



FALL 1989

# NEWS

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN, inc. P.O. BOX 3204, Darien, Connecticut 06820

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## WE ARE FAMILY! growing....and changing...

### Two new freshmen:

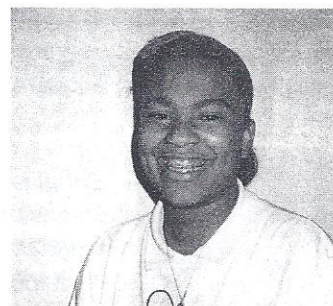
*These two beautiful young ladies are the newest members of our family. They were chosen from many applicants and represent the finest of high school freshmen.*



Hi! I am **Aysha Ramseur**, a freshman at Darien High School. I am originally from the lower west side of Manhattan, where I have lived all of my life, until now.

I learned about the ABC program through my guidance counselor in my junior high school, where I was maintaining an A average. She suggested that I take a test (SSAT) and then I received a call from Darien. I came to Darien, visited the school, the ABC house, talked to many people and compared the entire Darien environment with my other possibilities. I talked it over with my mother, who was really sad about my leaving home. She figured it was for the best, however, so she gave her consent, and **here I am**, in Darien!

This fall, I've played volleyball for the first time ever. I'm going to join the basketball team (that's my favorite sport!). And in the spring I plan to run track. During school I take art classes because I love to draw. Someday I plan to do something with this talent. In my spare time, I love to listen to music, dance and (occasionally) talk on the phone!



Hello, my name is **Anzula Richardson**. My friends call me **Bebe**. I'm one of the new freshmen girls in the ABC house. I came all the way from Manhattan, New York, to get a better education.

Darien has welcomed Aysha and me with open arms. The town is peaceful and quiet. The people in Darien are friendly. School life is great and the kids and teachers at school make learning more fun.

Home life is a new experience for me. Coming from a household with just two people (my mother and me), it's something to get used to.

I was in the seventh grade when I first heard about ABC. The eighth graders in the lunchroom would be talking about what high schools they would like to go to, but I didn't give it much thought until my eighth grade year. My guidance counselor told me all about the program. I became interested, so I went through all the procedures needed to enter the program. And, so **here I am!**



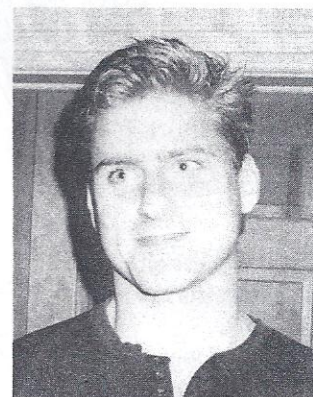
## A new baby:



*The apple of our eye!  
**Luke Reilly Devins**  
Born July 13, 1989  
shown here with  
proud mother Donna.  
Luke and his brother Casey  
have six adoring "big sisters".*

## A new tutor:

**Chris Black**, a handsome 24 year old native of Trumbull and graduate of Brown University is the new resident tutor at the ABC house. Chris, who is a math and computer science teacher at D.H.S., lives at the ABC house where he works with the girls every night during their study time. His com-



puter knowledge is invaluable too, as everyone gets "friendly" with the new IBM computer. Chris comes to us with a perfect blend of past experience, having spent one year as a resident tutor at the ABC house in New Canaan while doing an internship at Greenwich High School. Last year was spent teaching in East Harlem. "I'm very happy here", says Chris, "and I like having six little sisters and two little brothers. We really are a family."

# LOOKING IT OVER

by Sohui Kim, Class of 1990



*Sohui is a senior this year. She has made a niche for herself in this community where she is loved by all who know her. She has achieved high honors, spent last summer in Greece, and is a varsity field hockey goalie.*

As a fourth year ABC student, I spend a great deal of time looking back over my experience in Darien - and looking ahead to the future. Like many seniors at D.H.S., I find my thoughts are often occupied by college planning. Amidst all the college search I find myself looking: around, back and forward.

To be an ABC student is to be a witness to many things. And it is the duty of the ABC student to take the evidence and formulate our own ideas about life.

ABC is a complex experience and an important aspect of my life. It has defined me as a whole person.

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What I have extracted from the program and the community was far beyond the academic gain. The ABC program demands not only academic excellence of the participants, but an individual and social adjustment, as well. To "fit" into the program, one must alter the individualism brought in as a freshman. In the beginning, the concept of ABC seemed all too bizarre. Naturally, I had doubts and questions. Many of them began with the word "why". The answers simply narrowed down to: ABC, A Better Chance Scholarship Program for academically gifted inner city, minority students. This was to be my four year journey. I have excelled academically, thanks to those special teachers at Darien High School.

Through this program I have had the opportunity to live with ten unique girls, three different sets of supportive resident directors and their children, three different tutors, three wonderful host families, and have worked on eight fun-filled carwashes, four annual fund-raisers and countless bakesales. And when the end approaches, I will miss it all!



