Our new Resident Directors, Ronda and Evan Zelezny-Green

~ A Word From the President, Jennifer Regentz ~

How does nature know when to turn everything to “Fall”? It seems that as a new school year begins, mornings become brisk and afternoons have that golden autumn glow that causes one to look automatically to the beautiful maples that have just a tinge of red on them. We are a bit sad that summer has ended so abruptly but excited about the changes to come. And we are excited about so many new things at the ABC House!

First, we have new Resident Directors! They are Ronda and Evan Zelezny-Green who hail from North Carolina by way of Madagascar! Both teachers of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL), Ronda and Evan have visited over twenty-five countries, worked and lived in six countries and become familiar with the culture and learning styles of European, American, Asian, Latin, and African students. Their rich experiences working with youth and adults around the world have already proven to be an invaluable asset to the ABC program.

Brandon, Josh and Greg are returning juniors. Cameron, Ahmad and Tristan are returning sophomores. All will be mentored by Kemdy Lawson, our resident tutor who led them to scholastic excellence last year. We have one new freshman, Rayvoughn Millings, who is joining our returning group of three sophomores and three juniors. Rayvoughn is smart and engaging. He has already assimilated himself into the group of scholars and has proven himself worthy of the challenge. He and Brandon accepted the shipment of four new computers and within one hour, had them in working order!

(Continued on back)
Welcome Rayvoughn! (Class of 2013)
By Evan Zelezny-Green

It is my pleasure to introduce to the Winchester Community the newest addition to the ABC House. The only freshman this year, Rayvoughn Millings hails from New York City and is an alumnus of the KIPP (Knowledge is Power Program) middle school program, as are two of the other scholars. His host parents are Bill Davis and Darlene Heikkinen. We are delighted to have Rayvoughn join our community, as he brings a refreshing burst of energy along with him. A naturally outgoing person, Rayvoughn is capable of starting a conversation with anyone and has already made a number of acquaintances at the high school. He always has a pithy comment to contribute to our dinner conversations at the house. I sat down with Rayvoughn to ask him to describe himself to the readers of our newsletter.

E: Rayvoughn, why did you choose to come join us at Winchester ABC?
R: I came for different opportunities that I might not have had elsewhere; in particular, new connections. It goes back to one of my deepest beliefs: in this world, it's as much who you know as what you know.
E: I couldn't agree with you more! Have you found that you have already begun to make connections?
R: Absolutely, it began the moment I stepped off of Amtrak!
E: Well, I can definitely say that I aspire to be great in any career I choose. At the moment I am considering entering the field of computer science and/or graphic design.
E: So far, what has been the greatest challenge for you here in Winchester?
R: Without a doubt, it has been keeping up with the schoolwork. Entering any high school is a change of pace for a middle school student, but especially so in a new town where the teachers may have a different style of teaching.
E: That's true. Now, for some fun questions...what is your favorite film?
R: My favorite movie is 'Rent'. It portrays the common struggles of people who live in NYC. I especially like the use of music to present messages.
E: What do you do in your spare time?
R: Well I make a distinction between hobbies and pastimes. A hobby is what you are good at and you try to develop your skills, and I would say that my hobby is tweaking with computers. A pastime doesn't require talent; my pastime is playing games on the Xbox.
E: One final question. If you could be any animal, which would you choose?
R: A liger. It's a cross between a lion and a tiger. For me, it represents the quality of being true to yourself, not letting your environment shape you too much.
E: Well, thanks for letting us get to know a bit more about you, Rayvoughn!
R: My pleasure Evan!

From left to right: Evan Zelezny-Green, Tristan Hardy, Joshua Rodriguez, Rayvoughn Millings, Brandon Farquharson, Ahmad Greene-Hayes, Cameron Horsey, and Ronda Zelezny-Green. (Absentees: Kemdy Lawson and Greg Thompson)
Winchester ABC Scholars

Juniors

“I am looking forward to this upcoming year. My last two years here in Winchester have been nothing less than great, but I expect even more this year. It will be more challenging of course, but I have high hopes.”
Brandon Farquharson, 
Class of 2011
Host Family: The Simpsons

“I am enjoying my junior year. I started this year playing football for the high school and I am planning on playing basketball. I feel optimistic and I am looking forward to achieving academic success.”
Joshua Rodriguez
Class of 2011
Host family: The Hales

