



GABC Celebrates Graduating Seniors Kyra & Tamojah



Kyra & Tamojah

Cheers and tears from scholars, parents, and volunteers punctuated Guilford ABC's Year-End Celebration at the Guilford Community Center in May. Kyra Amani who has chosen the University of Massachusetts at Lowell expressed her gratitude with flowing tears of joy.

"The academics at Guilford High School reached my highest interests. I loved the opportunities in sports, participating in musicals, the opportunity to meet new people." She acknowledged the financial support of GABC that gave her these experiences.

"We are so grateful to have each other," Kyra said, acknowledging her fellow scholars. "These girls are so caring and funny." She made a special tribute to Resident Director Lynn Prendergast, saying "She's a second mother to us" and thanked her host family and "my mom who is always supportive."

Kyra will major in chemistry with a minor in race and ethnic studies. Her mother, Leah Kariuki, said "I'm so proud of her achievements. I've seen her growth in the program; her leadership skills improved because she became more disciplined in time management. She shows respect for others' opinions."

Kyra received the Connecticut Association of Boards of Education (CABED) Student Leadership Award. The award honors students who demonstrate leadership and make meaningful contributions to their schools and communities. A Guilford Board of Education announcement reported that Kyra served for three years as a student representative to the Guilford BOE. She also founded and led a community-based BIPOC affinity group and was the lead organizer of the annual Multicultural Festival for two years.



GHS Principal Julia Chaffe presents the CABEE award to Kyra

Guilford High School Principal and GABC Board Member Julia Chaffe saluted the celebration. "Every year this is my favorite experience. GABC is woven into the fabric of our school, and it's okay to cry," she said, acknowledging Kyra's loving tribute to her high school experience.

"Tamojah is a quiet leader who takes everything in with her reserved way. Her contributions have been incredibly rewarding. Both Tamojah and Kyra have learned when to reach out, when to ask for help. Asking for help is what we adults don't model well," she added, as she gave gifts that signified "my affection for you!"

Tamojah's parents Karen Reid and Everold Tomlinson noticed "how mature and responsible she's become. She's like a mother to the other girls. When she started the GABC program, she was very shy and reserved, but now she meets and talks to others. The International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP) courses pushed her academically. She was always a smart girl, and we are thankful to the ABC program for giving her so many more academic experiences."

Tamojah later described her class trip to Sicily, Italy, during the spring semester. She attended Italian language classes there four hours a day, expanding her studies at GHS. "The

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The Power of Community

FROM PRESIDENT EILEEN LIMONCELLI

Three years have passed since I became involved with A Better Chance (ABC), and I continue to be inspired by the dedicated individuals who work tirelessly to ensure the success of Guilford ABC (GABC). As a board member, I quickly learned that the program's strength extends far beyond the Board and Advisory Board. Behind every scholar is a remarkable network of support that makes the program possible.



The six scholars who reside in the GABC house are guided by a resident director who oversees their daily lives. They are supported by volunteers, staff members, and a program director who help ensure that both the house and the program run smoothly. Each scholar also benefits from the guidance of a host family, an academic advisor, and a student life advisor. Another essential part of the GABC community is the dedicated team that operates the Hole in the Wall thrift store, whose efforts provide significant funding for the program. In addition, Guilford High School, the Guilford community, and our many financial and in-kind donors play a critical role in sustaining the program. Together, this extraordinary team has helped GABC thrive in Guilford for more than 50 years.

As a student life advisor to one of the freshmen who is now a senior, I have had the privilege of getting to know my advisee and many of the other scholars on a personal level. I have shared activities with them, met their friends, and watched them participate in extracurricular programs. It has been both an honor and a joy to witness their growth—not only academically, but socially and personally as well.

Over time, I have developed a deep appreciation for these young women. Each year, new students arrive at the GABC house, leaving behind their families, friends, and familiar surroundings to pursue new opportunities. Their willingness to embrace a new community and place their trust in the ABC Program is inspiring. Watching them grow into confident, accomplished young adults has reinforced my belief in the transformative impact of this program.

