

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN, inc.

P.O. BOX 3204 • DARIEN, CONNECTICUT 06820

SPRING NEWSLETTER 1985

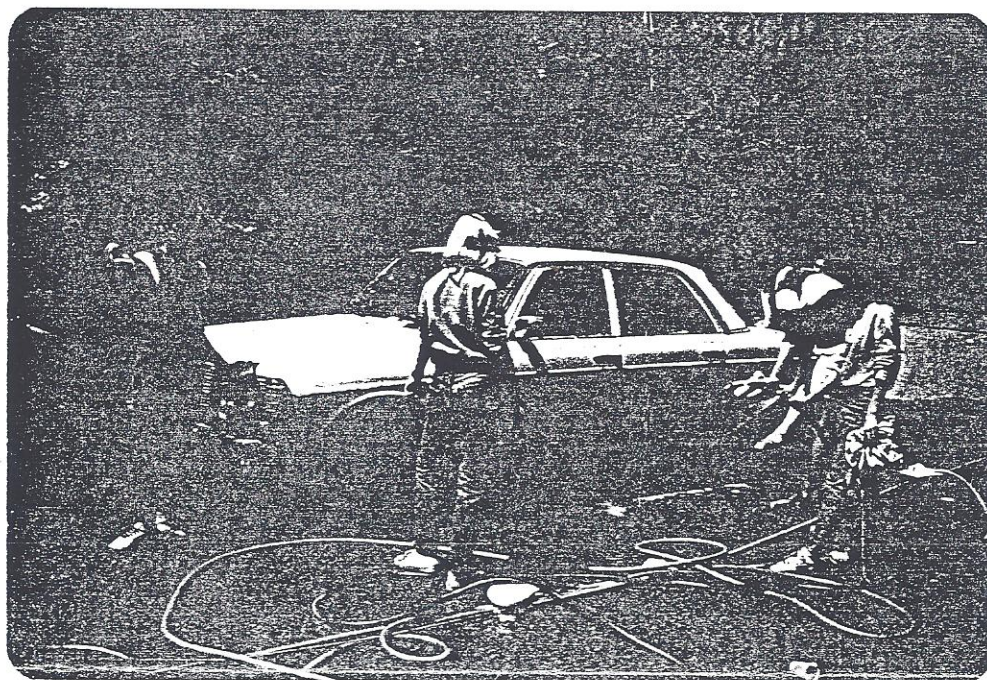
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Hard-working helpers at ABC girls' car-wash fundraiser, May 4th.

Dear Friends:

The verdant warmth of Spring brings us closer to the end of our ABC year at 11 Brookside Road. Zoe Davis will have completed two years in the program here, while the other five students will have their first year behind them.

It is both interesting and encouraging to note that the girls unanimously agree their academic level has risen since being here. They have been challenged and, while their views on their different classes vary considerably, most of them have been upgraded in one or more subjects. This is, indeed, "good news" for everyone, but for the girls, most of all.

Interest in extra-curricular activities is growing, too. All six girls are presently taking part in Darien Dancers; Shelley, Jackie, Khisha and Denise are working on "Dariannus" (D.H.S. Yearbook), and Shelley and Marcie are signed up for Driver's Ed. Denise, Shelley and Marcie auditioned and were chosen for Mr. Schwago's Gospel choir, "Refuge". Zoe is babysitting in her spare time, while Marcie has enrolled herself in First Aid and CPR classes at Post 53.

Socially, the girls' horizons have broadened. Resulting from a recent day visit at Norwalk High School, they have attended several parties in the town. Other ABC programs continue to include our students on their guest lists for parties, a bikeathon and informal get togethers. This has meant a lot to the girls, adding an important dimension to their ABC experience.

Some of the girls attended the Exploration series at St. Lukes recently. Those that went were most enthusiastic and want to participate in more programs of this kind.

