



Jasmine Chooses South Africa for Summer Experience



Jasmine

Each rising senior at Guilford ABC has the opportunity to spend part of the summer abroad or choose another significant experience. Jasmine Laryea chose a trip to South Africa, inspired by the work and memory of Nelson Mandela.

During her three-week trip, Jasmine also studied one of the many ancient languages, isiXhosa, and delighted in “an amazing variety of food.” Her group shared their food with the homeless population living on the beach. One week she helped children at the Bonga Primary School build a food garden, growing onions, tomatoes, asparagus.

In Cape Town, Jasmine hiked Lions Head Mountain, then ascended Tabletop Mountain via cable car. CIEE was the sponsoring organization.

Jasmine also visited museums that have captured the history of apartheid and Robbin Island where Nelson Mandela, the first democratically-elected president of South Africa was held for 17 of his 28 years as a prisoner.

“It was brutally honest,” she said quietly. The concept of Ubuntu captured her intense interest. “It’s the concept of seeing everyone for their humanity,” she explained, “to unify.” ▼

Andrea Inspired by Summer Trip to Morocco

Andrea Kaluma, now a senior at Guilford High School, wrote passionately about her summer adventure in Morocco, which ended shortly before the devastating earthquake in Marrakesh. The CIEE organization sponsored the trip.

Andrea recalls her hike up the mountain of Akshour. “I really pushed myself because I am not a hiker. On a previous hike, I only got halfway up the mountain, and almost slipped a couple of times. But when I got to God’s Bridge at the top, there was a beautiful waterfall. I realized it was “the beauty you achieve after reaching that peak.” Andrea is also studying Arabic at Guilford High School.

She reported her interaction with the Moroccans, “...some of the kindest people you will ever meet! I was met with many smiles and kind eyes throughout the trip. This experience has changed my life for the better – and because I went, I believe that I can go anywhere...The language and cultural abroad program that I was a part of taught me the importance of community; a collectivistic culture that emphasizes the importance of taking care of one another.” ▼



Andrea

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The Year Begins

FROM CO-PRESIDENT JUDY WRIGHT

School has been in session for a month and it's autumn in Guilford. The trees are beginning to change color and when I drive around town, I notice pumpkins and mums in front of houses. When the ABC house was packed up in June, we sent our two seniors off to start their adventures at college – Janelle to Muhlenberg College and Kilee to Boston University. In September we welcomed 2 ninth grade students – Irene and Jazhira. We've kept them busy meeting many new people and they've adjusted well.



Our current house includes 2 seniors, 2 sophomores and 2 freshmen. Supporting them are our after-school tutor, Sharon, and college intern, Kaylene. We are extremely fortunate to have our wonderful Resident Director, Lynn Prendergast. It's a busy household and we appreciate everyone's contributions.

After nearly 10 years on the board, our ABC nurse, Regina Demitrack, is transitioning to semi-retirement. Our immense thanks to Regina – she positively touched so many lives of our students. We are happy to welcome nurse practitioner Danielle Morgan as our new health consultant. This year we plan to develop a wellness program for our scholars and so far, they've tried a yoga class and pickleball. We hope to continue with both activities and include more as time permits.

In July the AC malfunctioned and we suffered water damage starting in the attic and going through the second floor all the way to the study room on the first floor. It was a long process getting repairs made, and thanks to our House and Grounds super stars, Ann Street and Mike Hryb, the job was completed the day before our scholars moved back!

Believe it or not, the student recruitment process has already begun for next year. As our current 12th graders graduate in June we will hope to invite 2 9th graders to join our program.

Thank you for your continued support for Guilford ABC as we approach the 50 year milestone in 2024! ▼

The summer newsletter mistakenly identified Joan Simonetti as a Hole in the Wall volunteer. Joan has been a long-time hard-working manager of Hole in the Wall. Thank you, Joan!



Freshmen Irene and Jazhira Join Guilford ABC

Lynn Prendergast Begins 6th Year as Resident Director

The Resident Director lives at the Guilford ABC house and watches over the six ABC scholars like a devoted mother hen. Lynn Prendergast loves her job. She is constantly smiling when she speaks of “my girls.” During the day, Lynn is a full-time teacher of fifth-graders in Madison, a position she’s held for 31 years. After a full day of “hanging out with 10-year-olds, she “loves coming home to the Guilford teen scholars.”

