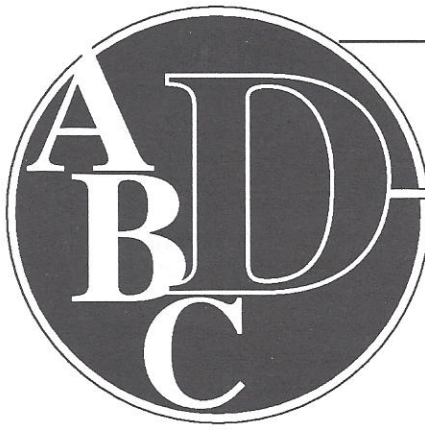


FALL 1994



# NEWS

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

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## Let Us Introduce You....

ABC in Darien is pleased to welcome three new students to the high school. **Nicole Monique Beckford, Migdalia Caraballo and Barbara Mar-ti Lawrence**, all entering freshmen, are currently gracing the halls of DHS and the ABC House.

Nicole loves playing soccer and lacrosse, doing puzzles and playing games, and is interested in the clarinet. She thinks that Darien High School is "very different and challenging." Her favorite subjects are math and French, and she thinks some day she would like to either be a pediatrician or follow a career in acting and singing. Nicole comes from Brooklyn, New York, and has two younger sisters, ages seven and three. This past summer she visited her

father in Antigua.



**Nicole**

This past summer she visited her family in



**Migdalia**

Migdalia is also currently from Brooklyn where she lives with her mother and two sisters, ages seven, sixteen and seven.

enthusiast, she loves to skate, swim and play soccer. Her favorite subjects are math and gym, and she says, "I also love to go to the mall and talk on the phone."

We at ABC are extremely pleased with these wonderful additions to our ABC family, and wish Nicole, Migdalia and Barbara a successful and happy four years with us.



**Barbara**

Mexico and loved it so much she "didn't want to come back!" Migdalia enjoys creative writing and loves to read any type of book but science fiction. Although she misses her family very much, Migdalia says she enjoys being in Darien and a part of the ABC program. "It is teaching me to be independent and responsible."

Barbara lives in Manhattan with her grandmother and two sisters. She hopes that her experience in the ABC program will help her get top grades at the high school and enable her to go to an Ivy League university. A sports



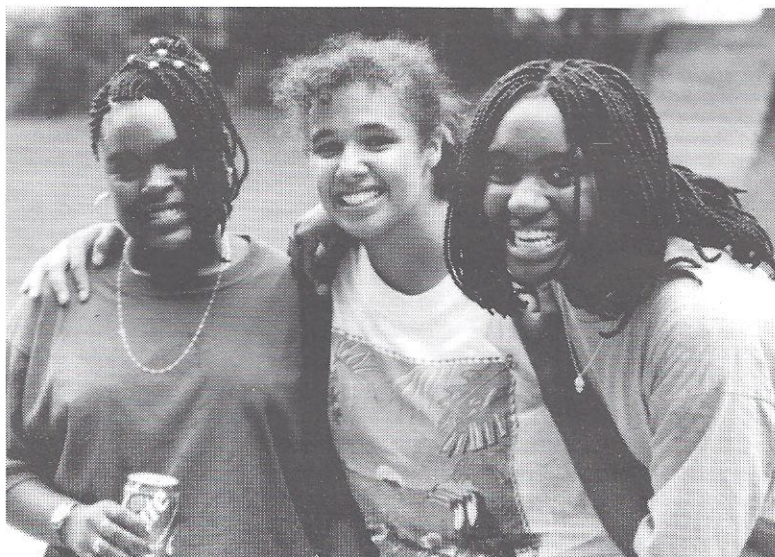
# GLAD TO HAVE THEM BACK!!

The three returning ABC students, **Renata Alexis, Jacqueline Ferrer** and **Danique Clarke**, are again gracing the halls of DHS and the ABC House. They all have played an important part in making the new freshmen feel comfortable here in Darien.

Renata, a senior, enjoyed a very busy summer with her family, some of whom were visiting from Trinidad. Besides "hanging out with friends," Renata babysat and tutored her nine year old brother. She has a very challenging course load this year, including two Advanced Placement courses. "The work is strenuous, but I have set a goal to do better than my best in each class," says Renata. She is applying to several very competitive colleges, some of which are "reaches" for her. "But as my mother says," Renata explains optimistically, "with prayer and faith anything is possible."

At the High School, Renata is again heading The Respect for Differences program. With the guidance of Assistant Principal Tony Pavia, the group works with the elderly, tutors Stamford children and participates in the Big Brother, Big Sister program. Renata is also an active member of the Human Rights Club at DHS.

