First, we have to say that everyone was enthusiastic to be back at ABC House, as Gamaral demonstrates so vibrantly. (Top row: Enderson Naar, Tobi Omola, Omar Grant and Ricardo Gayle, Bottom row: Bryson McEachin, Gamaral Sawyer, Machias Turner and LaVon Brathwaite.)

Next, we hope your holidays were happy! It's hard to believe 2014 has flown by so fast. In these pages we will tell you a little about what we've been doing ever since our first day back in town in late August. We spent that morning kayaking with host mom Melanie Carden. Then, while she curled up with a cup of coffee at Roast, she sent us out on what may turn out to be the First Annual ABC Scavenger Hunt. We had to get pictures of: one of us with a Winchester Police Officer; one of us with a town librarian; one of us scooping ice cream in a local ice cream shop; plus, a 20-second video of one of us dancing (“really dancing!”) outside of Bruegger’s Bagel, and a video of one of us holding a Barbie Doll and loudly proclaiming "OH MY GOSH IT'S A BARBIE!! IT’S A BARBIE – SHE’S MY FAVORITE!!" really loudly.

All this we did, and we have the footage to prove it!
In September, three weeks after Machias scooped ice cream for the Scavenger Hunt, our folks came up to attend open house at the high school. They heard from the summer program people about opportunities for us when June comes, hung out with our host families, and ate (and partied!) at the big Fall Family Feast.

We also tutored, both in Boston’s neighborhood of Roxbury, and here in the town of Winchester. We studied, we wrote, we went to practice. We really enjoyed our three-day retreat in New Hampshire where we played games, talked, and slept - and where Enderson led the way through the corn maze. 😊
Sure, you may have seen us around town or read about us in the paper but there’s a lot more to our stories than you might think. For example, did you know...

- That our notable trumpeter Tobi also performs in a band called Sockless Venus and the BDPs, playing tunes from many decades, some of them funk such as those by Rick James and the Gap Band, Outkast and Joe Cocker too (“though he’s not really funk.”)? And that he also takes AP Economics, AP Spanish, and AP Stats, as well as Forensics, Shakespearean and Modern Drama, and Advanced Symphony and Jazz Ensemble? Asked is he ever sleeps he says “Sure, though I do have my all-nighters.”

- That Machias made the cut to compete for Community Rowing in Newton and has been on the River Charles six days a week since late August? And that he expects to be rowing straight through the winter and spring? Did you know that he studies THREE languages right now? Spanish 4, Mandarin 4 and Latin take up a lot of the time he’s not strapped into his seat and pulling those oars!

- That like his two classmates, Machias and Tobi, Enderson has his eye on a liberal arts college. Will he be going to Roger Williams? “I guess I’ll find out in March! Right now I’m focusing on Wrestling.” And also on Advanced Symphony and Jazz. Nine years now he has been playing the sax. “I’m bad!” he says with his signature Endo grin. “Michael Jackson bad!”

As for the juniors, did you know...

- That Gamaral, just elected to the National Honor Society as a Junior has also been involved every year in Student Government and in the social outreach group called Connect and Commit? Now he has taken his interest in Trapeze, conceived at the summer camp he has attended for many years, to the next level. He’s begun lessons at ESH Circus Arts, which calls itself ‘the Boston area's home for high-quality circus instruction and performance.’

- That LaVon has wingspread wider than he is tall? That he trains year-round to better his game in basketball? That, back in Queens, brother Elijah who is 8 writes both fiction and non-fiction and illustrate what he writes? As his Winchester host mom Mel Carden puts it, LaVon is “a rock star in Physics and enjoys (and excels in) his sculpture class.”

- That Bryson’s mom, who lives with him in New York City and has worked in the non-profit world for years, hails from one of America’s smallest civic entities, Virginia’s tiny Goochland County (pop. 861) where one whole side of town is named for part of his family and the other side is named for the other part? Get Bryson talking about his times down there and watch his smile widen. And yes, he wrestles too.
Omar Grant, a self portrait

“I was born on May 17, 2000 in Atlanta, Georgia where I live with my little sister and both my mother and father. I’m a good big brother. My mom’s mom lives with us as well. I also have three dogs and have had five total. One of them (King) is 13 years old which is 91 in dog years so he might be on his "last legs". I have many favorite things. My favorite food, subject, color, and shoes are tacos, Science, blue, and Adidas. My favorite animal and video game series are the Peregrine Falcon and Pokémon. I have done a martial art called Tang Soo Do for some years now and just started wrestling this year. I also like to rap as well as dance. I listen to a lot of Eminem, Fort Minor, B.o.B, and other artists similar to them.