Summer plans are presently being worked out. Through the good auspices of board member, Truda Jewett, an Outward Bound trip to Hurricane Island, Maine, has been arranged for Shelley, Jackie and Khisha. Most of the girls would like to work part of the summer and are looking out for possible job openings close to home.

The sad news is that Resident Directors, Del and Jean Shortliffe are leaving. In their two year term at the ABC house, they have devoted themselves 'body and soul' to the successful running of the program and, along with twin sons Mark and Tom, they have created a warm family atmosphere at the house. They are moving to a newly purchased property of their own in Norwalk. While they will be sorely missed by all, we wish them well. (An appraisal of their ABC experience, is included in this newsletter.)

The difficult task of replacing the Shortliffes is now in the hands of a Search Committee, headed by Bernie Gilmore. This committee is presently interviewing candidates, and we look forward to introducing you to the successful applicant in our Fall Newsletter.

"What is pleasanter than the tie of host and guest?"
AESCHYLUS (525-456 B.C.), The Libation Bearers.

HOST FAMILY HAPPENINGS

by Sally Sprague

"A home away from home" - that is what a host family is. Host families are an integral part of the ABC program and every Sunday and every third weekend the ABC student has a family of which they can be part. We have now, and have had in the past, wonderful families and back-up families who, in the sharing of their homes, provide an important link in the support system. We are grateful to these people for their commitment and love. The George Wales family for Zoe, the David Mace family for Khisha, the Walter Raleigh family for Jackie, the Michael Armstrong family for Marcie, the Paul Tiller family for Denise, and the Geoffrey Magrath family for Shelley.

During the year all the families gather together two or three times for social events. The next event planned is a picnic on June 16th.

Many of us have busy schedules and we have a need for a few more host families and back-ups. If you are interested in this, please call Tana Gilmore at 348-1374.

A Few Thoughts on our ABC Experience

by Del and Jean Shortliffe

Resident directors for Darien ABC are greatly challenged and wonderfully rewarded. It has been exciting and often exhausting to deal with the job's intensity, but we have also seen the girls' growth and have shared in the girls' triumphs, and we leave our home on Brookside Road with regrets and a real desire to stay in touch.

We arrived here in time to see five seniors worry through the fall, traumatized by college applications and fearful their efforts would prove to have been in vain. With them, we celebrated as the college acceptances came in and dreams of financial aid came true. It became clear that ABC is a program which works. It was equally clear that the graduating girls were excellent people, who deserved their rewards and were a pleasure to live with. We have only warm memories of our first year.

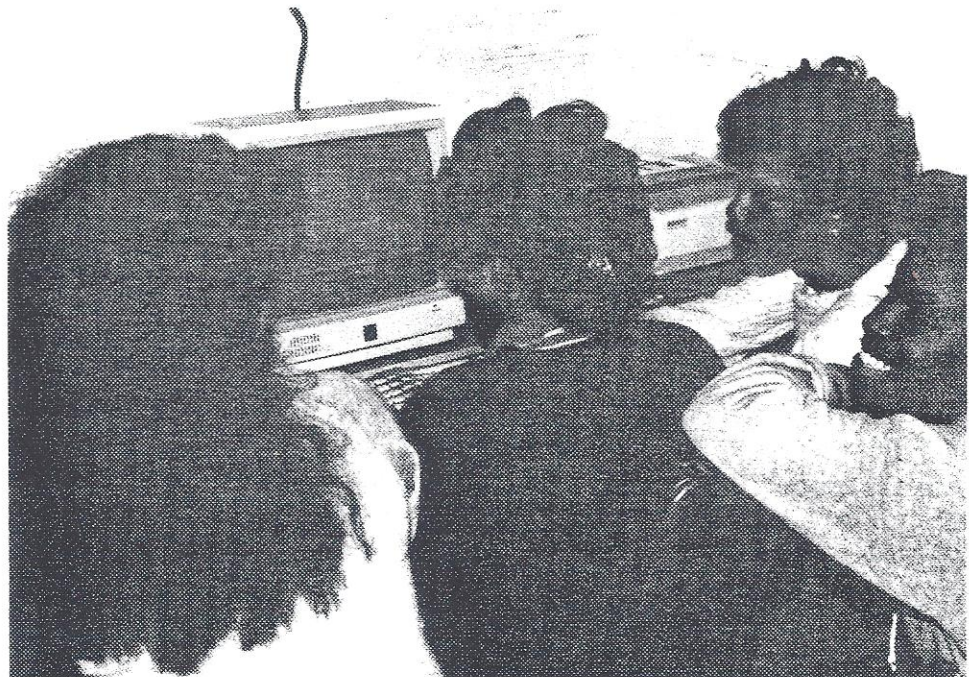
Getting to know new girls and striving to help them know us proved to be a long effort, but also a rewarding one. It has become even clearer to us that Darien ABC constitutes major culture shock and identity crisis for a normal, urban adolescent, but we also know that such shocks are endurable and, once endured, yield maturity, self-knowledge and poise. The house is fun to live in - high energy, time-consuming, emotionally draining, and life affirming.

