



# A BETTER CHANCE

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FALL 2016

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

## Alumni Moms' Speeches are Highlight of Fall Fundraiser!

The ABC House of New Canaan held its annual fundraiser on Thursday, October 6th at The Roger Sherman Inn. Cocktails for a Cause was organized by Courtney Grigsby and Doreen Connelly, and was attended by over 160 people. Host families, board members, educators and community friends gathered to celebrate the ABC program and hear remarks from senior Rajon Mitchell as he thanked attendees and the ABC community for their support. In addition, two Alumni Moms (Maria MacCalla and Yonette Andrews) gave heartfelt speeches about the program's impact on the lives of their sons.

Maria MacCalla's son Brian graduated this past June. She remarked: "More than four years ago, our family had never heard of ABC. We were struggling with the fact that Brian might have to attend the local public high school which had been plagued with violence, drugs, and declining test scores. Then we got a call from a board member who told us that Brian might qualify for a spot in the program given his academic record. Shortly thereafter, we visited New Canaan High School and knew it would be the best option for Brian. Along with the very best residence directors,

Laura and John Walsh, as well as a very committed and engaged board, the ABC program provided a phenomenal foundation for Brian. The teachers and staff at New Canaan High School as well as the greater New Canaan community and friends of the ABC program have all been a tremendous asset to us and we are eternally grateful for them."

Yonette Andrews' son Christopher graduated in 2013. In addition, her older son Tony Adams became the house tutor and a tremendous role model for the boys from 2012 – 2106. Yonette remarked: "It's going on 3 years since Christopher has graduated, and to this day I am still witnessing first hand the lasting impression ABC of New Canaan has left on him. We will always be grateful for everyone who is involved with this program. This was undoubtedly a wonderful experience for him, but an even greater one for me as a mother who wants the best for her child. You have played a fundamental role in helping him become the young outstanding man he is today!"

It was an amazing night to celebrate our scholars and our community! Thank you to all for your support!

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### HOST FAMILIES

Courtney & Michael Grigsby  
Jennifer & Richard Essigs  
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Claire & Dick O'Hare  
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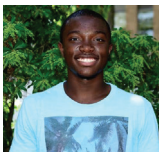
### HOST FAMILY COORDINATOR

Mary Freiberg

### STAFF

John & Laura Walsh – Resident Directors  
Tutor – Grace Mills  
Tutor – Elle Carroll  
Cook – Beth Jones  
Administrative Assistant – Judy Gilroy

## Spotlight on Senior Rajon Mitchell



Senior ABC scholar, Rajon, traveled to Morocco this past summer for an amazing 4-week cultural experience! He sat down with the ABC Board to share details about his trip...

### What was the name of the program?

The Experiment in International Living. There are programs all over the world, but I chose to go to Morocco with 15 other students, 2 adult leaders, and one country leader.

### How did you hear about it?

Through the ABC National program. They were looking for scholars who could best represent ABC.

### What did you do there?

It was a cultural immersion program so we traveled around the country, and then we stayed in a farming village for 12 weeks so we got to experience the local culture too. I took Arabic classes and participated in activities like weaving with our host families, and teaching English to the local children.

### What surprised you and what did you learn?

I learned how open-minded other kids were, exploring and accepting another culture. I was struck seeing so many young people, like myself, embracing globalism and celebrating differences. Also, I was asked to live in a host family where the head of the household had two wives (which is typical there) so it was very interesting!



## President's Message November 2016

By Susan Donnelly



We have a lot going on at 64 Locust Avenue, and it is flourishing thanks to everyone who has supported the program over the past 42 years! First, I'd like to introduce myself as the new president of ABC of New Canaan and tell you how excited I am to work with the ABC Board and staff. I've taken over the reigns from Mike Curran, who did a masterful job for the last three years. He has retired from the board after serving for 7 years in various capacities and is leaving ABC on very solid ground. We wish him well and our heartfelt gratitude.

