

OUR NEWEST GRADUATES!

ABC board members, friends and family bid a fond farewell to Edwin Carbajal and Issaka Mohammed at graduation ceremonies on June 19. Edwin is attending Princeton and Issaka is attending Lehigh. Like any family who has sent a child off to college, the ABC family anxiously waited to hear from them. We print their words here so that you can share in our pride and understand how important and critical a role the ABC program and the Wilton community play in shaping and influencing these students' lives. We thank you for your support!



From Issaka:

I didn't know how formal I should be so I opted to be more colloquial. Right now as I sit to type about my first month at college, I honestly don't know where to start. Perhaps with "Lehigh's amazing!!" Don't get me wrong, I enjoyed Wilton like no scholar before me but Lehigh's the perfect combination of everything I wanted. When past scholars always said college is amazing, I was usually frustrated when they couldn't elaborate. However, I am currently in their situation and I understand their sentiments. How could you possibly describe such an amazing experience?

I will attempt by starting with dorm life. This year I am extremely blessed. I live at Richards House which, according to many, is the best freshman dorm. I can see why they say that. I live in a single which I'm not particularly fond of. I would rather have a roommate but I would probably be let down because they couldn't live up to Elija. One of the biggest surprises in the school is the intimate nature. Though the school has 5000 undergraduates, I feel I have encountered the same 2500 people again and again. It's great that everyone is so amiable; it makes feeling comfortable a lot easier. Another surprise is the ease of the classes. I guess I can say in terms of academics ABC prepared me really well. However, the workload can at times be overbearing. Because of its relative ease though, it feels a lot like busy work but I'm trying my best to always stay on top of my work, a worthy feat if I may say so!

Recently, I walked on to the Track team, which I consider my most impressive feat. It even tops my first ten-page essay, which I got an A on. I would like to thank English teachers for that, and yes I know the previous sentence ended in a preposition; sorry Mrs. Klein. Try-outs were hard and it makes me especially happy because I was the only one to make the team out of 5 potential walk-ons. With track comes a lot of responsibilities and lower-body pain, but I wouldn't trade it for anything.

I know it probably doesn't surprise anyone when I say I despised study hall during my years with ABC. When I finally thought I escaped, I found out sport teams have mandatory 2.5 hrs study hall. I think I physically laughed or cried, I can't remember which, when I heard the news. Being a part of a team automatically qualifies you for a leadership program. First year is mandatory, but I plan to continue with it all four years. The first year program is called P.R.I.D.E, and as you progress the name gets cooler, though I forget what the acronym stands for.

I'm sure Mrs. Clune will be happy to hear Lehigh is enforcing her work-hard mentality and I plan to fully utilize this time. My goal for first semester is to make the dean's list, which is a 3.65. I feel this is attainable if I work hard. I would like to end with a cliché to all my fellow ABC scholars: College is amazing but never forget why you're there. Academics always come first, though it gets really hard with a TV, free cable and a ps3. Despite the many distractions, I'm glad Lehigh emphasizes academics and I am going to try really hard to avoid the many temptations and focus on my studies.

From Edwin:

Princeton has been a phenomenal experience. I love the school, the environment, the people, and the opportunities. I actually did a summer term through the Freshmen Scholars Institute here at Princeton, consisting of 7 weeks. During that time I was able to take 2 courses for 2 credits, giving me a leg up as a science major, for what will be a busy 4 years. I took calculus 103 and an epistemology course called Ways of Knowing. It was an enriching experience and I learned the ins and outs of Princeton before the start of the school year, plus, I was fulfilling general requirements. I did really well in the courses, giving me the confidence to start strong this semester.

Upon the conclusion of the program, I was getting ready to go on my pre-orientation trip. I signed up for sustainable farming, what turned out to be another incredible experience. I loved the fact that I was getting to meet so many new and diverse people. I had a great group of friends and enthusiastic leaders. The trip taught me the importance of farm work in this country and the value of manual labor.