Her enjoyment of teenagers began years ago. In addition to teaching full-time, she taught teenagers at a driving school after the school day ended. For three years she taught some 450 teens to drive. “Only two failed their driving test,” she reports proudly. Her delight with knowing teenagers grew during this experience. “Spending more than seven hours one-on-one driving with the teens was very interesting. They opened up and told me everything. They trusted me.”

So, when the Guilford ABC position as Resident Director opened up, Lynn knew she would love it. Her daughter had graduated from Guilford High School, and Lynn was ready for a new adventure with teens. “There was really no way to prepare,” she admitted, but the group grew into a cohesive little “family” through group activities she initiated. One unifying activity was creating a group Christmas card.

She is grateful for the amazingly hard work the Guilford ABC Board members contribute. “Because I’m at the center of the program, I see all the working parts including academics and student life. The Board members bring open hearts and minds, are generous and unselfish. They work many, many volunteer hours to support the ABC program,” she said.

From the beginning of her tenure, Lynn has felt that it is very important to make the parents of all the scholars feel comfortable “and trust me with their kids. After all, the students are leaving familiar locations, family, and friends,” she said.

Lynn glows as she speaks of her work. “This is a unique job. It’s an honor to be Resident Director. I love the program. Every year I am so proud of my girls!” ▼

With their sweet smiles and calm personalities, Irene Opoku-Gyamfi and Jazhira Douglas (who likes to be called “Jazzy”) have settled into the Guilford ABC house as freshmen at Guilford High School. Irene who originates from New York City says that “Guilford people are really nice. There’s lots to do here, and it’s pretty quiet.” She’s tried pickleball and thinks Guilford High School is “cool. There are so many clubs that I’ll never be bored!” Her favorite subjects are history and science. She is thinking about becoming a pediatrician. Irene especially enjoys volleyball and reading.

Jazzy hails from Bridgeport, Connecticut, and also finds Guilford “quiet.” She’s already been to the Guilford Fair – “the food and the rides were really good!” She loves the Guilford Green and enjoys all sports, especially soccer. Jazzy is committed to “making goals and teamwork.” She enjoys studying Latin and science courses and is “thinking about the future.” Her favorite singer currently is singer-songwriter Lauryn Hill. Jazzy has already become close to the other scholars. “They’re like sisters. They make me feel welcome.” ▼



Irene



Jazzy



Kyra



Tamojah

Sophomores Kyra and Tamojah Expand Their Interests

After an accelerated math course in Algebra II, which she studied online for two weeks during the summer, Kyra Amani is studying music theory at Guilford High School, this sophomore year.

"I want to understand music better, have a deeper understanding of the emotional basis, and of chords," she explains. She sings in the chorus and during the summer also studied drums. She can hardly wait to sing in the spring musical!

Tamojah Tomlinson took a one-week immersion program in nursing at Fairfield University this summer. Her academic advisor had helped her discover the course which appealed because Tamojah is interested in a career in medicine.

"We were taught vital signs and the process of birth which involved using a life-size robotic mannequin – it was very lifelike," she said. In addition to learning some medical basics, "we learned the need to take care of yourself, too," she said.

Tamojah hopes to participate in the fall drama and the spring musical at Guilford High School. ▼

Guilford's M.J. Petretto Foundation Donates \$4,000 to Guilford A Better Chance

Guilford's The M.J. Petretto Foundation, which is the philanthropic arm of the Retirement Planning Group of Guilford, CT, today presented a check for \$4,000 to Guilford A Better Chance. The proceeds are a result of The 14th annual M.J. Petretto Golf Classic at the Farms Country Club in Wallingford, CT. The fun day out included a scramble golf competition, pre-golf lunch, then post-golf dinner, including silent and live auctions hosted by Guilford's own John "Cadillac" Seville. Jeff Zeitlin, Board Member and Guilford ABC liaison for the golf event commented: "The spirit of the organizers and participants for this wonderful community event grows each year. Returning players are like old friends and new players are enthusiastically welcomed! We are grateful to M.J. and her team for their ongoing support of Guilford ABC, and the other worthy non-profits the event supports. It is a wonderful example of a Guilford business giving back to the community."

