

SPRING '89

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN, inc.

P.O. BOX 3204 • DARIEN, CONNECTICUT 06820

NEWSLETTER

Hurray for the Volunteers!

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Sue Flagg

A Better Chance makes it possible for academically talented minority students to attend excellent high schools so that they have the best possible chance to be accepted at any college they may choose. In less than 10 years, ABC in Darien has become a highly respected program both locally and across the country. The success of such a program is the result of three essential components: 1) financial support from the community, 2) serious academic effort from the students and 3) a tremendous commitment of time and concern from volunteers.

Since its beginning, close to 200 individuals have contributed significant time and effort in order to make ABC the best that it can be. One of the most rewarding contributions of volunteer time is the job of host or back-up host family. This weekly commitment gives the girls a couple of other places to call home and builds some strong ties to the community. Right now 17 families participate as hosts.

The weekly rap session, in place for the first time this year, helps to diffuse tensions and assures a time for good communication. It's run by Marta Elders who is getting her doctorate in psychology at NYU and it takes place in space donated by the Congregational Church. As far as we know, ours is the only ABC program in the country offering this particular form of support.

The advisor for College Counseling is a major volunteer effort also. Lee Cushman begins looking over catalogues and discussing options with each girl during her junior year. She makes sure they set up appointments for visits and interviews and has often driven them either to the airport or directly to the college.

Enrichment is the umbrella under which all special interest programs fall and this spring, because of interested volunteers and the coordination efforts of our Enrichment Chairman, Penny Liu, the girls will have a chance to take piano lessons and/or learn to play tennis.

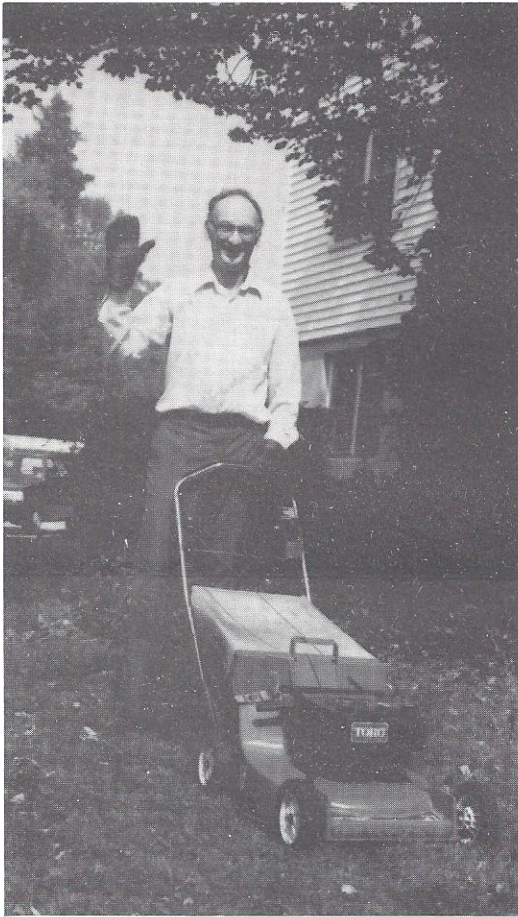
And then there are the committees. Although National ABC dictates certain academic and behavioral standards, it is the nine local board members on the Standards Committee who deal with any problems which arise. This could include confronting and discussing a problem, finding help from an appropriate source, enforcing a penalty, or if it should become necessary, asking a girl to leave. Over the life of the program this committee has had to make some tough decisions and do some very resourceful parenting.

Less crisis driven, but certainly as important, is the Student Selection Committee. This group selects the new students and this year, if distance allows, they are bringing each applicant out to Darien to meet the girls and visit the house and school.

Since ABC maintains a residence, everyone has the chance to help with a little paint and wallpaper occasionally. Once a year there's even a special invitation for lawn work (see inside). But it's the House Committee that oversees the physical safety and comfort of the house throughout the year.