Much of the energy and fun comes not only from the students; we have also been delighted to make friends as fine as Liz Deas, Leonard Krill and Liza McFeely. There has never been a moment when we felt anything but respect and affection for these others working in the house; there have been many times when Ms. Liz's wisdom, Leonard's creative spirit and intelligence, and Liza's insights and concern have pulled us through our crises. Also, we have been consistently struck by the commitment and energy of the ABC Board and host families.

The eleven ABC girls we have lived with will remain a part of our family. We have delighted in their honors: Kathy and Liz as members of the National Honor Society last year; Denise in the Foreign Language Honor Society this year; Marcie in Carousel; Zoe and Khisha in Darien Dancers; Zoe taking the floor, with insight and enthusiasm, at the Explorations meeting at St. Luke's. We have enjoyed Washington, Great Adventure, Broadway and "Mamma, I Want to Sing" with ABC. We have seen our sons grow up happy in crowds and nourished by many personalities. And all in all we have learned a great deal about ourselves, adolescents, parenting, and the joys of sharing daily life.

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Girls taking a break from studies for a game on their new IBM computer.



*** Chicken a la Liz Deas ***



Ingredients - Serves 6
5 lbs. chicken thighs
1 12 oz. bottle marmalade
3-4 TBSPS. Soy sauce
garlic salt and pepper.
Set oven to 350 degrees.
Wash and dry chicken thighs.
Season thighs and place in large
roasting pan.
Mix marmalade and soy sauce together;
spread mixture evenly over chicken.
Cook for 30 minutes.
Remove and turn pieces over.
Return to oven for further 30 minutes.
Serve with wild rice, green vegetable
of choice and freshly baked biscuits.
(The editor of this newsletter was
invited one night to share the ABC
family meal. Chicken a la Liz Dias
was the featured entree, and it was
quite delicious. Ms. Liz generously
agreed to our including it here.)

^ ^ ^ ^

I need HELP!!
My paint is peeling
and, apart from not
looking too good,
it just doesn't
feel right.



ABC HOUSE NEWS

Barb Magrath, having
obtained quotes on various
options for this problem,
recommends vinyl-siding as a
practical solution against
increasingly higher painting
costs every three years or
so.

Is there anybody out there, a corporation maybe, who would like to help? \$10,000 would be wonderful, but, of course, any contribution would be greatly appreciated.

* VAC AWARD * Margaret Ross was recognized by the ABC board for the Vac Award this year, for her tireless efforts in handling the ABC finances. Her self-effacing attitude and meticulous monetary management makes her truly an unsung hero whose work is appreciated by all.

'Til Fall, when we will have news of how the girls spent their summer, an update from our alumni students in college, and a "get-acquainted" piece on the new Resident Directors, we wish you all a relaxing, happy summer.

Sandra Filmer
Editor