When we arrived, orientation began and so did the festivities. We started with getting settled to our residential colleges, meeting my roommates (whom are great friends of mine), and meeting administrators. The orientation commenced with an awesome convocation in our university chapel and continued with a parade, where freshmen are welcomed by the rest of the community. After singing, attending performances, enjoying the evenings at eating clubs, and signing up for classes, it was time to start school. I am taking calculus 104, chemistry 201, Spanish 207, and a writing seminar on Animal Acts this semester. I am excited for what is going to be a great semester and a wonderful start to an enriching 4 years. I am currently thinking of majoring in molecular biology with an emphasis in pre-med or research. I have also joined the pep band, which has been a funny experience!

COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVES ON ABC

Becoming a part of the ABC program has been one of the best decisions we have ever made as a family. Helping others through donations and part-time volunteering is wonderful in itself, but there is no better feeling than giving someone a priceless education and a loving, caring family atmosphere. Being a host family to an ABC student taught me to be thankful for my own education. These students try their hardest to pursue a better education; a decision many young people are not so concerned with. This pursuit challenges them as they must leave their family, friends and surroundings to receive this incredible education, whereas I had been handed it through simply living in Wilton. Welcoming our ABC students into our home has not only given me more brothers to call my own, but also the drive to pursue the best education possible and the reminder to always be thankful for what I have been given. – Emma Hines WHS '07

When I entered Wilton High School, Wilton's ABC program had just begun. Until then, the most exotic addition to the Class of 2001 might have been a lanky red-headed kid from Tennessee who joined us in 7th grade...even the girl who came from Spain had long-time residents of Wilton as her grandparents and knew what was going on in town. All of a sudden, though, we had Jamal and Nick, two boys from New York City neighborhoods, in our classes and joining our sports teams, many of which had been solid for years before we entered high school. Their housemates were running for student body president, involved in the music programs, or taking awards for their artwork. Just like us, they were singing and dancing in the Senior Show. Unlike us, though, they had grown up outside of the so-called Wilton bubble, and so brought a completely different experience to Key Club or National Honor Society meetings. Free-period discussions opened our eyes to the realities of life outside the bubble (though, as usual, the conversations often focused on what was going on after the football game, or whether anyone had figured out the answer to that chemistry problem of Dr. J's). The community's active participation in the program gave us first-hand experience in how philanthropy can affect lives. I've watched my parents spend weekends upon weekends visiting colleges with a scholar, and hours wading through application and financial aid forms. I've seen the many charitable events held for the program's benefit, and watched families open their homes to scholars, not only during their tenure at Wilton High, but also during college breaks and high school reunions. With such a fine example of giving back to the community in front of us, and hearing from the scholars themselves how it has changed their lives for the better, the community's children learn how their time, effort, and money can make a difference. The ABC scholars get a fantastic education in Wilton and the town's children get a fantastic education from them as well. - Elizabeth Burnham WHS '01

Having two ABC students stay with my family turned out to be a mutually beneficial relationship. We learned from each other. With two ABC brothers it was like having five brothers instead of three. We shared classes, sporting events and friends and we still keep in touch and share the latest family updates. One of the greatest benefits of the ABC program at Wilton High School is that you learn that all people are exactly the same. We all desire the same give and take of respect, dignity, and love. I hope that other Wilton families will take this amazing opportunity to learn about people from varying backgrounds by getting to know them and ultimately becoming involved in ABC. – Mary Elizabeth Clune WHS '04

There is no doubt that the ABC Program enhanced my experience at Wilton High School. The students in the program added new ideas and perspectives to the classroom and allowed us to gain new insights. I can also say personally, that witnessing their hard-work, discipline and determination was truly inspiring. But above all, many of us gained friends through the program that are still a part of our lives today - Alex Smith WHS '04

My perspective of this issue is personal; I graduated from WHS in 2005. It is in part as a result of my relationships with former ABC scholars that I have embraced different cultures and lifestyles. Due to the homogenous nature of Wilton, life after Wilton High School often comes as a shock to many former students. By providing students with the opportunity to know and work with students of color, with a diversity of life experiences, Wilton is taking an important step toward preparing their students for the real world. My sincere hope is that the A Better Chance program will continue to allow Wilton students to move beyond their comfort zone and learn about different life experiences and cultural backgrounds to better prepare them for life after WHS—Sarah Carta WHS'05

