

# The Scholar

June 1996

A Better Chance in Darien Newsletter

Volume I

Nº II

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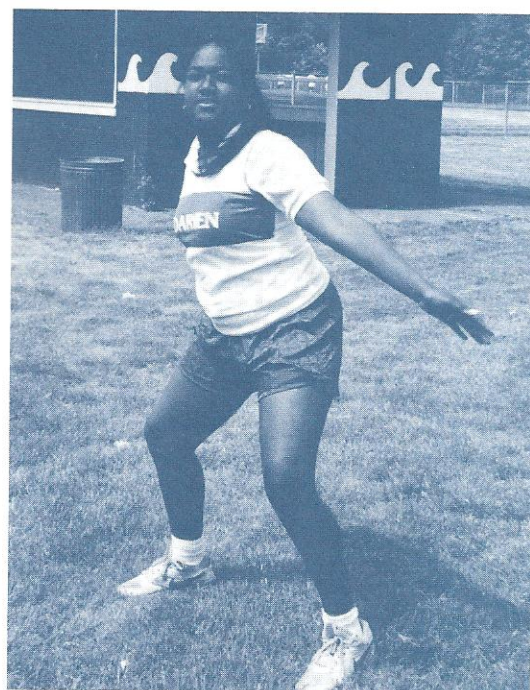


## Yeah! School's Out!!!

**F**illed with music, sports, studies, volunteer and part-time jobs this has been an amazing year! Danique and Chanelle, as members of the DHS Concert Choir, participated in the spring Pops Concert. Jackie, Erica and Danique worked on the Human Rights Day Committee, with Danique giving the opening speech for the Day, introducing the keynote speaker, Mr. Bill Burkley from South Africa. Debbie Parnon introduced Danique, Jackie and Erica to our nation's capital over the April break. The girls visited Georgetown, Trinity, Howard, University of Maryland and George Washington. Danique was especially moved by the Holocaust Museum and the Vietnam Memorial. Jackie was awed by the beauty of Capitol Hill. Erica loved walking around the Mall and feeling the sense of history. Everyone loved the Lincoln Memorial and no one liked the Green Room in the White House!! The Blue Wave benefitted from Chanelle's talents as student manager of the men's freshman lacrosse team, while Barbara's talents helped the track team in discus and shotput, Erica played on the freshman softball team and Migdalia split her time between an after-school job and volunteer work at Person-to-Person.

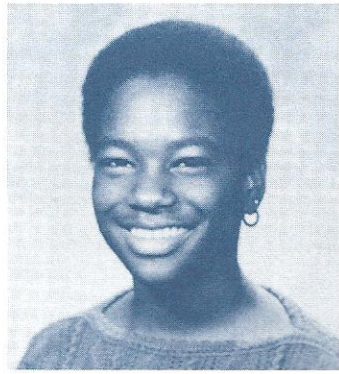
## Con- gratulations!

**W**hat does it take to be a winner? How about a full house of hardwork and dedication?! Honors and high honors were awarded each student this school year. Jackie achieved High Honors first semester, while Chanelle, Migdalia, Danique, Barbara and Erica made the Honor Roll. Migdalia joined Jackie at the High Honors level spring semester, while the others kept their status on the Honor Roll. In May, Migdalia won First Place on the National Spanish Exam for Bilingual Advanced Level 4 and Jackie received an award for excellence in Spanish. Barbara and Chanelle were asked to join the Blue Wave Dancers--we all know how stiff that competition is! Way to go you two! Congratulations to one and all for a most successful year!