The M.J. Petretto Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization established in 2009 as part of Retirement Planning Group's commitment to give back time, talent and money to support the efforts of Connecticut not-for-profits. The Foundation's mission is to fund organizations that support education health, and quality of life to build stronger Connecticut communities. In addition to Guilford A Better Chance, the event also supports Gaylord Hospital's Spinal Cord Injury Program, Home Care Plus – Community Healthcare and Hospice (formerly VNA of Guilford) Parkinson's Exercise and Caregiver Support Program, and the Shoreline Arts Alliance.

Guilford A Better Chance, starting its 50th year, invites academically talented young women of color from under-represented communities to attend Guilford High School and to enjoy the many benefits of living in the Guilford community. The program's goal is to lessen the educational divide, one scholar at a time, and to prepare these scholars for a lifetime of achievement. ▼



L to R: Judy Wright, GABC Co-President; Jeff Zeitlin, GABC Board Member, M.J. Petretto



A Mother's Joy

"We are extremely pleased with the ABC Guilford Program. At Guilford ABC, Janelle was in a caring and safe environment. Her years at Guilford were filled with a variety of educational and fun activities. She was surrounded by an armor of academic and emotional support which played a major role in propelling Janelle to be successful. Guilford's ABC program taught Janelle to be a critical thinker, a self-advocate, team player, and to develop her time management skills. Moreover, she learned the importance of volunteering and community relations. The program also afforded Janelle many opportunities, including a trip to London to learn about culture and theater. Janelle formed lasting friendships and relationships which she cherishes"

Debra Wilkinson, mother of Janelle Wilkinson pictured above, Guilford High School graduate, class of 2023

Amy Mickelson Retires from Hole in the Wall

Hole in the Wall, the resale and thrift shop in Guilford Center that provides major support to Guilford ABC, thrives due to the dedication of the staff. After many years of service, Amy Mickelson is retiring. Patty Sullivan, manager of the store, writes about Amy's departure: *It IS possible to be sad and happy at the same time!*

Hole in the Wall staff and customers are quite sad to see long-time manager Amy Mickelson retire, but we are so very happy for her future as well.

Amy has been an integral part of Hole in the Wall and its daily operations. She has been a wonderful worker and friend to us all. Amy always does things with flair and fashion with the utmost attention to detail. We will miss her undying work ethic and dedication to the shop. She has also shared her family's talents with the shop. Son, Tim Mickelson, has been our volunteer IT expert and husband, Greg, has helped with numerous projects in and out of the shop, including an entirely donated bathroom renovation. The great news is Amy has assured us she will stay involved with the shop on a volunteer basis and still attend ABC board meetings as a liaison from Hole in the Wall. Quite simply, this gal's pretty amazing!

While we are sad that she won't be with us as often, we are happy Amy will now be more free to spend time with her husband Greg, family and her beloved grandchildren, Fiadh and Wesley, as well as those of blood and those of the heart, as she always says! She will continue her extensive travel to places near and far on this big blue marble and do more "glamping" in their lovely camper. Wishing her health and happiness for many years to come. The best is yet to be!

The Hole in the Wall shop is located just off the Guilford Green at the corner of Park and Boston Streets. New merchandise arrives every day at Hole in the Wall, always gently priced and offering great value. The shop is open seven days a week: Monday through Friday, 10 am to 5pm; Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm; Sunday, noon to 4 pm. For consignment information, visit www.guilfordabc.org/hole-in-the-wall ▼



Amy Mickelson, right, greets new manager, Judi Wallace.



Hole in the Wall staff celebrates retiring manager Amy Mickelson (seated right) at restaurant Kamana in Guilford.



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GABC will mark its 50th anniversary in 2024. To honor this milestone, please consider providing for the next 50 years by adding a legacy gift to GABC to your estate plans. If you have questions about this please contact Georgia Cosgrove at gabcmain@gmail.com.

**CALLING ALL
GABC ALUMNAE!
50th Anniversary
Celebration**

Our 50th anniversary is next year, 2024. We're reaching out to all our former scholars to hear stories of where you are now and what you are doing with your careers. We could use your help finding contact information for alums missing from our lists. And we'd love to have you help out on the Reunion Committee! Please email Georgia Cosgrove at gcosmook@gmail.com with contact information and ideas for reunion activities. We want to hear from you!



The 2023-24 Guilford ABC scholars quickly embraced pickleball on arrival for school. From left to right: Jazhira (Jazzy), Tamojah, Andrea, Kyra, Jasmine, and Irene.