I just wanted to reach out to Thank You, from the bottom of my heart, for recommending Sophie and Onessa to our program. They are absolutely outstanding, and thrived in our camp environment! - Marnie McDonagh, Director, Camp Dudley at Kinyia (Westport, NY)

ABC ALUMNI

Ray Chambers '99
Brown University
Harvard Business School

Michael Chang '00
Boston College
Sun Yat-Sen University,
Guangzhou, China

Luis Lora '00
Columbia University

Jeffrey Correa '00
Fairfield University

Nick Chong '01
Duke University

Jamal Aaron '01
Amherst College

Loi To '02
Tufts University

Roger Manzano '02
Lafayette College

Qui-Juan Jones '04
American University

Anthony Esponda '04
Boston College

Sean Muschett '04
Wesleyan College

Elliott Castillo '05
Providence College

James Uko '05
Carnegie Mellon

Marcus Cave '06
Howard University

Elijah Everett '08
Villanova University

Chris Payne '08
Amherst College

Kenneth Faward '09
Binghamton College

Jeremi Lewis '09
Howard University

Freddy Mendez '09
Bentley College

Issaka Mohammed '10
Lehigh University

Edwin Carbajal '10
Princeton University



WILTON

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A BETTER CHANCE

Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1996.

Reflections on A Better Chance of Wilton from Ray Chambers, ABC Wilton/WHS '99 Brown University '03, Harvard Business School '10

As a fourteen year old, soon-to-be high school sophomore, Wilton A Better Chance (ABC) took a chance on me. Likewise, my parents and I made a bet on a fledgling program promising a great education and a transformational experience. In hindsight, the decision to move to Wilton, as one of the first three ABC scholars, is the best investment I have made in my life.

Life at 6 Godfrey Place, Wilton ABC's initial home, was filled with many, many memorable moments. The strong bonds forged with the other scholars and the weekly chores that I never truly learned to appreciate come quickly to mind. Upon further reflection, there are three main things I believe I took away from the program: increased expectations, a dependable support structure and a strong sense of accountability.

Through hard work coupled with strong support from the Wilton ABC program and volunteers I was fortunate to be accepted to all eight colleges to which I applied. I had received a full scholarship from Trinity College and was later accepted with a much less generous financial package to Brown University, my dream school. The ABC experience emboldened me with the view that my goal was not simply to go to college, but rather to attend the best school I could, even if it meant some sacrifice. It was not easy to explain to my parents and even some in the program, why I would pass on a good school where I would have only had to pay \$5 per year. My rationale was simple: I had been given a life-changing experience that required tremendous sacrifice from myself, my parents and the Wilton community and I intended to take full advantage of the opportunity I had been afforded.

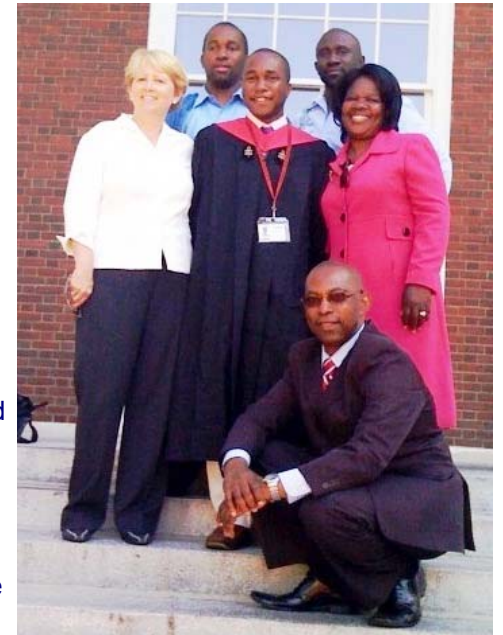
One of the hallmarks of my ABC experience was the weekends spent with Win and Spen Kellogg, my host family. They graciously opened their home to me and introduced me to others as a family member. They were my second set of parents who I knew I could trust and confide in when making important decisions. We still remain close 11 years later.

