



Growing Academically and Socially through Classes and Activities

The six scholars at Guilford ABC are developing their minds and personalities this year at Guilford High School. In a recent interview, they described interesting class assignments and stimulating extra-curricular activities. They also reflected on changes that were personal challenges.

JASMINE LARYEA, a senior, said that in her International Baccalaureate (I.B.) classes she has enjoyed “exploring theories that also take place in real time; how cultures interact; and the biological and chemical aspects of love.” She especially enjoyed the interactive debate project.

“I.B. forces you to be a student,” Jasmine explained. “You learn how to learn, and that’s good because you’re always learning,” she said. “It made me learn how *I* like to learn – and that’s visually.”

Jasmine is a dancer and performed in the spring musical, “Legally Blonde.” She’s been dancing since the fourth grade and said “it was so much fun learning different numbers.” The most challenging aspect of her senior year has been time management, with all the work of college applications, academics, and the higher-level expectations of the I.B. course. She liked exploring resources and the collaborative process.



IRENE OPOKU-GYAMFI, a freshman, loved the assignment that accompanied study of *Beowulf*, the old English epic poem – “we created our own

table.” She also enjoyed acting out scenes from Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. In art class, she learned how to make a macrame friendship bracelet.

Irene attended GHS’s first multi-culture festival. Her face lit up with smiles as she recalled experiencing different cultures – “the belly-dancing from the Middle East, the Indian dancers, too.” She’s also joined the fencing team.

High school has been a challenge for Irene. “It’s really different from middle school – I had to learn how to study and prepare for tests.” She reflected on how she “learned to make friends and be herself, speak out and adapt.”

TAMOJAH TOMLINSON, a sophomore, became very interested in civics this year – “how Guilford and our national governments work.” She participated in a mock election in class and learned how to vote. She also practiced being a journalist, asking questions in mock interviews with the mock candidates.

“We made videos of our interviews, and they were both funny and embarrassing. We learned about setting, too. We did one interview in the cafeteria, and it was too loud,” she explained.

The 2023 fall play, a collection of Shakespeare comedy scenes, found her working with props again. “I learned how to work with the whole crew – it was a very large group this time. You need to know your part because there was a lot more to do this time. I also learned more about time management,” Tamojah said.



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Managing Editor: Ellen Creane
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Volunteers and Staff Sustain Our Guilford ABC Program

FROM CO-PRESIDENT LAURA BERKOWITZ GILBERT

It's been a little over six months since I began my term as co-president with Judy Wright. It's been fascinating and gratifying to develop a closer look at this beautiful ecosystem called Guilford ABC. The more I learn, the more in awe I am of this organization.

First off, the heart of the program and the why – the scholars themselves. These brave and smart young women choose to leave their families and their communities at 14 years old to join the Guilford community and attend our stellar high school. The trust that the scholars and their families place in our organization and the sacrifices they make for this opportunity are incredibly humbling.

Then there's Lynn Prendergast, the resident director who tirelessly creates a nurturing and loving environment so the girls feel like this is their second home.

Our student interns Kaylene and Sharon are incredibly important helping the girls after school and into the evening with their studies or running errands with them as well.

Taylor, our cook, has the near impossible task of cooking nutritious delicious dinners for six teenagers with varying palettes. Can you imagine? But the girls love the food!

Did you know that we are an all-volunteer Board? It's one of the hardest-working boards around! The work includes direct involvement with the girls' academic and social activities, vetting future scholars and host families, and raising funds to keep this all humming along. You'll read about our House and Grounds activity in the following pages, because by the way, we are also property owners!

Our volunteers are crucial – from helping with house chores to driving the girls to activities. There are so many volunteer opportunities that even just a few hours a month makes such a difference. (If you would like to volunteer, be sure to get in touch! There's a sign-up form on the GABC website or speak to one of us directly.)

Host families are also an integral part of the organization. The girls spend one weekend a month with their host families and form incredible bonds. I was just talking to an alumna who graduated in 1977 and is still in touch with her host sister!

The dedication of everyone involved with the organization, the scholars and the mission, is awe-inspiring. And the fact that we have been doing this for 50 years is amazing! We will be celebrating our 50th anniversary the weekend of October 18-20. The details of this multi-event celebration will be announced soon, so stay tuned!

Did you know that Guilford ABC is self-funded? Our local program receives no money from the national ABC organization? Our main sources of funding are proceeds from the Hole in the Wall consignment/thrift store and our annual appeal to donors. As you'll read in this issue, just keeping the house running takes an incredible amount of effort.

We are in the process of updating our website so it will be easier for you to find out what's new and ongoing with the program. The website is also the easiest place to make a donation. ▼



Growing Academically and Socially, continued...