When I first joined Guilford ABC, I knew I was becoming part of a worthwhile cause and a community of volunteers united by a common purpose: "to lessen the educational divide, one scholar at a time, and prepare these scholars for a lifetime of achievement." However, it was not until recently, while listening to one of our graduating seniors and a 2018 GABC alumna speak at the 2026 Year-End Celebration, that I fully appreciated the profound impact of this mission.

Their words conveyed heartfelt gratitude for the opportunities the program had provided and highlighted the life-changing influence of the many people who support it. The speeches moved the audience deeply, touching the hearts of family members, volunteers, staff, and donors alike. More importantly, they reminded all of us why our involvement matters and why continued support is so essential to the future success of these scholars.

I am proud to be part of the GABC community and grateful for the opportunity to contribute to its mission. As I continue my role as a Student Life Advisor and begin my new responsibilities as GABC President, I look forward to helping ensure that future generations of scholars have the same opportunities to learn, grow, and succeed. ▼

Rising Juniors and Seniors Report Fun Year in Guilford

I had the most fun sophomore year spending time with the girls here at the GABC house. Our personalities work well together – we’ve bonded!” says Lakeesha with a big smile. She’ll be a junior at Guilford High School in the fall of 2026 and reflected on her first year with GABC.

“My first year I was just getting integrated into the community and I’m comfortable now. My host family has been taking me places, and I feel more confident in myself and my abilities. I have a feeling about what’s right for me, making my own decisions.” She is spending the summer at a forensics course at the University of New Haven, learning about criminal psychology; and camping at the Ron Burton Training Village in Massachusetts.

Irene confirmed she had a fun junior year as well. “I tried new things and put myself out there – trying difficult classes, such as International Baccalaureate (I.B.), and I was very happy with my choices, even though the coursework was challenging.” This summer she’s studying in Rome on a month-long Italian language and culture course with C.I.E.E. Irene is interested in a career in nursing. She recalled seeing nurses when she went for checkups as a child and their work inspired her.

Katie will be a junior in fall 2026. She loved “hanging out with the girls and visiting with kids from other ABC



GABC Scholars enjoy the end-of-year celebration: Kyra, Jazzy, Lakeesha, Katie, Irene & Tamojah.

houses at a party. I also love going to Jacobs Beach and playing volleyball.” This summer she’s traveling back to Ecuador to visit family there for two weeks. “They live in a small town in the mountains.” Then she travels to Spain for a month to study language and culture also with C.I.E.E.

“Jazzy” (Jazhira), a rising senior, exclaimed: “The prom was the best fun!” She is also studying forensics at the University of New Haven this summer.

“I’m learning about fingerprints, detective work, and evidence such as hair and teeth.” She’s looking forward to college visits in the fall.

Chatting at the Year-End Celebration, her parents Steve Douglas and Twinetta McCollough expressed their delight in their daughter.

“We’re so proud of Jazzy. Now we have conversations with her – it’s mind-blowing! She was quiet as a freshman. She’s very responsible, more involved in activities such as theater and sports.” ▼

GABC CELEBRATES GRADUATING SENIORS KYRA & TAMOJAH, CONTINUED

classes were taught in Italian, and we learned how to respond to a situation, read, and do homework all in Italian” during the 10-day trip. Tamojah will attend the University of Vermont in Burlington as a psychology major. She looks forward to “helping people all my life.”

GABC 2018 alumna, Jada Allison, a Wellesley graduate, described the values of the GABC experience: “You learn how to adapt, be flexible, to observe. It’s a deeply powerful

experience. I was very shy and quiet when I came to the high school, but ABC allowed me to blossom.” Her advice to the girls: “Despite moments of doubt, you kept showing up, built trust, courage, strength. Some obstacles are meant to be seen through – so stay the course,” she advised.