Sophomores

“I’m excited for all the things that junior year has to offer. I know it will be a challenging year but I am ready for anything and up to the challenge.”
Greg Thompson,
Class of 2011
Host Family: The Clearys

“A new year, a fresh start, new goals, new successes. This year I have a lot of ideas in mind, a lot of goals I want to achieve, and a lot of adventures I’m ready to explore. I expect new challenges but I am ready for every challenge that may come my way.”
Ahmad Greene-Hayes, 
Class of 2012
Host Family: The Sprys

“I’m enjoying my sophomore year at Winchester high. I’m having a lot of fun, and it feels like freshman year again. I’m looking forward to the rest of this year. I have high hopes, and big goals.”
Cameron Horsey,
Class of 2012
Host Family: The McGeown-Conrans

“I have high hopes for this year. I want to succeed in and out of school. I know that won’t come easy, but I am willing and ready to work hard for the success I would like to achieve.”
Tristan Hardy,
Class of 2012
Host Family: The Hollands

Learn about Rayvoughn on page 2
The night before African-American historian John Hope Franklin received the Medal of Freedom from President Clinton for a lifetime of brilliant achievements, a woman at a Washington, D.C., club asked him to fetch her coat, assuming he was an attendant. It was 1995. I heard this story after Prof. Franklin died last spring. He lived through almost a century of change, from the earth-scorching race riot in Tulsa in 1921, when he was six years old, to Obama’s election in 2008. And while he witnessed hard-won progress toward equality and civil rights, noting that “All of us should reflect on the role African Americans have played in compelling this country to live up to its professed ideals...forcing Americans to envision a world beyond race,” he held no illusions about achieving a color-blind world. So when President Obama spoke to the nation’s students this September, I wondered how the seven students in the ABC house felt about the President, how the country has or has not changed for the better, and their own challenges in school. Here are some excerpts from our conversation, which included new resident directors Evan and Ronda Zelezny-Green [my questions in italics].

Is Obama, and what he said to school students a very big deal?
Greg: The message means more coming from a respected figure like Obama.
Rayvoughn: No. He made history. Great. But it doesn’t affect me. If you want to do something you will do it, regardless – not just because he said it. Cliché stuff, you hear it all your life. It’s true. But his saying it doesn’t make it special.
Ahmad: Obama is confirmation of what’s been said before. He didn’t always have everything together, but to be the best he got there through hard work. The standards for him are higher.
Cameron: Race may not be as much of a problem as before, but it’s still an issue. There’s always some question about why an African American is doing well. Obama has to work ten times harder to be remembered as a standard figure. He’s in the spotlight.

Like you guys?
Rayvoughn: But why bring up the past about our struggles? The struggles have totally changed. Jesse [Jackson] tried. Shirley Chisholm tried. But Barack Obama succeeded. The country has become more unified.
Ahmad: It’s important to learn from other people’s struggles. African Americans in the past persevered. You can use the lesson of perseverance. It’s important to learn the effect of what they did.
Ronda: I do think it’s significant that Obama is bi-racial and has achieved the highest position in the world. You [scholars] are not far off from Obama. Obama’s message is that it’s OK to fail, but that you also have to do better.
Rayvoughn: He’s a superhero, a savior, just because he’s black, well, fifty percent black. This makes no sense. It took us twelve years to get out of the last depression. He’s supposed to get us out of this one in four? There’s way too much faith in him.
Ahmad: If he does something unacceptable for the people he’s representing, he will be judged. African Americans are looking to him. But in politics, race doesn’t matter as much as it used to -- as much as party, or pulling enough independent votes. (I’m an independent.) But Obama is still an eye-opener. For the closed-minded, who have been in their box for so long, things have changed, and it’s
time for them to come out of their box. I was shocked when I read that some people wouldn’t let their kids listen to his speech, acting like Hitler was going to talk to us.

**Cameron:** The race issue is still there. Growing up in the South is a lot different from here. If I were growing up in the North I’d be a lot different…

*Well, you are growing up in the North. Is the North making you different?*

**Cameron:** I can’t say now, if it is. It’s a good experience. Get back to me on that.

**Ahmad:** Even here versus New Jersey, it’s a lot different. The farther away you are the more different it is. One reason Obama is in office is because he can relate to different kinds of people. At ABC, being in a big house with a lot of people has advantages. You may not want to bring up everything with everyone, but there is always someone you can relate to.