FALL CLEAN UP

EVERYONE



George Hickson



Margot Hand



Tammie Loatman and Sandy Filmer



Lincoln

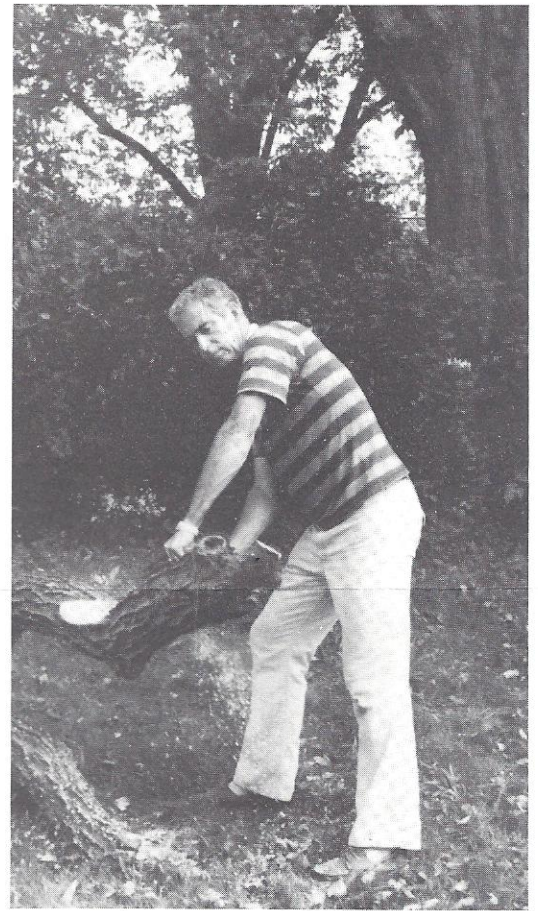
Mark De...

DAY —

ONE PITCHES IN!

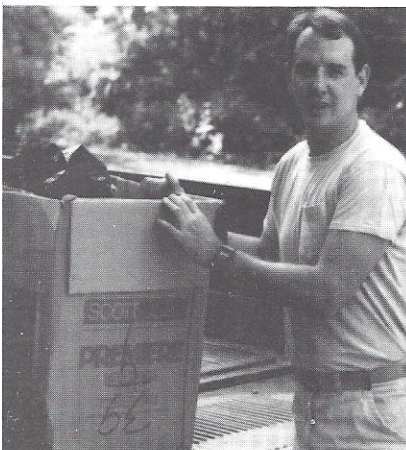


Miscellaneous Muscle



Bob Cushman

la Woodrum
and
Rosemary Mace



evins



Carole Braunschweig

*Spring
Cleaning?*

ABC WISH LIST

Moving?

Kitchen Items

Spoons
Toaster
Cooking knives
Other utensils
Tupperware containers
Drinking cup dispensers
Pots and pans
Baking pans
Cookie Sheets
Cake tins
Water purification system

Miscellaneous

Plants (only resilient ones)
Electric typewriter
Word Processor
Picnic table
(the bigger, the better)

Furnishings

Room fans
Floor, table & desk lamps
Small blue throw rug
Carpet for upstairs hallway
Carpet for staircase
Carpet for study room
Bed pillows
Desks
Desk & dining room chairs
Single bed frame & mattress
Wooden dressers
Small table (5'X 2')

Indoor/outdoor vacuum
Electrolux Vacuum Cleaner
with attachments and bags
Wallpaper for front hall
Paint and paint brushes

If you wish to contribute any of these things, please contact:

Donna Devins
656-2537

OR

Linda Woodrun
655-9572

BUT PLEASE DON'T SURPRISE US!

STORAGE SPACE IS SO LIMITED THAT WE NEED TO SEE WHAT

YOU HAVE BEFORE IT COMES TO LIVE WITH US.

*Or
just
feeling
generous?*

VOLUNTEERS CONT

Then there's the Finance Committee which leads the chase toward meeting a \$42,000 budget each year.

Special organizational skills which are provided by volunteers include arranging a transportation network, keeping track of all doctor's appointments, prescriptions and trips to the emergency room, filling out all the insurance forms necessary for reimbursement, keeping the books, paying the bills and submitting all the required tax forms.

And of course there's the Newsletter and other PR efforts which help the community to keep in touch with the program.

Altogether, it amounts to an incredible number of volunteer hours.

Why is it, when other organizations flounder for want of volunteer strength, that ABC is so successful? Rosemary Mace, president and 6-yr veteran of the Board of Directors, says she thinks we get terrific support for three reasons: "One, we have so many different jobs for volunteers to do that we wind up with a wonderful variety of people. Second, many of the jobs involve working directly with the girls and that's fun. And third, we all believe in the program---we simply believe that it's a very important and worthwhile thing to do."