Judy Wright, past president and now GABC Program Coordinator, announced that Kyra and Tamojah would each receive an annual financial award for their four years of college

from the Guilford ABC College Education Fund managed by the Guilford Foundation. Thus far, nine GABC students have been supported by the Fund while maintaining a “B” average.

Nancy Patton, outgoing president, thanked outgoing board members Kristina Powell and Mary Cosgrove, both Student Life Advisors to our graduating seniors. ▼

Celebrating the end of the year!

GHS Musical: "All Shook Up"



Kyra



Irene



Kyra



Backstage with Irene, Jazzy (Costume Crew), and Irene

Multicultural Festival



Katie



Senior Prom

Kyra, Jazzy

Graduation 2026

LEFT
Alums Kilee, Jasmine,
Janelle, and Andrea
celebrate with current
and graduating scholars.
Pictured: Janelle, Lakeesha,
Katie (front), Kilee, Jazzy,
Irene, Jasmine, Andrea
(middle), Tamojah, RD
Lynn, Kyra (back)



RIGHT
Tamojah & Kyra



Year-End Celebration



Jazzy and Irene



GABC supporters Jean Marie and Colin Cooper with Tamojah



Jada Allison, GABC alum 2018



Mary Cosgrove, GABC Board Member



Jada Allison, GABC alum 2018, and Kyra



Aliyah Hunter, weekend coverage, and Melonie Swan, GABC Board Member



Lynn Prendergast, Resident Director, and Taylor Trombetta, Cook



Judy Wright, GABC Program Coordinator



Julia Chaffe, GHS Principal /GABC Board Member, and outgoing president Nancy Patton



Kyra with her mom Leah Kariuki and siblings Zayaire & Nala



Andrea LeCoq, Katie Cooney, Aremni Grajales, GABC Volunteer Sondra Baseggio, Patty Sullivan, Judi Wallace, Harriet Cianci. All (besides Sondra) are employees at Hole in the Wall



Ann-Marie Cornwall-Garden

Deland, Florida

Graduation Year: 2006

It really seems like yesterday that I was doing chores, packing my lunch, and writing papers at the dining table during study hours from 6-9. 20 years have gone by so fast. I graduated from Quinnipiac University in 2010. I went into college confidently knowing that I had the Guilford A Better Chance experience under my belt. There were hard academic semesters, there were tears, there were disagreements with housemates, but most of all there was exponential emotional and spiritual growth.

My faith in God and the sisterhood bonds created in those four years in Guilford has continued to blossom. I am still very close to some of my sisters Sophinna Singh (Oginni) and Katery Fernandez. No matter how busy our lives are with our families, we still make time to check in because we are family as well.

I have a beautiful five-year-old daughter, Aubrey, and loving husband, Jermaine. We are truly enjoying our Florida living and still making time for mentoring when we can. My passion is still helping the youth because I realize how much of an impact having support, and exposure to new experiences has impacted my life. In 2018 I self-published a book "Make Way for Rene" that helps kids in middle school to love themselves despite being bullied. In a way, it is an ode to the younger me as a reminder that I am beautifully and wonderfully made by God to live a full abundant life through love, grace and service.

Thank you Guilford A Better Chance for being a part of my story!

Above, Cornwall-Garden (center) with daughter Aubrey and husband Jermaine

Seeking Host Families for New Scholars

Want to make a lasting difference in a young person's life? Join the Guilford ABC support team by becoming a host family for an incoming Guilford ABC scholar. Host families welcome a scholar into their home for seven visits during the school year, from Friday at 5:00 p.m. to Saturday at 5:00 p.m.

For more than 50 years, Guilford families have helped make our scholars feel welcomed, supported, and connected to the community. Host weekends provide an opportunity to share family meals, local activities, traditions, and everyday moments that help scholars build meaningful connections beyond the classroom.

Many Guilford ABC alumnae look back on these weekends as some of their fondest memories, recalling the warmth, fun, and encouragement they received from their host families. Host families often tell us that the experience is equally rewarding, creating meaningful connections and lasting friendships that enrich the lives of everyone involved.