"It is a positive sign for me that for the first time in two years we actually have six girls in the



**Renata, Jackie and Danique  
at the ABC House**

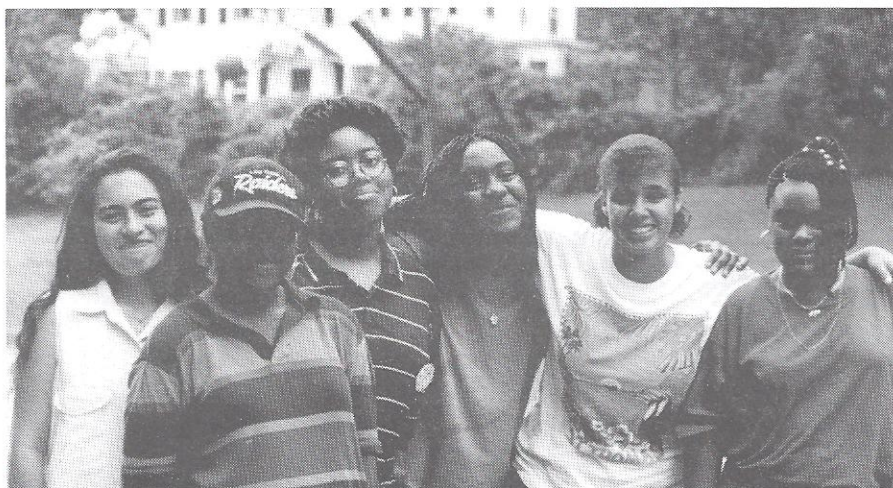
ABC House. My host and back-up host families, I'm happy to say are still the Helsteins and the McGroarty's. Along with our Resident Directors and the six of us girls, we intend to make this a splendid year!!"

Danique is returning to Darien as a sophomore. She had one of the best summers of her life this past summer. The first part of the summer was spent relaxing with her friends and "trying to

Algebra 2, Spanish 3, Weight Training and Concert Choir. She is working very hard and, she says, "I just hope my grades reflect my hard work."

Jacquie, also a returning sophomore, spent most of her time with her family. They went to the beach a few times, and one day when it was raining Jacquie's mom created a "beach day" inside their house. "That day was so much fun I didn't want it to end." They also visited The New York City Fire Department Museum, the Transit Museum and the Central Park and Bronx zoos. "I really enjoyed myself," says Jacquie, "I loved being home with my family, and I miss them a lot."

Jacquie, who is also currently volunteering at Person to Person, says her main goal this school year is to keep her grades up. She is currently taking Chemistry, Geometry, Western Civilization, Spanish 4 Honors and English Honors. "I intend to do a lot of studying!"



**Migdalia, Barbara, Nicole, Danique, Jackie and Renata**



We are always very interested in hearing news of our ABC in Darien graduates, so we were especially thrilled to receive a call from Shelley Dugas Thomas who was part of our program from 1984 to 1987. We asked Shelley to write down a few thoughts about her time spent here in Darien and about the path her life has taken since she left us. Shelley responded with a beautiful letter which we know she would like us to share with all of our readers. It is reproduced below.

## Shelley Dugas Thomas

**2709 Georgia Avenue • Omaha, NE 68147-2462 • 402-731-3130**

September 26, 1994

Dear ABC Board members:

I was delighted to hear from you so soon after speaking to Cherie Greene. My correspondence with ABC Darien is way overdue. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to get everyone caught up.

I am presently living in the heartland with my husband, Gregory Scott Thomas and cat, Keynu. We have been here for approximately eight months and love the clean air, light traffic and the low cost of corn. My husband works for Union Pacific Railroad, as a Senior financial analyst and I work with at risk teens for Boys Town.

Prior to our migration to the Midwest, we were soaking up the sun, Dixieland music and nightlife in Atlanta, Georgia. It was very hard to leave, but you go where the job takes you. During our three years in Atlanta, I worked with children with autism at Emory University's Autism Resource Center, and my husband worked for Coca Cola Foundation.

Before mortgage payments, life insurance and grocery lists, I experienced four wonderfully carefree years at Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts. As a first year student, I experienced the normal growing pains; finding a niche, figuring out how to read Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of the Day* in one day, and rediscovering the opposite sex. My last two years were the best. I was finally able to manage my academic, extracurricular and social life, and I also had my first real taste of self-assurance and independence. I no longer started to sweat and fidget when some one asked me, "So, what do you want to do with the rest of your life?"

I have fond memories of Darien ABC and I help keep them alive by speaking with fellow graduates, Denise Richards and Sohui Kim. My three years there (1984-1987) were filled with joy and pain, encouragement and discouragement, and enlightenment and confusion. Assimilating into the Darien community and high school was an overwhelming task. One, I was not emotionally or developmentally prepared to undertake. I did the best I could, and I learned and grew tremendously from the experience. My hormonal imbalance and struggle for autonomy wouldn't allow me to show my true appreciation back then. So THANK YOU! Del and Jean, Sharon and Gary, Eliza and Christopher, Mrs. Gage and Kleinman, and all those adults who gave me unconditional love and support and ultimately made my life success possible.

