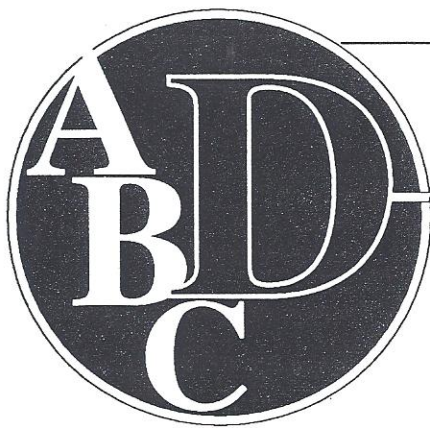


SPRING 1995



# NEWS

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

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Darien, CT 06820

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## Renata moves on...

Our 1995 ABC graduate, Renata Alexis, has graced the halls of Darien High School during the last four years. Her warm smile, gentle and caring nature, intelligence and insight will be missed both at school and at the ABC House. A native of Trinidad and currently living with her family in New York City, Renata has written the following reflection on her four years in the ABC program. Renata, we will sorely miss you and wish you the very best of life.



Renata Alexis

*There were times I was told I couldn't say "that" or I shouldn't do "that" because it might reflect negatively on the ABC program. Well, instead of being afraid and suppressing my beliefs, I have been able for the last four years to let my voice grow and be heard. I have been able to find myself and become the person I need to be with the support of my parents, family, ABC "sisters," and through programs like Respect for Differences and Human Rights. I will always remember those who supported me - teachers, friends and board members - who gave me no choice but to stay on a straight line. My heart will always remain with my families away from home, the Helteins and the McGroarty's. They always made me feel a part of their families and that I was at home when I was with them.*

*Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has made my four years in Darien the best that it could be. As I conclude what at times has felt like a perilous journey, I take with me both the good and the bad. The relationships that I have formed with my ABC "sisters" will never be allowed to die. I take with me the results of this very different experience, my hopes, my dreams, understanding, aspirations and all else I have gained from my time in Darien to my next stop at St. John's University. I wish success to all the girls who will be taking the journey after me, and to the ones I'm leaving behind this year. As I celebrate with those who came before me, knowing we have achieved the goals with which we entered the program.*

PLEASE CONSIDER  
HELPING US TO KEEP  
THIS WONDERFUL  
PROGRAM ALIVE AND  
WELL. WE HAVE JUST  
COMPLETED A  
TOWN-WIDE MAILING TO  
SOLICIT DONATIONS.  
NINETY PERCENT OF  
FUNDS USED TO RUN  
ABC IN DARIEN COME  
FROM PRIVATE  
DONATIONS. WE HOPE  
YOU WILL BE A DONOR!!

We are pleased to announce that ABC's 1995 graduate, Renata Alexis, was the recipient of the Principal's Leadership Award and the DHS Faculty Award at the annual Darien High School Awards Assembly on May 31st.

INTERESTED IN  
BECOMING A  
HOST FAMILY?  
IT'S ONE OF THE  
BEST  
EXPERIENCES  
YOU'LL EVER  
HAVE. FOR MORE  
INFORMATION  
CALL BETSY  
MCGROARTY  
359-0526.



# Super Support System.....

## DHS NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY TUTORS

This fall, after several years of discussion about putting together a tutoring program involving members of the National Honor Society and the ABC Program, Darien High School teachers Marcia Kasony and Dick Bochinski were able to start a program which will hopefully become a long-standing tradition.

The tutors participating in this year's program are seniors Katie Daly, Susan Chesley, Rachel Kinnunen, Sanae Kubota and Dana Rajczewski, many of whom also serve as tutors in the school's math and writing labs. As a result of the high number of committed volunteers, every week-night study session at the ABC House has the services of a tutor for at least an hour. The tutors are available to help in any subject, but the most popular area is definitely math, especially geometry.



Standing, left to right: Barbara Lawrence, Renata Alexis, Dan Rajczewski, Rachel Kinnunen, Susan Chesley, Sanae Kubota, Jackie Ferrer, and Study Hall Proctor Josie Dunnigan. Seated: Nicole Beckford, Danique Clarke and Migdalia Caraballo.

How valuable is the program for the tutors and the students? Dana Rajczewski says, "Helping Jackie or Migdalia with geometry forces me to review my math skills. Once in a while when we are faced with a difficult problem, we work through it together. It reminds me of the episodes of nail-biting panic that got me through freshman math, so I can relate to what they are going through.

When asked if she is helped by the tutoring program, Jackie Ferrer was enthusiastic. "When I have a question about my

work the tutors sit with me and explain it until I understand. I hope the program continues next year."