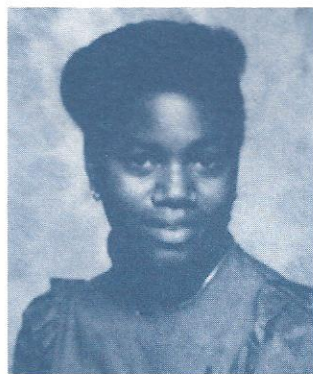
# Alumna News



Class of '83

La Rose Parris

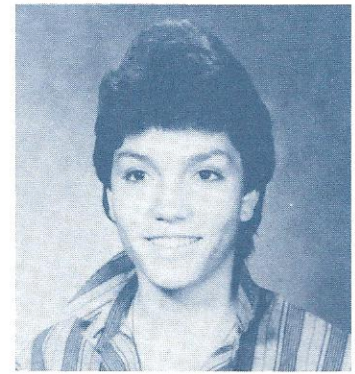
One of Darien's first ABC graduates, La Rose is currently working in Commack, LI. This September she will be entering graduate school at Sarah Lawrence. La Rose spent two years in Taiwan learning and teaching Chinese. She then attended New York University where she received her BA in History in 1990. She has worked as a free lance writer and for the last four years has been working at the Urban Justice Center where she has been a Clinic Supervisor and an Immigration Specialist. La Rose feels that attending Darien High School was excellent preparation for college and is very much looking forward to sharing in our 15th Anniversary Celebration.



Class of '84

Joz "Kathy" Marshall Jones

Kathy currently lives in Brooklyn, New York, is married to Paul R. Jones, and is the mother of two small children, Paul, Jr., two years and Kayla, eight months. She received her bachelors degree from Northwestern University in 1988 and is now juggling her duties as a mother with her career as a Christian Elementary School administrator. Kathy remembers feeling extremely isolated and homesick as a fourteen year-old at DHS, yet she feels that the experience here was rewarding. She stays in contact with some of her ABC mentors and friends.



Class of '84

Elizabeth Tejada Reyes

After graduating from DHS, Elizabeth went on to Cornell University and was awarded a bachelors degree in Political Science in 1988. She pursued a career on Wall Street, where she specialized in Government Securities and bonds, working at Nations Bank. Elizabeth has now become a full time mother. She and her husband, Eric, live in Yonkers, New York, have a two and a half year-old daughter, named Samantha Christina and a new-born son(born May 24th), named after his father. "The culture shock of coming to Darien was at first a little unpleasant, but in retrospect I know it made me a stronger person and more open to people of different backgrounds."

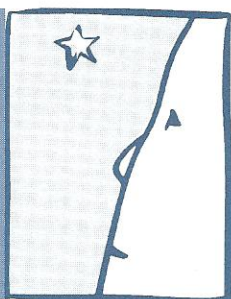


Class '87

Shelley Dugas Thomas

After graduating from DHS, Shelly spent "four wonderfully carefree years at Amherst College." After receiving her degree in 1991 she resided in Atlanta for three years and worked with autistic children at Emory University's Autism Resource Center. She is presently residing in Omaha, Nebraska, where she lives with her husband, Gregory Scott Thomas, and works with at risk teens at Boys Town. Shelley feels that the ABC program offered her positive role models and helped her to develop the confidence she needed to achieve academic, social and professional excellence.





# Catching the Dream for Gifted Children

Part II

by Judith B. Griffin  
A Better Chance, Inc.

**A**T ABC our first commitment is to believe that there is treasure where others may believe there is none. With this belief locked in mind and heart, ABC's teachers, guidance counselors, coaches, Boys and Girls Club leaders, church members . . . have returned year after year after year to the inner cities of America and any place else children of color may be recruited. And we found children like Amanda, a foster child from the Bronx, abandoned on a New York City street corner at age 3, who graduated from her ABC school having earned a full scholarship to Stanford University. We found William, a boy from a large, poor southern family, who, after college and business school, has become a managing partner in one of the country's foremost brokerage firms. We found Sylvester in Chicago's Cabrini Green public housing project. After graduating from Harvard and Stanford universities, Sylvester has become a correspondent for Time magazine. And we found a kid from Cleveland's east side, named Tracy Chapman.