*Obama quoted Michael Jordan: “I have failed over and over….and that’s why I succeed.” Have you experienced that?*

**Tristan:** When you try to invent something you learn from it, make adjustments. In Mr. Petty’s engineering class we built a Rube Goldberg machine. It didn’t turn out too well. It failed. We didn’t give up. But we ran out of time before we could make it work.

*Isn’t that the definition of school – that you run out of time before it works?* [laughter]

**Greg:** I’ve experienced it in sports. I’ve always been able to throw. But now to improve I’ve tried to break down my old habits. It’s hard. The same with school. I was always good at writing, didn’t have to check my work, but coming here, there are tougher graders, and I have to look over my work.

**Josh:** I’ve had that in math. I’ve always been good in math. It comes naturally. But as I’ve progressed in advanced classes, I’ve had to study more.

**Brandon:** It happened to me last year. I got my first “C.” I was mad. It made me want to be better. I had to speak to my teacher more and study harder. The final quarter I made straight As.

**Evan:** Part of learning is becoming aware. Does the school recognize that you need to risk failure in order to become aware? To succeed and learn?

**Ahmad:** Some teachers do, some don’t. You can’t generalize.

**Greg:** I get my motivation from watching successful people. Everybody has an idea of where they want to be when they’re older. Obama’s story can motivate you. I take external sources and try to internalize them.

*Like who?*

**Greg:** Well, like Donovan McNabb [QB for the Philadelphia Eagles]. I watch him on the field. He has good leadership, so I’ve been trying to become a leader on the [WHS football] team. I speak up more. You don’t want come across like it’s just for show. But sometimes you can’t think about that. You just have to do your job.

[We ended our conversation when the guys had to get ready for a trip into Boston on the train.]

“It starts with the premise that talent resides in every American community—and then puts that talent in the way of opportunity. It’s as simple and powerful as that.”

Deval L. Patrick

Governor, Commonwealth of Massachusetts
A Better Chance Alumnus
Milton Academy class of ’74
“A Look into the lives of Ronda & Evan…”
By Terry Marotta (Vice President of Winchester ABC)

This year we decided to fold the traditional Outdoor Adventure Day into a kind of Back to School Retreat, held Labor Day weekend on a corner of Lake Winnipesaukee where both the Regentz and Marotta families have summer places. As we awaited the arrival of the Dix Street crowd we knew we’d be busy, what with the preparation of meals and snacks, the supervision of waterfront fun and the planning of the more formal ‘sessions’ during which we would all get the chance to look inward a little.

We were right there! In 36 hours’ time we wrote and drew and swam and kayaked - and some even got to take the wheel of the Regentz family power boat. We all knew things would get busier still with classes about to start in earnest but if your President and Vice President realized then just HOW busy our two Resident Directors would soon be we might have suggested they just sleep all weekend to rest up.

Herewith a typical Day in the Life as described in a recent email from Ronda:

“At 9am Evan heads off to work at Centro Latino in Chelsea where he teaches a pre-GED class (He also teaches at the Mother Caroline Academy and Adult Education Center in Dorchester.) An hour and a half before that I have begun my own 40-minute commute to my ‘other’ job as Coordinator of Multicultural Services and Youth Leadership Programs. Then, with Evan’s classes done around noon, he heads home to catch a small break before - SCHOOL’S OUT! - things immediately ramp up. There are doctor’s appointments, visits to Winchester High, rides for the boys who need haircuts, shopping trips to BJ’s… Basically, Evan becomes Superman at 2:15pm. I then finish work at 5pm and make a mad dash from Chestnut Hill back to Winchester to join everyone for dinner. Dinner doesn’t usually begin until 6:30pm due to the delayed arrival of the scholars who are participating in football, basketball, and all the other myriad extracurricular activities they’re involved in. Then we sit down with the Scholars as necessary to figure out house needs, concerns, and to identify ways to make it all work smoothly. Finally, sometime around 11pm, we head upstairs to our apartment to rest up for another day in the delightful grey house at Number 2 Dix Street. It’s enough to make your head spin!”

You might think a couple would find this pace unsustainable (Did I mention that Ronda is also doing graduate work at UMass Boston?) Ah but if you got to talk to them every day as we do – and especially if you’d been in New Hampshire with us - you would know otherwise.

On this retreat weekend we looked ahead and we looked back too; shared hopes for our future and fresh insights about our past. When, in the course of all this sharing Evan revealed that he spoke English AND French AND German AND Spanish we were stunned. I was anyway.

“Say something to us in German “ I said, and he did. “Now say something in French.”

