



SPRING 1992

NEWS

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

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203 Old Kings Highway North
Darien, CT 06820

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A Better Chance in Darien Really Needs Your Support This Year!

ABC in Darien has been fortunate over its eleven year history to have had the generous support of hundreds of Darien families. Each year in May the ABC Board sends out a solicitation. In the fall, follow-up mailings and telephone calls are made to remind potential donors. By January, when the campaign ends, enough money is usually raised to pay for the operating costs associated with our program. Typically, we raise upwards of \$40,000 each year from more than four hundred families.

Unlike many other ABC programs, Darien's ABC receives more than 90% of its financial support from individuals. The few corporate dollars we get are earmarked for specific purposes such as enrichment. ABC in Darien receives no financial support from ABC national headquarters.

As one of only twenty-four public school programs in the country, ABC in Darien is somewhat unique. Unlike private school ABC programs where the students reside in dorms and

eat in cafeterias, Darien's ABC scholars are housed and fed in a separate home. The house, at 11 Brookside Road, belongs to the First Congregational Church of Darien. The church generously leases the house to our program for just \$1.00 per year. Without this gift, our fund-raising task would probably be double what it is today.



Shown left to right: So Lan Liang, Tamara Loatman, Fatima Ullah, Wendy Olivera, Renata Alexis and Aysha Ramseur

(please see page 4)

THE BUSY LIVES OF OUR ABC GIRLS

ENTERTAINING

The girls organized and hostessed a party at the Congregational Church on Saturday February 1. Guests included friends from the high school, from Stamford, from the ABC houses in Ridgefield and Guilford, plus friends and family from New York City.

Thanks to Connie Tallman and the Enrichment Committee's efforts, the girls attended two basketball games at Madison Square Garden this spring, went to New Haven for dinner and the play "The Death of the Last Black Man," and have enjoyed shopping and eating in South Norwalk.



EXERCISING

Four of the girls are involved in softball at the high school this year. Fatima is managing the varsity team. JV players are Renata and Wendy in the outfield, and So Lan is catcher.

ENTERPRISING

Tammy and Aysha work after school in the DHS office, duplicating materials and generally helping out teachers and staff. They have become trusted co-workers and everyone in the office enjoys their company.

TAMMY CHOSE THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

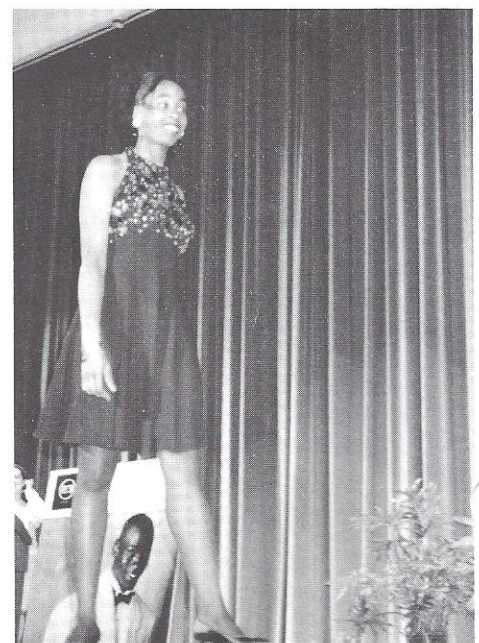
Tammy has been accepted at the following schools: Columbia, Villanova, Spellman, Cornell, N.Y.U., Syracuse, Howard, University of Virginia, Barnard and Penn. After much consideration and consultation with her advisors, she has decided to attend the University of Virginia.

We wish her all the very best. We're going to miss her.



TAMMY AND AYSHA MODEL PROM WEAR

Tammy and Aysha recently modeled promwear in a fashion show at the high school. The show was organized by the junior and senior classes as a fund-raiser for the after-prom party sponsored by Darien parents.



SO LAN CONTINUES TO WRITE WINNERS

"The next thing I knew I found myself dressed, with my bags packed and ready to go. As we walked down Canal Street, I began to notice certain things I had never noticed before - how busy it was even in the the early morning, how there were so many stores and signs, how everything looked so much like Canton. As I descended into the subway and headed toward Grand Central, I began to discover how much my world was changing...I then found myself walking toward Metro-North and taking the 7:45 train, track 25, New Haven Line, to Darien, Connecticut."

This excerpt is from So Lan's story, "It Was Beginning to Rain," which won the Damon Walsh ABC Writing Award, a national competition for ABC students all over the country. Along with the honor, So Lan was also given a \$500.00 check.

A piece of her writing will also be included in the state-wide "Connecticut Student Writers" magazine, sponsored by the Connecticut Writing Project and the University of Connecticut.