# TO BE OR NOT TO BE...a host family

by Penny Liu, "host Mom"

I wasn't at all sure about it. After all, I was a teacher at the high school. I was around teen-agers all day. Did I really want another one at home on the week-ends? And what if she found out all sorts of secret things about Sandy and me and told everyone at school? "Pssst, the Lius read at the table and you'll never guess what Sandy eats for dessert!" We don't have any kids of our own, I offered as an excuse, so there won't be any other children around to help break the ice and make her feel at home. We're stodgy and dull. What would we talk about? Our week-ends were precious, and like English teachers everywhere, I usually spend a good part of Sunday afternoon marking papers. Did we really want to make a three year commitment to a girl we hadn't even met?

On the first Sunday Julie spent with us, the three of us sat out on the patio carefully feeling our way into a conversation. I didn't know how to help her. What does she see when she looks at us, I wondered. I knew that our world must be as foreign to a child raised in Manhattan as Hong Kong had been to me when I first saw it through culture-shocked and jet-lagged eyes.

Culture-shocked or not that afternoon, Julie was self-possessed and articulate as well as beautiful. We managed to carry off the first Sunday but we probably all breathed a sigh of relief when we said good-bye at the house that night.

*Maybe we could make this work after all.*

From that point on, the days blend in my memory: working on homework (write a new scene for Macbeth, practice a French dialogue), visiting museums in New Haven,

watching movies on TV, reassuring Julie that Connecticut dogs were friendly, and eating Sunday spaghetti with long talks over the dinner table. (Sandy and I gave up our reading.)

Some particular moments remain vivid, though, like the days Julie came flying into the English office at school with a cheery "Hi, Mom." I remember Sandy and Julie in the school parking lot one cold winter night (I stayed in the car), Julie holding the flashlight on the Times star chart so they could identify the constellations. (Julie's taking astronomy at Connecticut College this year. "There's more to astronomy than just looking at stars," she reports.) Then there was senior prom: Julie dancing with her date and laughing at me dancing with Mr. Mainelli. (We chaperones had a great time too.) And then it was graduation and all of Julie's families - the Leungs and the Braunschweigs and the Aymars and the Lius - shared her happiness and sorrow.

I certainly am in favor of giving these girls as many choices as possible. There is no doubt that ABC gives them choices which they might not have considered without the program. And I am very convinced of the benefits the program brings to our Darien high school students. ABC girls give our kids an education by allowing them to meet people they would never otherwise get to know.

Sandy and I are grateful to Julie for letting us share three years of her life. And she hasn't divorced us yet: the train from New London to the City runs through Darien so we've had one visit so far, and hope for more. Then there's parents' week-end (and Julie's birthday) coming up.

Who knows? We may even be host grandparents some day.

***If you have an interest in becoming a host family, please contact Judy Nance or Linda Russell, Host Family chairpersons or one of the persons listed below.***

## 1989-90 HOST FAMILIES

### Seniors

Sohui Kim - Jane and Stellan Wollmar,  
Judy and Peter Nance, back-up

### Juniors

Alexa (Cha Chi) Aviles - Libby and Doug Rubin, host  
Linda and Frank Russell, back-up

Cielo Irizarry - Marilyn and Bob Aymar, host  
Celia and Paul Rose, back-up

### Sophomore

Tamara Loatman - Susan and Robert Erzen, host  
Connie and Cliff Tallman, back-up

### Freshmen

Aysha Ramseur - Barbara and David Bristle, host  
Jean and John Williams, back-up

Anzula (Bebe) Richardson - Linda and Bob Woodrum, host  
Evelyn and Ewan Copeland, back-up

Donna, Mark and the girls send a special thank you to Linda Woodrum and all the board members who helped with the Fall Clean-up. The house and grounds look great!



# WHERE ARE THEY NOW? News of our very first ABC students: This is what makes us proud:

Rosa Garcia, Class of 1984, is currently on a \$10,000 fellowship at UCLA where she is working on her PhD in Latin American History.

LaRose Parris, Class of 1983, has returned from China and is applying to NYU Law School.

Orgyln Clarke, Class of 1984, is combining business and modeling in Chicago.



NEIRAD photo, October 1981

"Toni" Frost, Class of 1984, is working in a Washington, D.C. congressional office.

Liz Tajada, Class of 1984, is working on Wall Street, NYC.

Kathy Marshall, Class of 1984, is starting her Masters degree at Brooklyn College.

## DID YOU KNOW?

That ABC Darien is one of only 24 public school ABC programs in the U.S.? Most are in private schools.

That as of November 6, 1989, 316 donors had given a total of \$26,230 to the ABC 1989 Fund Drive, including 40 NEW donors? More than 500 families donated to ABC last year.

That the approved budget for this year is \$38,805?

That more than 90% of all money raised to support ABC comes from *individuals*, not corporations?

That the ABC residence is owned by the Congregational Church and rented to the program for ONE DOLLAR per year?

That the ABC program was recently given a brand new computer by the IBM Corporation? Do you have any software which would be helpful?

That the enrichment committee is working hard to provide trips, speakers, concerts and other cultural events? Perhaps you have some suggestions...or some free tickets!

That transportation is provided for the girls by a busy committee of drivers who take them to doctors' appointments, sports practices, etc. If you would like to join the "driving force," call Pat McGarry.

That donations of various items for the house are gratefully accepted? Currently on the "wish list" are:

- armchairs
- cooking utensils (in very good or new condition - these pots and pans get a good workout!)
- lamps of all types
- laundry baskets and
- plants.

This issue of the ABC newsletter is edited and produced by Judy Betty and Penny Liu.