Modesty brought the color to his cheeks. “Well, I mean… what would you want me to say?”

“Tell us how you feel about us,” I blurted.

“Tell us that you love us” is what I almost said and it was as if he could read my mind: Setting reticence aside, he opened his mouth and without pause or hesitation uttered sentence after sentence. With our ancient high school French we old folks could actually (sort of) tell what he said but I believe the boys could too, even those who didn’t know a single word of that beautiful language.

He looked from one to the other of us and said that he was happy to be with us. That he found us to be exceedingly congenial and interesting people. That he looked forward to knowing us better as the year went on.

And when he got done there opened the sort of pool of pleased and reverent silence that you sense after prayer.

Then Ronda leaped up. “Who’s for some Texas Hold ‘em down in the basement?”

I had to jump up myself then and go find my hanky. High energy, great kindness AND a stellar sense of timing: It’s enough to make your head spin for sure.
The annual Winchester ABC Fall Fundraiser took place on Saturday, October 24. The event was a huge success. More than 250 people attended the tailgate-themed party held at the Sons of Italy Hall on Swanton Street in Winchester. The event featured a performance by the Arlington High cheerleaders, delicious food from Blue Ribbon Bar-B-Q of Arlington, a DJ, dancing and live and silent auctions. The ABC scholars were all in attendance to enjoy the evening. Before the auction got underway, Rayvoughn Millings, a current scholar and Winchester High Freshman, and Brian Ovalles, a past ABC Scholar and Duke University graduate, both spoke to the crowd about ABC and how the organization has enriched their lives.

“We were thrilled with the turnout for the event,” said Maria O’Connor, one of the committee chairs. “Not only did the event attract a lot of people, but many of the Winchester residents who came were first-time attendees. This means that we’re spreading awareness for the program and building long-term support for ABC in our community.”

The auction featured many outstanding items donated by Winchester residents. A few of the items included Patriots tickets, tickets to see the Bruins at Fenway Park on New Year’s Day, tennis lessons by some local pros and dinner at LoConte’s restaurant in the North End. The auctioneer for the evening was Brian Milauskas, director of Kidstock. In addition to the live and silent auctions, a speed auction was conducted to help supplement the remaining portion of a current technology bill.

Thanks again to the planning committee for an outstanding evening. The committee chairs were Trintje Gnazzo, Maria O’Connor and Kim Savage.

Excerpt from his speech:
“...If I could summarize ABC in two words they would be: Opportunity and Growth

Opportunity because what opportunities are in life are gifts. A gift is something that you should receive openly so that someday you may learn to give it to someone else. The growth part is less clear. If you sit here and think that I am going to tell you that living in Winchester for four years was EASY, you have another think coming. But that is the beauty in life, most things in life that are worth having, are usually NOT easy...Even when things were tough, ABC was an experience that served as a foundation for my understanding of a higher truth. That although we are different colors and textures, God made us from the same palette”
Letter from the President Jennifer Regentz continued from page 1:

As I have come to know the scholars, I am reminded of an article I recently read entitled “What is Class?”

“Class never runs scared. It is sure-footed and confident in the knowledge that you can meet life head on and handle whatever comes along. Class never makes excuses. It takes its lumps and learns from past mistakes. Class is considerate of others. It knows that ‘good manners’ is nothing more than a series of small sacrifices. Class bespeaks an aristocracy that has nothing to do with ancestors or money. Class never tries to build itself up by tearing others down. Class can ‘walk with kings and keep its virtue and talk with crowds and keep the common touch.’ Everyone is comfortable with the person who has class because he is comfortable with himself.”

If you have class, you don’t need much of anything else. If you don’t have it, no matter what else you have, it doesn’t make much difference.

I am so proud to be a part of this organization that has been in Winchester since 1963 and run on an entirely volunteer basis. These scholars ooze class. This organization exhibits class!

Welcome to another, exciting year in the growth of these young men.

Jennifer Regentz, President

WANT TO KNOW WHAT’S NEW?

COME VISIT THE WEBSITE AT:

www.winchesterabc.org

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

Upcoming Bottle Drives

January 9, 2010
May 8, 2010

Support ABC by bringing your clean and presorted bottles and cans to the Sons of Italy parking lot before the entrance to the Transfer Station. Call Brian Sergenian (721-0242) with any questions.

We appreciate all who support this regular fundraising effort. Your efforts help us raise important funds for ABC.