ANDREA KALUMA, a senior, just had an exciting experience as a singer. She auditioned for a solo, was chosen, and performed singing "Over the Rainbow" at the GHS "Meals on Wheels" benefit concert in February. Andrea performs with the Voices ensemble and loves having many opportunities to sing. "It's really fun," she enthused.



Andrea has a passion for reading. "I just love to cozy up and read a good book." She wrote her college essay on her love of books. She's currently into Jane Austen – "all of them!" Her ABC "sister" Janelle, who graduated last year, sent her a collection. Andrea said she began to love reading early in her life, cuddling up with her dad in their library at home. "He's continually learning, and reads all the time," she said. She began with picture books and grew up with reading Dickens (*Oliver Twist* is a favorite), Fitzgerald, Oscar Wilde and many modern writers. "Literature is so welcoming to women – with open arms!" she exclaimed.

Andrea praised the help she received from the College Matters team. "They helped me organize my thoughts and develop my list of potential colleges to attend. I was very happy working with them."

Reflecting on her growth over the years at GABC, Andrea feels especially grateful for the experience traveling in Morocco last summer. "It was my first time traveling by myself in taxis, on trains in cities. I learned to be independent, to navigate the world for a month. I adjusted to a new way of life. These experiences helped me to become a leader in the GABC house – to be an example of maturity for the younger girls. I can help them by being a resource, helping them make friends and feel stable. Coming here, away from home, is hard. But it teaches you lessons in growing up."

KYRA AMANI, a sophomore, has enjoyed studying topics such as the Peace Corps and the United Nations. Examining the positives and negatives helped her understand how organizations can have internal problems yet still be successful. She was excited to participate in the high school's Model U.N. during the spring semester.

Kyra secured the role as understudy for one of the

characters in the spring musical, *Legally Blonde*. She enjoyed learning her lines and rehearsing each day after school. "It was more intense than last year. You have to be more accountable since it's a large cast," she said.

This second year of high school, Kyra said she was focusing "a lot more" on classes and reducing the number of extra-curricular activities. "School is the main thing," she affirmed. Still, developing a new People of Color club is important to her. She helped to organize, follow the rules for clubs, and finished with creating an informational poster to draw students in.



JAZHIRA DOUGLAS, a freshman, has the perfect nickname:

Jazzy. Her deep interest this year is in studying the history of imperialism. "I didn't even know the definition," she said, but she has found intriguing how imperialism happened in different countries throughout history and in the modern world.



She's enjoying soccer, a first sport that helped her make new friends. But the sport of

fencing has enthralled her. "Everyone is so welcoming. I'm learning different styles, different rules, and better techniques for your target area. You use the same body parts, but differently. The uniform and the mask protect us."

This first year of high school Jazzy admits that "classes are challenging, especially math and English. But she says she's learning more, even though "it can be exhausting."

In addition to their academic classes and their extra-curricular activities, each of the Guilford ABC scholars have assigned "chores" as part of the "family" at the house. They often volunteer at the Hole in the Wall retail/consignment shop that helps support the maintenance of the dwelling that provides a welcoming home away from home. ▼

CALLING ALL GABC ALUMNAE! 50th Anniversary Celebration

We're celebrating our 50th anniversary this year!. 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 gcsmook@gmail.com with contact information and ideas for reunion activities. We want to hear from you!

Constant Maintenance and Flood Repairs Keep the ABC House Glowing

Multiple loads of laundry every day. Ceiling light bulbs burn out and need replacing. Weeds growing in the landscaping. A home always needs attention. Our beautiful house on Church Street not only houses the six young women scholars with Guilford A Better Chance, it is also the scene of countless meetings and volunteer activities. Maintaining the three-story dwelling requires a team of volunteers and professionals.

First, the home must have complete insurance coverage. This became critical when a water leak in July of 2023 caused extensive damage on all three floors. The water leak destroyed sheet rock and flooring, affected electrical, and required complete re-painting of the rooms. All this had to be completed before school started right after Labor Day.

Fortunately, three key GABC volunteers stepped in immediately. Susan Welsh, a member of the GABC Advisory Board with extensive knowledge of the insurance industry, expertly handled the insurance claim negotiations. Mike Hyrb professionally coordinated the contractors for all phases of the renovation. Ann Street, Chair of the House and Grounds committee, oversaw the budget and communicated with all the parties.

Ann supervises routine maintenance at the house and is always looking for volunteers to step in when, for example, an alarm is going off for no reason, to do touch-up painting, and to wait for repair people to come and keep all the machines running.