A powerful example of the strength of the support I received during my time is embodied in Mr. Robert Graham, one of the founding lions of the Wilton ABC program. He was my college coach and has been a life-long mentor. When I thought about applying to business school, I knew he would be able to write a powerful and personal recommendation and he readily agreed to help. Tragedy struck, however, and Mr. Graham faced a life threatening condition. While he thankfully survived the ordeal, his prognosis for recovery fell months after the due date for my recommendation. Because of his indomitable spirit he was on the road to recovery faster than expected. Despite his weakened condition he wrote me an outstanding recommendation although he had every reason to do otherwise. When I was accepted to Harvard Business School, I called my mom and then the Grahams.

As the oldest scholar in the newly established program I felt a sense of accountability to not only lead by example for the younger scholars but also for the program as a whole. I felt and still feel this sense of responsibility because Wilton ABC is a program that changes lives. A personal example is that through exposure to Wilton ABC, my younger brother also became an ABC scholar in Edina, Minnesota and became the second college graduate in our family three years ago. The idea then is that the beneficiaries of the program will also mentor and encourage others, driven by this deep sense of accountability, creating exponential return on ABC's initial investment. I am proud to be an alumnus of Wilton ABC and would like to thank all the generous individuals who ensure its continued success.

FALL 2010

www.ABCWilton.org



Graduation from Harvard Business School

Ray Chambers (center) with brothers Albert Jr and Romeo (top row l-r), former ABC of Wilton President Lynne Vanderslice (middle left), mother, Violet (middle right) and father, Albert Sr, (kneeling)

A BETTER CHANCE OF WILTON

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Kathy Shouplin
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Eydie Sum
Nancy Toll
Maria White

OUR SCHOLARS



(l-r): Onessa Faulknor, Elija Sanon, Raphael Mettle, Sophie Delfeus, JR Bonhomme, Damaris Mozie, JP Clark, Amanda Allison, Hui Lu, O'Londi LeGrand, Selena Cardona, Micah Allwood

This year's annual "Welcome Back" picnic was held at Trackside teen center. ABC Board members, volunteers, family and friends welcomed 6 female and 6 male scholars to Wilton for the 2010-11 school year.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE....

Thank you, citizens of Wilton for your generosity in supporting our community based "A Better Chance" program – one of only five in the country offering programs for both boys and girls. While our program does not guarantee the success of its scholars, it does offer each scholar an opportunity that was not available had he or she stayed at home – the opportunity to receive an excellent education that will be the foundation on which they can build a successful college experience and a satisfying and rewarding career.

Typically, in the midst of poverty and diminishing opportunity, a teacher or another caring adult observes potential in these girls and boys. They see them as "unpolished gems" with minds that work harder and a spirit that strives to succeed. They help light the pathways to opportunity by referring them to "A Better Chance" programs. Your generous contributions of time and money over the years have helped keep those pathways to success well lighted.

It is rewarding and a bit heart rending to hear the ABC scholars say with palpable relief, "Yes, the kids here are nice; they say hi in the hallways." I've also heard the following from the back seat of a car: "I love everything here." One of our ABC Board members received an email from a recent graduate stating "College is amazing, I love the atmosphere and work ethic at Princeton." On the first page of this newsletter, you have already read the words of Ray Chambers, ABC of Wilton's first graduate. ABC of Wilton had a life changing impact on his life. These feelings of ABC scholars, expressed in their own words, make your efforts on their behalf so worthwhile. I share them with you so you can feel their gratitude for your support.

We are passionate in our belief that the scholars will share your generosity of spirit and pass it on to their children. In so doing, their passion will grow support exponentially with the resulting ripple effect on their families, the communities from which they came, and the residents of Wilton and other communities where the scholars work and live after graduating from college. Wilton started the ABC program in 1996; since then, 21 scholars have graduated from WHS, with 12 more currently enrolled. We ask you to continue to support this program through your generous donations of time and money and thank you for helping our scholars learn how to "pay it forward."

Marylynn Clune

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

The success of the ABC program is due entirely to the generous nature of our Wilton community. ABC provides many opportunities for volunteers (drivers, college coaches, host families, fundraiser hosts/planners, etc.) We thank the many volunteers whose time and energy fuels the program and we welcome anyone interested in becoming more involved. If you would like to learn more about ABC of Wilton and how you can participate, either on a one-time or on-going basis, please contact Liz McGroarty, mcgs46@optonline.net.