For many scholars, coming to Guilford is a big step. They leave their families and communities to pursue an exceptional educational opportunity that will help shape their futures. As a host family, you can play an important role in that journey.

To learn more or speak with current host families, please contact Janet Cronin-Rumanoff at rumanoff@sbcglobal.net or 203.687.5271. ▼



The DePetrus Family (Kyra's host family), Leah Kariuki (Kyra's mother), and Kyra's cousin Furaha at the GABC Year-End Celebration.



Tamojah, her parents, and host mother and Board Member Elisa Milano.

IN MEMORIAM

Gretchen Milem MacKenzie

The Guilford ABC community was saddened to learn of the passing of Gretchen Milem MacKenzie on March 31, 2026. She was one of the founders of Guilford ABC and Hole in the Wall Consignment and Thrift Shop.

Gretchen was also the beloved host mother of Valerie Price Cornelious (GHS 1978), one of the first GABC scholars to come to Guilford in 1974. Valerie and several other alumnae remained close to Gretchen throughout the decades.

Valerie had said of Gretchen shortly before learning of her passing: "It's been over 50 years since I came to the program and met Gretchen. We've stayed in contact all this time. She's been a stalwart in the program and a wonderful host parent to me and to other scholars over the years." ▼



GABC alumni Cheryl Harvey McPherson (left) and Valerie Price Cornelious (right) with Gretchen Milem MacKenzie.

Georgia Cosgrove

Hands Development Baton to Jennifer Barth

After many years as Development Committee Chair, Georgia Cosgrove is handing over the many fundraising responsibilities to another Board Member, Jennifer Barth.



Georgia has been invaluable to Guilford ABC having served many roles besides Development Chair including: Marketing Chair, Vice President, and Co-President all while consistently volunteering at Hole in the Wall.

GABC was the fortunate recipient of her professional expertise as she transformed our donor database, wrote and secured many grants, maintained the extensive mailing list for the newsletter, and initiated many marketing and development efforts. She'll remain on the GABC Board to continue her work as Liaison to Hole in the Wall and as an Investment Committee member.

THANK YOU, GEORGIA! ▼

*Your donations support Guilford
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*Thank
you*



Jazzy, Lakeesha, Irene, Katie (back), Kyra and Tamojah (front)



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Hole in the Wall has a lot of love to give!

Patty Sullivan, manager of the GABC consignment and thrift store, feels an outpouring of love from customers and staff. "We often hear people saying, 'I love this place' or 'This is my happy place!' from frequent and even new customers. Hole in the Wall is a welcoming and positive thrift shop that is truly filled with love."

She loves to list all that Hole in the Wall gives: "Love of treasures, love of new-to-you items, love of bargains, love to our customers, love of our co-workers, love of the bonds formed between volunteers, love to our many consignors, love of our new summer hires that are young and vibrant, love of the family we have created here, love of having some fun at work and listening to good music, love to all our generous donors of clothing, housewares, jewelry and so much more! And especially love of the students that we support."

Patty related "extra-curricular" fun, too: "We love having fun outside of work too. Here we are supporting Guilford ABC and other charities playing in the M.J. Petretto golf tournament. We have had the same golf foursome for many years and we often say, 'It's one of the best days of the year!' We support charities and have so many laughs during the day. This year we had the honor of winning the Ladies Low Net event!" Congratulations to Peggy, Amy, Patty and Judi.

And here's a special message from Patty: Step into Hole in the Wall for summer bargains and good music! We will take requests! Summer and fall appointments are currently full. Call the shop to make a winter consignment appointment. Donations are accepted daily during business hours. We love that we are busy and thriving the way we are. Stop by the shop to get a little love yourself! ▼



Peggy Keck, Amy Mickelson, Judi Wallace, and Patty Sullivan win Ladies Low Net at the 2026 M.J. Petretto Foundation Golf Tournament which benefits Guilford A Better Chance among many additional charities.