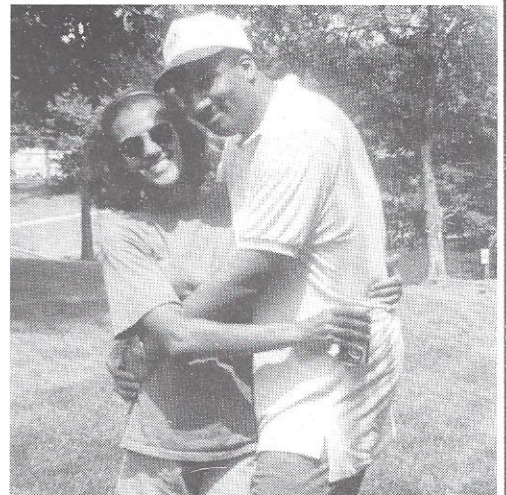
My life goals are to live each day to the fullest, don't take life or myself too seriously, and never forget to "give back." I plan to enter the University of Nebraska at Lincoln's Child Clinical Psychology program in the fall of 1996.

My advice to the present Darien ABC students is to laugh and cry, communicate concerns and accomplishments, embrace and share your differences and love life. My advice for the Resident Directors, Board members, teachers and counselors is to set limits and stick by them, expect the best, and provide continuous "air time" for the students.

Best wishes to you, the program and the community.

Sincerely,

Shelley Dugas Thomas





## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

A BETTER CHANCE in Darien is celebrating its 14th year with a full house! We are pleased that three outstanding new freshmen elected to accept our invitation to come to the Darien program this year giving us a complement of six students. The girls are led by our senior, Renata Alexis, who has exerted a steady influence on the two sophmores and three freshmen. I encourage you to visit the house and get to know the girls. I am confident that you will find it a very rewarding and enjoyable experience. They're a a happy group of highly capable students with a focus on excellence.

Our Resident Directors, **Thad and Kathleen Coulombe**, are with us for a third year, and their experience is paying wonderful dividends. Because of their efforts, we are off to our best start in years. The atmosphere in the house is warm and light-hearted, and the girls are grounded in a positive attitude of consistency and care.

On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank you for your support and contributions. We are proud of our program and its long list of graduates who have gone on to matriculate at the country's finest universities. You can feel proud that you are helping to secure a brighter future for those who pass through our doors. A journey commences with a step, and ABC is an excellent beginning to a path of understanding and academic achievement that serves as the foundation of our nation's future.

It's an honor to serve as president of this organization. Through the ABC program, Darien offers those less fortunate an opportunity to reach the American dream and gains in the knowledgethat with this effort, Darien, in turn, is well served.

I am proud of our community for it dares to care. America's future lies in education. America's strength lies in its heart. ABC Darien represents the best of both. It works because of people like you.

Respectfully,

**Cherie Greene, President**  
ABC Darien

## ENRICHMENT IDEAS???

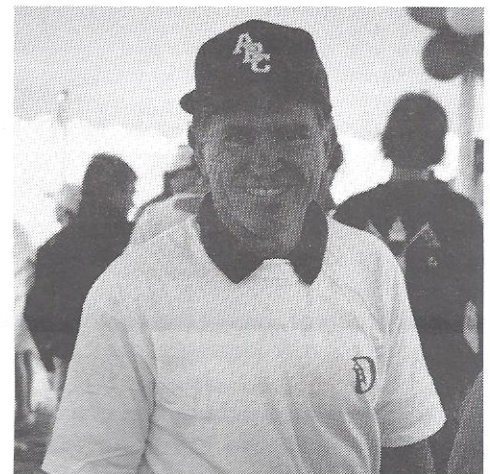
**Chris Place**, co-ordinator of Enrichment, has already planned two trips for the ABC girls. In December she has arranged for the girls to see a performance of the Boys Choir of Harlem, and in January, she will accompany them to a performance of "Arsenic and Old Lace" starring Joann Woodward.

Chris would love to get some standing bookshelves for the house and books with which to fill them. So if any of you have any extra shelves and copies of any classics and/or books on the high school's summer reading lists, please contact her at 966-1821

Tickets to sports events, the Ballet and Opera, and Broadway and off-Broadway productions would also be appreciated.

A hearty "Thanks" to **Chris Filmer** and his energetic committee for organizing last spring's FUNWALK. The rainy weather didn't stand a chance to spoil the FUN or the success of the fundraiser. Approximately \$10,000.00 was raised, and a good time was had by all.

The Girls' DHS Cross Country Team, shown below, set the pace for everyone !!



**We are very pleased that Thad and Kathleen Coulombe are again our ABC Resident Directors, beginning their third year in the ABC House.**