

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN, inc.

P.O. BOX 3204 • DARIEN, CONNECTICUT 06820

NEWSLETTER

FALL '88

INTRODUCING OUR NEW RESIDENT DIRECTORS

Despite the challenge of shepharding six busy teenagers, Mark and Donna Devins say they and son Casey have settled into the ABC house quite comfortably. In fact, they describe their new living situation as "almost peaceful" compared to some of their past experiences.

If this seems hard to believe to most of us (especially those who are currently or have recently housed one or more teenagers), it becomes more plausible when we know something about the lives of these two energetic individuals.

Donna spent her early years in Topsville, Massachusetts where her mother started an ABC program. "The ABC residence was just down the street so my house was always filled with kids from all over the country," Donna says. Her horizons were expanded further when, after a year at Boston University, she went to London and worked as an assistant warden in a youth hostel. A year later with two years of college behind her, she decided she wanted training in cross-cultural education and enrolled in the educational branch of The Experiment in International Living in Vermont. Her internship for this program took her to Kenya where she did social work in an extremely poor area and also worked part-time for AFS (the American Field Service).

Mark also began his international experience in his late teens. At 18, during his Sophomore year at Washington College in Maryland, he and a friend persuaded the Robert F. Kennedy Foundation to support them in a research venture in a small village in India. In addition to completing the study, Mark got hands-on community development experience by helping dig wells with the people in Maliwada, India.

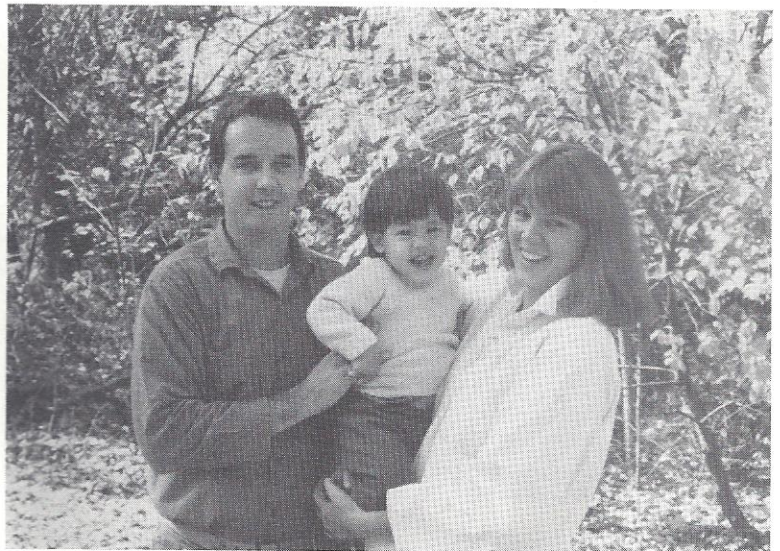
Before college Mark had worked at a special camp for medically handicapped children and his friendship with the camp's owner led to a job as a cowboy on a 70,000 acre cattle ranch in Colombia, S.A. He also spent time cruising the

West Indies as first mate on a well-known charter sailboat called the Ticonderoga.

In the U.S. Mark worked for a foundation in San Francisco, for the Griswald Inn in Connecticut, for a shipbuilder in Maryland (he had learned carpentry by taking extra vocational training during high school), and as a counselor for the Youth Conservation Corps under the Department of the Interior.

This program gave inner city kids the chance to spend some time in a state park in the summer and Mark's involvement was a logical extension of his experience as a child. "My mother was the director of a fresh-air program which brought city kids out to the country in the summer so our house was always full of kids from different backgrounds," says Mark. "Full" is an accurate description since Mark is one of nine siblings.

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MARK, CASEY AND DONNA DEVINS

SPECIAL

SKIL



Edwina Chapman, a senior who says Chemistry is her easiest subject, finds time to play on the DHS Volleyball team. Of course, she's visiting colleges this fall too.



Sohui Kim, a junior, practices her defense manoeuvres for her position as goalie on the DHS Field Hockey team.



Sophomore Alexa "Chachi" Aviles (pictured here with Sohui) may be a budding director. Pursuing her interest in film, she has produced the first "video" on what life is really like at the ABC house.