I'd like to start with a little about me. My husband is Michael Donnelly, and we have raised our three children here in New Canaan (Colleen 26, working in NYC for (RED), Maggie 23, Graduate student at Fairfield and Mike 20, a Junior at Lafayette College). We were the host family for Chris Andrews, now a thriving junior at Penn State. I first became a host parent coordinator, then a Chair of the Selection Committee and Vice President of the board. I have seen first hand what it takes to help these promising students adjust to the social and cultural changes they experience. Every ABC student comes with a different set of circumstances and we do our very best to help each one find his place in our community. I believe wholeheartedly in the mission of ABC, and I hope my experience brings a useful perspective to this position.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the ABC program is when our seniors address the board in June and talk about their ABC journey and their plans for the future. Our 2016 graduating seniors Brain MacCalla (Elon University) and Chris Roman (Bentley University), gave speeches that did not leave a dry eye in the room. I would like to thank the exceptional host parents of our graduates, Mary Lou and Mike Salvati and Margaret and Steve Hoover, who had a huge impact on the lives of their host sons. It is so important to have such dedicated and supportive parents take on this job and open up their homes and their hearts. We wish Brian and Chris all the best as they begin their college experience.

The ABC House is 100% dependent on private donations from New Canaan citizens, town organizations and churches. New Canaan has been dedicated to ABC's simple idea that better educational opportunities lead to better lives. The people of New Canaan have helped enhance the lives of 75 hard-working and determined young men who became part of our community and graduated from New Canaan High school. Our alumni have gone on to college, graduate programs, and professional careers in law, business, technology and education, achieving greater things than they or their parents thought possible. At the same time, these boys have enriched our lives by providing the valuable diversity that reflects the country that we live in today.

I hope you will consider making a donation to A Better Chance of New Canaan. Your continued support will allow us to keep offering this life-changing opportunity to deserving young men.

Thank You.

## Halloween Weekend Fun in Washington, D.C.!

The ABC scholars are treated to an annual weekend trip to either Boston, Philadelphia or Washington, D.C. As Brian Klapper, ABC Board Member and Activities Chair, describes, the purpose of the trip each year is "pure educational enjoyment!" Brian, along with board member Scott Beyer, set off with our five ABC scholars to Washington, D.C. over Halloween weekend.

They stayed at the Marriott Marquis in downtown D.C., walking distance from The White House and so many other points of interest. Saturday was a busy day starting with a tour of the White House followed by a tour of the Library of Congress. After lunch, they all loved their private walking tour of the monuments. Brian commented "we walked everywhere!" They spent Saturday evening in Georgetown where they attended a 10 pm jazz show at the famous Blues Alley Jazz Club. They were entertained by renowned trumpeter, Roy Hargraves.

On Sunday, they toured the National Archives and the Air and Space Museum at the Smithsonian. So much was packed into one weekend! Brian said the highlights and fun moments of the trip were the White House Tour, seeing the original Declaration of Independence and free food and drink on the concierge floor of the hotel!

## Meet our new ABC Freshman, Adrian Davis from Philadelphia, PA!



Adrian originally heard about the ABC program from his mom's friend.

When asked what made him want to participate, he said "ABC schools have more resources than my school; more opportunities to learn." So far, what he likes best is NCHS and the other boys in the ABC house.

So what does Adrian do when he's not hitting the books? He played freshman soccer this fall. Now he's setting his sights on basketball, and plans to try out for baseball or volleyball in the spring. In addition to sports, he is a member of SLOBs and Students Advocates Group at NCHS.

Adrian's host family is the Richardsons... mom and dad, Jen and Tom, and siblings, TJ, Jack, Christopher and Abby. He likes the break from the routine when he visits them.

Last summer, Adrian worked for bITS (Building Information Technology Skills) at Temple University

as a Service Learner. That means he was paid to learn about stratified societies and gentrification throughout economies. Wow! It was a 2-month program, and he wants to work there again next summer.

Adrian humored us by answering some fun questions...

**How would you describe yourself?**

Outgoing, humorous and ambitious

**What is your favorite class?**

Either Spanish or Earth Science

**Who is your favorite teacher?**

Mrs. Chillington because she is very enthusiastic!

**Do you like the food at NCHS?**

Yes, but it is expensive!

**What do you think about the football games?**

It gets boring after the first half because New Canaan is always winning!



Photo (L to R) Rajon Mitchell, Josiah Jones, Adrian Davis, Ryan Hernandez, Kai Clancy.