At Winchester High I plan to do Wrestling and possibly Ultimate Frisbee. If possible, I want to continue Tang Soo Do. I am a straight-A student and I plan to keep it that way. I also want to be a paleontologist and/or an architect when I grow up. Someday I want to travel to Japan just to see what it’s like and experience the culture.”

Ricardo Gayle, a self portrait

“My favorite subjects are math, science, and sometimes social studies. Outside of school, I enjoy playing video games, researching historical questions, hanging out with friends, and keeping up-to-date with technology. In my free time, I enjoy writing songs and singing. What I would really like to do is learn to play piano, guitar, and drums as well.

In June of last year I was very busy preparing for finals and dealing with senior responsibilities at school, including making speeches and representing my school at various functions since I was the President of my school chapter of the National Junior Honor Society. Last summer, I was in a pre-law club where two of my friends and I read and researched about events that have to do with the judicial branch and talked about how we felt about each case.

Although I was born in New Jersey, my family is from Jamaica so that is where my roots are. At home, I play with my little sister who is four, though I need to buckle down with her on academics more. And that concludes a short biography of me.”

These two now wrestle (Omar), do Indoor track (Ricardo), and are grateful to be taking lessons in drum and piano at the Winchester Community Music School.
"Education. Scholarship. Striving for excellence." A quote from Jamoul Celey, these are the first goals that he and his wife, Alisa Celey, have set for each and every scholar that lives in the ABC house where they have been serving as Resident Directors (RD) since 2010. Finding out about the program from Jamoul's co-worker at Inroads, also the previous RD, Jamoul and Alisa were both excited to become the RDs here.

Jamoul's job includes him helping college students to get internships with major corporations and essentially help them to receive experience in the work field before finishing school. Alisa is a kindergarten teacher at a school in Boston. Obviously, helping young people is a passion for these two and after hearing that there was an open spot at the house, they were ready for the job. Although living here with eight other males could not be considered a job but rather would have to become a part of their life, they were still ready, and surprisingly they have described their overall experience as "fun, enjoyable, fulfilling, and very...enlightening."

When they started, they had Jaali, who was one. Zara came their second year in the house; "It's been an interesting journey raising our family within this household and spending time with the scholars," says Alisa. Jamoul says he loves is watching scholars "come in as freshman and see them go through all their changes."

When asked what impact Jamoul had on the alumni from 2011 and onward, Alisa stepped in stating that "the alumni seem to appreciate Jamoul's effort and [...] approach in hindsight [...] Their relationship with him as grown" especially from each of their senior years. Jamoul, on the other hand, thought more specifically and began to discuss taking the scholars to a Trayvon Martin protest. Comparing the Trayvon Martin case as this generation's Emmett Till, Jamoul says it gave the scholars a glimpse of being "socially conscious" and may have been their "first introduction as to what it meant to be a young male of color."

After realizing how strongly Jamoul felt about what being a male of color meant, I asked him where that strength came from and his answer was his late father. At a young age he read a quote from his father in a newspaper which Jamoul describes as being his "first introduction to activism." From his father, Jamoul has learned that as a black male he has a responsibility to support the culture and that is part of the reason "[he] does what [he does] now."

They are the reason that a family-type feeling is present at the house, especially during these teenage years. Alisa says believes their presence here is important because we are "learning who [we] are [...] developing [...] in a place [we] can't relate" and I can honestly say that this is true. Not only do they love the house, but also the community. I look forward to my four years here with them helping to guide me.
Chandra, our Chef

By Ricardo Gayle, class of 2018

While there are many people in the ABC family, one person that the house could not function without is Chandra Davis.

Chandra was born right here in Massachusetts as a “spring baby,” in May. After graduating from Tuskegee University with a Bachelor’s degree in Biology, she joined the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Incorporated. Finally, Chandra went to culinary school close by in Boston at Le Cordon Bleu.