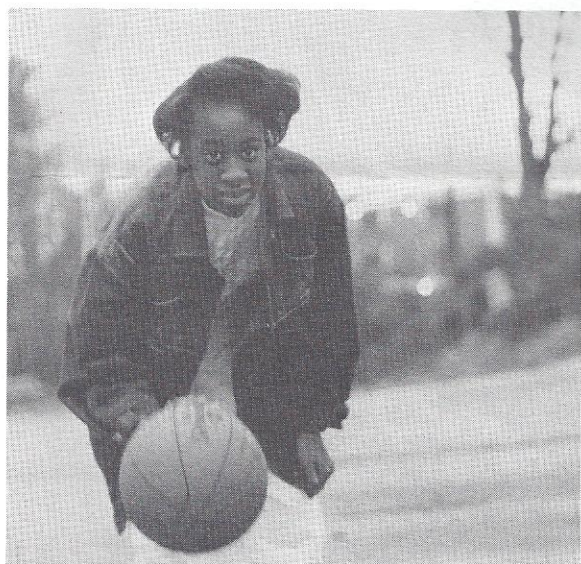
RESIDENT DIRECTORS CON'T.

After completing his BA at Washington College, Mark went to the Experiment in International Living for graduate work in Inter-Cultural Management. There he developed a resource bank of data on students with specific languages and experience which could be matched with requests from community development organizations for internships. He went on to become the school's Director of Admissions, starting the job just six weeks before he and Donna were married. "That's why we wound up having a 2-day honeymoon," Donna laughs.

While Mark continued in this position, Donna was the Assistant Director of Marketing--working furiously at fundraising. "Our work days seemed to stretch around the clock," explains Mark. "Because we were dealing with students and government representatives from all over the world, we got phone calls at all hours of the night. Ten

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SURFACE!



Tamara "Tammie" Loatman, a freshman, has come up with her own special methods for handling stress. She plays basketball or, if things get really tense, she hollers "MacDonalds!"

hour days were the norm, not the exception." In addition, they were living in a big farmhouse where various friends and relations managed to turn up for extended visits.

Given the intensity of all these experiences, it's a little easier to understand how the Devins feel "comfortable" and not stressed at the ABC house. "Of course we are getting to know the girls better and better as we go along," Donna says, "but from the very beginning there was a real family feeling. I can't imagine being without them this summer."

And after a moment of reflection she adds, "Our training and experience is in cross-cultural education--being supportive of young people as they try to achieve in a new environment. The wonderful thing is that with ABC we have a way to do this right here at home."



Although she can often be found toiling over the computer, sophomore Cielo Irizarry also finds time to play volleyball and manage the DHS Softball team.



Julie Leung, a senior, contributes her organizational skills to DHS as manager of the JV and Varsity Hockey teams.

We'd Like To Thank . . .

This fall Margaret Ross stepped down from her position as ABC's bookkeeper/accountant after seven years of service. Her volunteer hours spent in our behalf included such tasks as paying the bills, producing a monthly financial statement and filing all the various state and federal forms required of a non-profit organization.

Because Margaret agrees with the conventional wisdom which holds that the individual who keeps the books doesn't also make policy, she opted not to be a member of the ABC Board. However, serving in the background in no way diminished the influential role she has played in the success of ABC.

In the fall of 1981, when she was asked to "just take over the checkbook," Margaret didn't realize that the intricacies of non-profit accounting were substantially different from those in the for-profit sector. Undaunted, she found the guidance she needed in a book at the Darien Library. She likes to quote an ex-employer who used to tell her that, "There's nothing awesome about work in finance, it's just totally unforgiving so you have to be very careful."

Margaret specialized in foreign languages at college and it was only due to the urging of her superiors at Pitney Bowes that she took her first accounting course. Although she liked accounting, she chose not to move up the corporate career ladder and as she puts it, "retired" in 1976.

Business's loss became volunteerism's gain. In addition to her efforts on behalf of ABC, Margaret has served as



MARGARET ROSS

business manager for the Fairfield County Chamber Ensemble, president of Book Aid, and as an assistant to the financial secretary of St. Luke's Church. Last year, following the sudden loss of this financial secretary, St. Luke's urged her to take on that full-time position. Because of the cyclical calendar of the world of finance, her busiest times at work were also her busiest times at ABC. Reluctantly, she decided to resign her position with us.

Raised in Tennessee, Margaret moved to Fairfield County 20 years ago. Recently she and her husband bought a house in Vermont where some day they may retire. About this gradual northward migration she says, "I hate hot weather so much that I probably should have gone straight through to the Antarctic." It has been ABC's extreme good fortune that she didn't.



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