Besides the obvious academic importance of this program, it also provides another avenue for our ABC girls and other students at the high school to get to know one another and to exchange ideas, experiences and impressions. We all join Jackie in hoping that the great success of this year's tutoring program will continue in the future, and we offer a hearty thanks to all those involved.



Danique

### ALUMNAE, WHERE ARE THEY ??

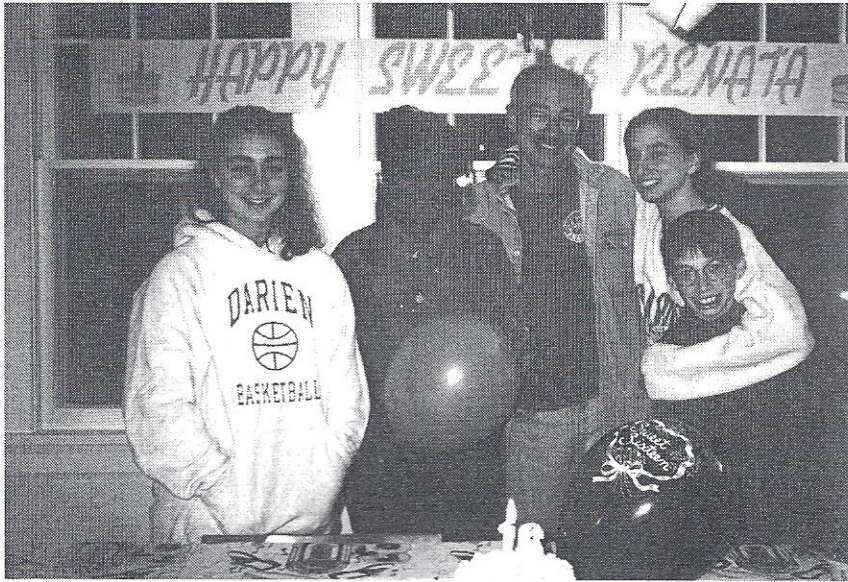
We are always extremely excited to hear news of our ABC graduates. This Christmas Aysha Ramseur, a sophomore at the University of Pennsylvania, and Tamara Loatman, a junior at the University of Virginia, visited the Erzens, Bristles and Tallmans. They are both happy and doing well and are in touch with ChaChi Aviles and Cielo Irizarry. Please contact Judy Eaton (656-2550) with any information concerning our past graduates. Here is a list of some of Darien's ABC alumnae.

LaRose Paris	(NYU Class of 1987)
Toni Frost	(Northwestern U. Class of 1988)
Kathy Marshall	(Northwestern U. Class of 1988)
Rosa Garcia	(Wesleyan Class of 1988)
Liz Tejada	(Cornell U. Class of 1988)
Orgylin Clarke	(Wesleyan Class of 1988)
Khisha Pratt	(Tufts U. Class of 1990)
Denise Richards	(U. of Pennsylvania Class of 1991)
Shelly Dugas	(Amherst College Class of 1991)
Edwina Chapman	(Dartmouth Class of 1993)
Julie Leung	(U. of Connecticut Class of 1993)
Schui Kim	(Barnard Class of 1994)
Alexa Aviles	(Columbia U. Class of 1995)
Cielo Irizarry	(Barnard Class of 1995)
Tamara Loatman	(U. of Virginia Class of 1996)
Aysha Ramseur	(U. of Pennsylvania Class of 1997)
So-Lan Liang	(Yale Class of 1997)



# .....at home and host home.

## THE HELSTEINS HAD A BALL !!



Maggie Helstein, Renata, Dick, Liz and Tim Helstein

### THE HOST FAMILY PROGRAM

The purpose of the Host Family Program is to provide a home away from home for our students... a change in environment from the pressures of group living in the house. Each student visits her Host Family and Back-up Host Family on regularly designated weekends. The girls are treated as members of the family, sharing their traditions, interests and conversations. This mutually beneficial relationship has become one of the outstanding aspects of Darien's ABC program. The families of Sue and Dick Helstein and Betsy and Bob McGroarty have opened their homes to Renata and have had the pleasure of sharing the last four years with her. The Helsteins, Renata's main Host Family, have shared their experience as follows:

*We can't believe it's already four years since Renata came to live with us as our ABC daughter. We have watched her blossom from a shy, reserved young lady to a self-confident young woman eager to try new experiences and capable of moving easily in all situations.*