As with every “family,” the GABC family home needs constant loving care. ▼



VOLUNTEER TODAY!

**Do you enjoy planting flowers?
Have a steady hand for touch-up painting?
Can you spare a couple of hours
to wait for the repair person to arrive?**

The Guilford ABC House would love to have you as a volunteer to help maintain our lovely house on Church Street – home for our six scholars and the Resident Director. Contact us at: www.guilfordabc.org/volunteer.

It's a Celebration!



The girls celebrated Irene’s birthday recently, along with her host dad and host sister Abby. (Host Mom and sister Izzy had colds and couldn’t join.) Right, back row: Andrea, Kyra, Tamojah, front row: Irene, Jasmine, Abby & Jazzy. Left, Irene and her host sister Abby.

College Matters Volunteers Prepare GABC Scholars for College Choice

How does a teenager get prepared for and make the best choice of college to attend? As many parents discover, it's a fraught process. The best college "fit" involves deep consideration of the academic, social, and financial aspects and how they match with the individual student.

"Each student is different," confirm Marcy Beatty and Sarah Rickelman, educational consultants with College Matters, a firm that counsels the Guilford ABC students as well as students nationally and internationally for initial and advanced college degrees. The firm supports the college search of the two rising seniors with GABC each year.

The company volunteers its educational consultants Marcy and Sarah who spend many hours of individual time with each young woman, discovering "likes, wants, and dreams." Each of the Guilford ABC students embarks on a journey of self-reflection, identifying their preferred learning style, strengths, current weaknesses, and "social comfort zone."

Marcy and Sarah recently won an excellence award from the Independent Educational Consultants Association (ICEA) and donated the \$1,000.00 prize to Guilford ABC.

College Matters was founded in 2003 by Elisabeth Morgan who has been additionally honored "for her work with and dedication to the A Better Chance organization."

The team lauds the young GABC women they've worked with. "They are respectful of our time with them, ask thoughtful questions, are very appreciative, and have done so wonderfully!"

Marcy and Sarah also praise the GABC Board, all the volunteers, and the Guilford community.

"Amazing support they give the girls at Guilford ABC! They volunteer with tutoring, give opportunities for travel, and have maintained the quality of the program over time. And we want to give a shout-out to Christine Dokko, Guilford ABC board member, for helping with the essay-writing process, too!"

The College Matters website is www.college-matters.com. ▼



Christine Dokko

Hole in the Wall Welcomes Judi Wallace as a New Manager

Joining a staff of some nine associate managers at the Guilford ABC consignment/thrift shop, Judi Wallace brings "ultimate patience and a very level head," says general manager Patty Sullivan. Judi knows clothes. She has spent 30 plus years designing and creating costumes for theaters around the country, including Goodspeed Opera House and Yale Repertory Theater. She supervised all the costumes for the Guilford High School Theatre Arts spring performance of *Legally Blonde*.

Judi brings deep knowledge of home decorative items as she also has a sewing/creative business where she creates quilts, t-shirts, and custom pillows. Judi has been working with the shop's consignment items. Patty related that Judi's laugh and smiles make her "an absolute delight to be around."

Judi was the Pilgrim Fellowship Director at the First Congregational Church in Guilford for many years. Guilford ABC co-president Laura Berkowitz Gilbert, mother of boys in the program, said, "She was amazing and all the teens loved her." ▼



Judi Wallace



SAVE THE DATE!

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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.

Consignments and Donations to Hole in the Wall Support Guilford ABC Education

Tired of that beautiful quilt? Ready to move on from that leather jacket? Downsizing and want to find a home for that exquisite vase?

The perfect place to unload it is Hole in the Wall, the thrift and consignment retail shop just off the Guilford Green where shoppers find special treasures for home and body. There are two ways to utilize this decades-old popular shop:

CONSIGN. You can realize some money by offering quality clothing at the right season for sale. Summer consignment begins May 1st. Make an appointment to show your items by calling the store at (203)453-2088. At this time, only summer wear is accepted for consignment, in lighter fabrics and colors, explains Patty Sullivan, head manager of the store. (All the appointments for spring consignment have been filled.)

DONATE. Get that warm feeling inside when you give to a wonderful cause that is the Guilford ABC program. Hole in the Wall accepts donations year-round of clothing, jewelry, and housewares that are in near new condition and clean, "something that anyone would be happy to pluck off

the shelves to have a 'new to them' item in superior condition for a great value," says Patty.

IMPORTANT: do not leave donations outside at the doors. Drop them off **inside** during business hours, seven days a week. Unfortunately, some donations have been left outside after hours and have been ruined by bad weather. So, bring in your treasures Monday-Friday from 10 a.m. to 4