In addition, So Lan has won TWO book awards at the DHS Awards Assembly: The University of Michigan Award for English AND the Vassar College Award for Humanities.



So Lan Liang, Junior, at the DHS Prom

ALUMNAE NEWS...

Julie Leung, DHS class of '89 and a junior at Connecticut College, is spending a semester at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

She reports in a recent letter: "I think this semester is going to be my hardest yet. I have nine hours of Chinese every week (with lots of homework) and three other courses: Intellectual History of Modern China, China's Regional Foreign Relations and Chinese Musical Culture. All of my classes are very interesting and also really tough. I have lots of term research papers to do. But it's all worth it and that's why I came here so I'm pretty happy about my academic schedule. The campus is gorgeous but very hilly. I get lots of exercise walking to and from class." She also reports that the food is excellent!



Shown here in the halls of Darien High School are freshmen Renata Alexis and Fatima Ullah and sophomore Wendy Olivera.

Recommended Reading - "All-Bright Court" by Connie Porter tells the story of Southern families who come north to work in the steel mills in a midwestern town. There is an interesting section about a bright boy attending a primarily white school, and the effect this has on him and his family.

We need you.....(con't)

Even with the "free" use of the house, Darien's ABC program encounters some significant housing expenses. We are responsible for all maintenance and improvements to the house. With six active teenagers plus the resident directors living in an older home, these expenses can be significant. We also pay for oil, electricity, water, garbage removal, sewer fees and insurance coverage.

Feeding the students is our biggest expense. Food and food preparation expenses make up one third of our current budget. Our students are served nutritious meals but care is taken to make sure we do not exceed our budget. Our average allocation per student per day for food is just \$8.83.

Last year, ABC in Darien celebrated its tenth anniversary. We planned to use this occasion to try to raise extra money to build up our contingency fund. There are a number of capital expenses

that must be made to improve the house. Also, we believe it is very important to slowly build up a reserve in case the church decides some day that it can not afford to lease us the house at such favorable rates.

Unfortunately we ran into the worst recession this region has experienced in decades. Many people who have historically supported us were unable to do so. Others were forced to reduce their annual contribution. The result was that last year's fund-raising campaign came up short of our annual operating fund requirements by almost 20%. Rather than building up our reserves, we were forced to use them up.

We hope that as the local economy rebounds, you and your family will be able to provide financial support to those groups that you feel are worthwhile.

ABC needs a successful fund-raising year to recover from last year and to build our reserves back up. We hope you will give as much as possible. The money will be carefully spent to help six remarkable girls get a better chance at a fine education.

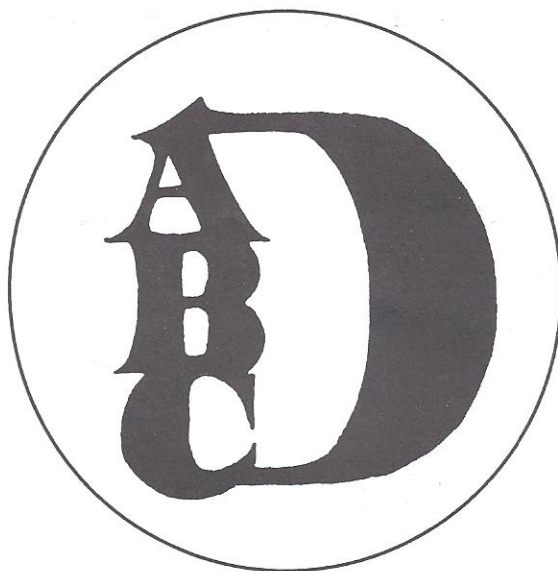
HOUSE AVERAGE IS 3.5 PLUS !

The ABC program is primarily about academics.

For the first semester, the house grade point average was a resounding 3.5, and the third quarter average was 3.595. This would be commendable any time but is especially impressive with three first-year students in the program. Congratulations to the girls and to their tutor, Tim Dutton, for their excellent work.

TIM DUTTON and JOAN BURCHENAL HONORED

At the annual Darien Volunteer Recognition Luncheon on May 6th, Tim and Joan were recognized for their continuing support of ABC and their tireless involvement with the academic pursuits of these talented girls - as evidenced in the house average reported above ! Accompanying them to the luncheon was Sandy Filmer, ABC past president.



The ABC Darien Selection Committee has announced the selection of a new girl. **Phuong Vu**, who was born in Saigon, Vietnam, and now lives in Holyoke, Massachusetts, with her family, will join us in the fall.

Phuong Vu, who has lived in the U.S. for five years, will enter Darien High School as a freshman and plans to continue her involvement in choir, drama and sports.