*In our role as host family for Renata, although we began on the premise that we would be giving Renata a home away from home, in reality we feel that we have received as much from our relationship with her as she has received from us. This could not have been more clearly illustrated than on the day our son, then in fourth grade, came home from school relating an incident on his bus in which some one had made a disparaging remark about the capabilities of people of color. "I knew he was wrong, Mom, and I told him if you knew Renata, you wouldn't say that!" I have long remembered that innocent reply, so simply stated. It describes the incredible benefit of the ABC Program for us as a family.*

*Renata was different. She was a native of Trinidad. But for Tim on that bus, she was also somebody he cared about, somebody whose honor he wanted to defend, somebody he knew was worth defending because she was as smart and as nice and as fun to be with as any of the other people he cared about. She was and is a person to him, not a nondescript member of a minority group he knew little about. And now, four years later, Renata has indeed proven herself worthy of her little "brother's" defense.*

*Largely through the efforts of her family and church, and her school and ABC "sisters" and friends, Renata has blossomed into a young woman of character, competence and compassion. We feel privileged to have had the opportunity to have had her as part of our family for the last four years and wish her Godspeed in the years ahead. We will miss her.*

### HOST FAMILIES

Sue and Dick Helstein - Renata  
Mallory and Conrad Weymann - Jackie  
Bonnie and Bob Brown - Danique  
Marilyn and Bill Frank - Barbara  
Brenda and Allen Greene - Nicole  
Janet and Michael Grogan - Migdalia



Jackie

### BACK-UP HOST FAMILIES

Betsy and Bob McGroarty - Renata  
Chris and Howard Place - Jackie  
Jini and Bill Martens - Danique  
Dana and Hank Dunlop - Barbara  
Joan and Rick Agresta - Nicole  
Donna Holt & Jim Archibald - Migdalia



## Dear Friends and Colleagues of ABC,

As the sun rises on my next adventure in life, I want to express my deepest thanks for entrusting the ABC Darien program to my stewardship these last two years. It has been an honor to work with all of you.

I am comfortable stating that the ABC program is in solid financial condition and that we have made significant strides towards reaching the stated goal of providing a strong academic foundation for inner city minority students. We have grounded the program in discipline and a caring environment, providing our students with every opportunity to succeed and become contributing members of our future society.

This year, Darien celebrates its fourteenth year affiliated with ABC and we are pleased to welcome our neighbor, Wilton, to the ABC family. Wilton expects its first students in the Fall of 1996. We are flattered that they have chosen to include us in the development of their program. Our founders can be very proud.

Overall, this year has been very successful. The house was at full complement and our lone senior, Renata, has provided calm leadership. As you know, Renata is graduating and will be attending one of her several college acceptances. Her choice to remain local is a tribute to her love of New York and her family. We rejoice in her success.

Our success as a program is a composite of your individual contributions. I want to thank each of you for the myriad and unsung efforts that you have made on behalf of our students. Your faith in the good will of mankind and the importance of education are a credit to yourselves and your families. You represent the very best that Darien has to offer. I am confident that our students will build upon this foundation and take the small steps along the brighter path of knowledge and tolerance.

As always there are those who give more than is asked and who, through their personal efforts, have added dimension to our success. In particular, I want to thank Debbie Parnon for her support, her counsel and her friendship. I am delighted to be turning the reigns over to her. She is an extremely capable and caring person. In addition, special thanks should go to those leaving the board, having served the program so well. Finally, and most importantly, I want to thank a very special couple, Thad and Kathleen Coulombe. As resident directors these last three years, they have brought stability, focus, love and guidance to our students. Without their strong spirit and sense of fairness, our girls may not have persevered. Its difficult to convey to you the incredible commitment to parenting that Thad and Kathleen have made to our students. There's no description adequate to illustrate the joys and sorrows of being on the firing line with six teenage girls. They have provided the security necessary for success and they have been exceptional role models. I wish them great happiness as they move on to a more quiet life.

On a personal note, I have grown enormously as your President. It has been an unparalleled experience and one that will remain with me throughout my years. Thank you for your support and encouragement. I will treasure it always.

Respectfully,

Cherie Greene, President  
ABC Darien

## MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!!

ABC FUN WALK — SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 1995



Another Fun Walk is in the works! This one will also include a "Run" portion for you speedier athletes! We hope to attract at least 300 participants of all ages and to raise enough money to cover half the ABC annual budget. Again, the Fun Run/Walk will be headquartered at the High School. Chris Filmer, the event's chairman, promises prizes, food, music, aerobics classes and lots of FUN!!! Please plan on participating. ABC is a great cause, and this is a great chance to help. Look in your mail, newspapers and for flyers around town next September for more details, or call Chris Filmer at 655-2445.