Truly a “master chef,” as LaVon described her, Chandra hates to be called a “cook” and compares the term to “nails on a chalkboard” because she is obviously more than any ordinary cook. She says, “I don’t have a favorite meal to prepare, but I like challenges. I’ll try to prepare any and everything at least once.” Of course, such a strong motivation and passion started from her childhood; both of her grandmothers and her mom always cooked everything from scratch. Also, they were not reticent about answering Chandra’s many questions about what happened in the kitchen. As a matter of fact, she says the part of her childhood that sticks out the most is that instead of watching the “seasonal holiday shows, (she) would be in the kitchen bugging (her) mother about why she used certain seasonings.” Obviously, this curiosity lead to her passion which led to her being the great chef she is today. When describing how she cooks, she says that she likes to put her “stamp on things” because when she cooks, she cooks with “passion”, and being as talented and experienced as she is, she can “feel” what ingredients go together.

To be honest, I have only been here for three months and I can already see that Chandra is comfortable and is a huge part of this family. Describing the ABC scholars as her “little brothers” I have seen her yell, joke, laugh, and play around with us everyday. “You’re going to get diabetes if you keep putting sugar in your frosted flakes” is just one of the many good-hearted and funny phrases that I can recall. Of course, being in a house with so many of us, Chandra has to mark her territory; “no rough housing here! This is my kitchen!” Of course, we joke back just like the little brothers she sees us as should.

Finally, on a personal note, I will add that she has gladly accepted the challenge of moving me out of my ‘food box’ to eat more than just Jamaican food. If anyone can do that, Chandra can. In sum, she is a vital part of the ABC family and we are truly lucky to have someone as funny, special, and talented as she is.
Changing of the Guard

As sad as we are to say goodbye to our Resident Academic Coordinator Penny Markuske, we are every bit as happy to welcome ABC Board Member DaLonn Pearson to the job. Penny leaves us December 19th to pursue her career as a physical trainer; DaLonn takes over as Resident Academic Coordinator on January 5th when the boys get back from break.

DaLonn graduated from our program in 2009, during which time he served as the House President for two years. Since 2011, he has been the Youth & Family Director at the North Suburban YMCA in Woburn but now, living at the House with the eight of us, he looks forward as he puts it “to mentoring, monitoring and helping develop the skills of all the scholars while helping to create both a positive and valuable change.”

One thing he can certainly model for us is persistence. A son of New Haven Connecticut, he began his freshman year at St. John’s University but when scholarship assistance dried up there in the wake of the Crash, he moved back home and switched to Connecticut State College. Then, three and a half years ago, he was inspired to return to where so many of his ties were, moving into the home of his former host parents Cindy and JD Hale. He landed this job at the Y, continued his college work at Middlesex and is presently on the brink of graduating from Springfield College with the Bachelor’s in Early Childhood Education - and by all account is being encouraged by Springfield to roll right on the Master’s. We can say that ever since coming back, he has been a frequent dinner guest at the House. He is at the Y all the time, naturally, and we are too. He has also been assisting Dr. Stu Koman in the confidential ‘rap sessions’ Stu holds the eight of us every other Wednesday.

Up until now we saw him when he rang the bell. but starting January 4th, he’ll be walking in on his own and be among us every day. We look forward to having this ‘older brother’ right here under our roof. As Jamoul said last week, “The hiring of DaLonn Pearson as the new Resident Academic Coordinator is a great and personal triumph for us as RD’s specifically and the Winchester ABC House in general. After losing a mutual acquaintance to senseless act of violence in the his hometown, he decided to make Winchester his permanent home and we were reminded that Winchester ABC is the right place for us to help in this powerful work. This was the beginning of what we categorize as a charitable relationship. By charitable we mean: just as the trees give us oxygen and we give them back carbon dioxide, Winchester ABC gave DaLonn his scholarship and now he will be bringing us back his valuable experience. More importantly his experience includes a missing piece to the present Winchester ABC Scholar experience, fraternity. We know DaLonn will provide this much needed fraternal inclination to our Scholars that will prove to be the most substantial value add to the Winchester ABC House Culture from now through the future of this program.”
While it’s true that the ABC Bottle Drives are behind us for good, *stay tuned* for other community events we’ll be putting on to do good, serve the community, and help bring us all together as a town.

May you all spend the year 2015 playing and working as hard as we do. Also, may you--like Omar here--always have someone to hug nice and close!

Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter and visit [www.winchesterabc.org](http://www.winchesterabc.org) often!

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**The Winchester Chapter of A Better Chance, part of the community since 1972, is grateful all who give so generously each year to keep our program going.**