of the year. However, this year, I want to take the opportunity to say a few words about ABC Board member Howard Freeman who passed away on November 4th from cancer. The thing about Howard is that he never mentioned that he had cancer. Obviously, his family and close friends knew, but he did not go around telling people. It wasn't his way. Instead, he went about his life including attending the ABC Gala just a month before he died. His wife Allison bid on an African safari, hoping that they would have one last family trip with their children Sarah and Alexander. Instead, she was sitting shiva for Howard and hosting his wonderful family and friends in a celebration of his life.

Howard spent his career in banking, but his real interest appears to have been music. His good friend and former ABC Board member Jim Holec told me he met Howard 25 years ago when they both decided to take piano lessons. In town, Howard was active with the Exchange Club and the Utility Commission serving as its most recent Chairman. As Chairman, he quietly but effectively moved a number of initiatives forward essential to its mission. On the ABC Board, Howard was responsible for Major Gift fundraising and he did an amazing job. When I asked Howard how he was successful in generating grants from several new sources, he just said that he asked. People responded to his quiet, but determined style. All his family and friends will sorely miss Howard. We at ABC were blessed to be a part of his all-encompassing circle of caring and love.

Michael Curran
President, A Better Chance New Canaan

Twittering With Our ABC Scholars:

Can you sum up an entire semester of life changing experiences in 140 characters or less? We challenged a few of our scholars to let us know how they were doing. As we found, not all great moments can be reduced to just a few words!

@georgewang "Made high honors and am running hard in life and in cross country. Miss my family but love my new friends and host fam, the OConnors. Tx for a great 1st year, NC"

@kaitakclancy "Fall semester great, it's almost a whole new experience. I know kids in this school really well now, and unlike last year, I have a lot of friends. Sophomore year is really fun."

@RyanH "Fall Semester Fun! New people and a sense of welcoming that makes me feel that I belong here. Hilarious 1st semester scenes as we acted like GOOFBALLs. Had an epic video game clash in the living room with the guys at home. LETS GO NC RAMS!!!!!!"

@BrianMcCalla "Great! Capturing the last few moments of Fall warmth and preparing for a new season filled with hot chocolate, warm clothing, and playoff football at every level."

@Chris Roman "This fall I ran for the cross-country team for NCHS and received varsity recognition. I am now looking forward to being a captain for the indoor season".

Please consider making a donation to ABC today.

Check donations should be sent to:
A Better Chance, Inc. of New Canaan,
P.O. Box 355, New Canaan, CT 06840
You can also make a donation online via our secure payments system.
Go to www.abchouseofnc.org.
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