

News

A Better Chance Program Opens Doors for 50 Years

By Sydney Bergan

Pictures of generations of A Better Chance Andover (ABC) members cover the mantle as early morning sunlight filters through the curtains, spilling into the modest living room. AHS junior Skye Padovani and ABC resident advisor Marina Williams sit wrapped in blankets; Padovani's is handmade with her favorite colors by an ABC alumna. Padovani and Williams fondly talk about a recent weekend celebrating the program's golden anniversary as jokes and a sisterly warmth bounce around the room.

The ABC program, which gives bright young women of color opportunities for a better education, celebrated contributions to the lives of five decades of youth on October 6-8. At the concluding Gala Event, alumnae and members of the Andover and Andover High School communities gathered at the Andover Country Club in order to acknowledge all that the program has achieved.

The ABC house's historic blue door is now coated with names of the alumnae who came to visit the house for a 50th anniversary weekend, these signatures now a permanent emblem of not only their involvement in the program, but also their involvement in the community.

For the A Better Chance Program, turning 50 does not mean having a midlife crisis. The im-

and go to school at Andover High School is truly inspiring. Second, unfortunately many of our students have little knowledge of life outside of Andover, and the students in ABC bring much needed diversity and rich learning opportunities for all of our students. I only hope that this is a reciprocal experience for the students of the ABC Program."



Above: Elise Cabrera, senior; Mr. Bach, social studies teacher; Jenni Nguyen, senior; and Olamide Olayinka, junior, pose for a photo during the 50th Anniversary Gala.

guests. Ms. Bergey, Andover High School guidance counselor and former ABC board member, said, "The event was an incredible opportunity to hear stories from past alumni and how ABC has positively impacted their lives. The event was also a fundraiser, and over \$70,000 was raised through a silent and live auction. [It] was amazing to see people giving so generously to this program."

The \$70,000 in donations will go towards all of the things an average family pays for for their high schoolers. This includes SAT prep, prom tickets, sports fees and the cost of sending all of the girls home to see their families five times a year.

As a three-year resident director of the Andover ABC House, AHS instructional aide Ms. Spinale is in charge of the safety and well-being of the eight girls currently in the program. For her, the event was incredible. "The very first resident directors were there," she said, "and they are well into their 80s now, and for them to come up and shake my hand and say: 'You're doing a great job and such an important job in the lives of these kids' made me feel so good."

Courtesy Photo

"In many ways it was overwhelming," Williams said of the gala. "There were so many alumni, host families, supporters, former teachers, all sorts of parts of the community that came to support these scholars."

The Board of Directors and the president of the Andover ABC Program, Susan Connolly, were in attendance at the Gala Event as well. Host families of the current Andover residents also were able to enjoy the festivities.