THREE NEW SCHOLARS JOIN THE ABC FAMILY ON CANNON ROAD

John Bonhomme, Jr. - "JR" is from New London, Connecticut. He moved to the United States from Haiti when he was eight years old. He has four sisters and one brother. Favorite subjects are math and science and his favorite sport is football. JR was very involved in the choir in his middle school where he was chosen to participate in the Eastern Region Music Festival.

Raphael Mettle lives with his parents and three brothers and sisters in the Bronx. He moved to the United States from Ghana five years ago. Raphael's favorite subjects are math and science and his favorite sport is football.

John Pierre Clarke - "JP" lives in New York City with his parents and brother. He moved to the United States from Jamaica two years ago. His favorite subject is science and his favorite sport is basketball.



(l-r): Jean Robert "JR" Bonhomme, Raphael Mettle, Jean Pierre "JP" Clark

ABC Celebrates Education, the key to our world's future

On Saturday evening Sept. 11th at the lovely home of Ed and Michele Barnes, A Better Chance of Wilton scholars and many Wilton community supporters came out to enjoy a night of great food, dancing and fun. Approximately 120 guests were in attendance along with Ray Chambers, our first ABC scholar (WHS '99), who returned to share his ABC experience. His story compelled guests to bid on the many silent auction items, which included JetBlue airline tickets, get away travel packages, an 8 bedroom log cabin near Park City, Utah, and a VT ski house. The theme "Celebrate Education" was a reminder to all of the importance of education to the well-being of our country and world. The event's committee was mindful of Sept. 11th and took the opportunity to share a message that parallels with the mission of the ABC program. ABC thanks the Barnes family, and the committee: Michele Barnes, Lisa Benison, Cara Calabrese, Valerie Colburn, Melissa Elmasry, Stephanie Gordon, Kris Herlyn, Kim Horner, Courtney Kleeman, Diane McDermott, Charlotte Morello, Diana Prince and Julie West. With the enthusiasm and support of these women, ABC raised over \$35,000.

Won't you consider hosting an event for A Better Chance? Please contact Adrienne Reedy, Dir. of Development at adrienne.reedy@gmail.com for complete information



(l-r): Michele Barnes, Adrienne Reedy, Ray Chambers, Marylynn Clune

GOLF OUTING 2010

The beautiful Redding Country Club was the setting for the 14th Annual ABC Golf Classic, held on May 25th. Another full field of foursomes competed for such prizes as vacations, cruises and of course – bragging rights at the 19th hole! Congratulations to low gross winners Jim Bardwell, John Arrix, Peter Bennett and John McDermott. Special thanks go out to our Reception Sponsor – The Williams Capital Group, L.P. – and our tireless committee; David Finkelstein, Rick Fingeret, Nick Lee, Mike McGroarty and Adrienne Reedy. To learn more about next year's outing, join the ABC mailing list at www.abcwilton.org



(l-r): Peter Bennett, Jim Bardwell, John McDermott, John Arrix. Photo courtesy of Gretchen McMahon

ACCOLADES FOR EDWIN!

Scholar Edwin Carbajal was chosen Citizen of the Year by the Drum Hill Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The award was presented at the Academic Awards ceremony held on May 26, 2010 at the high school. He also won first place in the 5th annual CT "Poetry Out Loud" competition and received the 2009 ABC National Excellence Award for outstanding academic performance. The ABC National award was presented at a luncheon in New York city .

CONGRATULATIONS, Edwin!



WISH LIST

Staples gift cards to buy school supplies
Current college guides
Current AP exam study guides
Air miles for travel to summer programs
CVS gift cards for toiletries & medication
Newspaper & educational magazine subscriptions
To donate, please contact Marylynn Clune at 203/762- 1227

SAVE THE DATE!

3rd Annual *I DREAM A WORLD CONCERT*
February 12, 2011 at the Clune Center at Wilton high school
Featuring renown composer and musician Rollo A. Dilworth
With Wilton student musicians and singers and a student art show