We find our children regardless of the statistics that might encourage us to believe that they do not exist --regardless of the predictions of the non-believers. We don't dare allow ourselves to become discouraged. We tell the world about the dreams we have caught. We share our 8,000 anecdotes, and we speculate eagerly about the children waiting to be discovered, to have their intellect cultivated, refined, sharpened into demonstrable skill and capability. We urge others to go catch some dreams themselves. And we try our darndest to make believers out of nonbelievers.

The gifts and talents of these children are not always so obvious if one depends on the traditional measures

of intelligence that educators have come to rely on. So we frequently have to answer the question: Where is your evidence? How can you believe in what you cannot see?

This brings me to the second commitment ABC has kept: In our 29 years of dream-catching, we have continuously worked at expanding our thinking about how to identify these children that we know are there. Detecting, estimating, and evaluating "intelligence" is still typically based on test data: performance on an intelligence test, performance on an achievement test, and teacher recommendations. Further, they have found that an IQ score of a predetermined level remains the most important factor determining placement of a gifted child.

But the dreamers and dreams that ABC catches do not come well-rehearsed for test-taking. They have not been groomed by a math tutor, or a summer at computer camp, or by watching mom or dad solve problems at the office. Maybe they don't have many books or games around the house. Maybe their parents work too many jobs to have time to answer questions. Maybe their grammar isn't all that great. Maybe English is their second language.

So, many of my children will not demonstrate their giftedness through high test scores or other methods traditionally used to gauge giftedness. And in this regard, they are like many other students who have difficulty taking tests. So at ABC, we have trained ourselves to look beyond standardized measurement. We have learned to use other yardsticks.

... We look for the child who has a

strong sense of self, pride, and worth. We look for the child with an independent mind--the child who can resist peer pressure and other typical negative social conditioning--the child who, on occasion, can even resist the teacher. We look for the child who, at critical points in his or her development is prone to asking questions such as 'Who am I?' or 'Where am I going?' We look for the child who believes that her self-determination, creativity, and hard work will pay off. We look for the child who can channel his anger at being disadvantaged into strategic action to change his situation. And at ABC we especially look for the child who is willing to take a risk. One who is willing to endure the anxiety, suspense, disappointment, and humiliation inherent in experimenting with new behaviors and situations. One who can persevere.

Melding the . . . human values and the scientific--enables us to evaluate ability, to know our children intimately and herald their potential.

... Statistics show that within every state, every city, every district, every school, every grade, every classroom in this country, there is a proportion of students who are gifted. And it is the same proportion that is found in the most affluent communities in this nation.

... We will make reaching our rule. We can reach to believe. We can reach to expand our thinking. We can reach to blame ourselves and not our children. We can reach to impart confidence. And we can reach and catch, those precious dreams.

Excerpt from *Gifted Child Quarterly*.

For a reprint of this article please call Debbie Parnon at 655 . 7060.



# Letter *from the* President

This year was truly an inspired year for everyone involved with ABC. Most importantly, the girls had an outstanding academic year, with each of them achieving Honors or High Honors. The time and dedication given to the program throughout the year by Lynn Branstrom and members of the DHS National Honor Society goes beyond what a mere Thank You could express.

All of the positive energy at the house has produced some exciting responses by ABC board members. Thanks to Chris Filmer, and his committee, the Fun Walk kicked off a tremendously successful year of fundraising.

Managing Editors: Judy Eaton, Sandra McDonnell

Designer: Sandra McDonnell, **SJM**Design

Through the exceptional personal efforts of Charlie Eaton, the tireless efforts of our December mailing chairmen, Sue Mandel and Ron Hammer and the generosity of our community we raised over 75% of our annual budget by February. Sandy McDonnell and Judy Eaton not only renamed, redesigned and reformatted our newsletter, but Sandy was also responsible for uplifting our image by redesigning the ABC in Darien logo. Parties played up the Diana Ross Super Bowl XXX connection. The Dodecaphonics concert was great entertainment and publicized the historic relationship between Dartmouth and ABC. Our financial goal was met and surpassed with the proceeds from our June Tag Sale!

In addition to our financial success we continue to enjoy the personal contributions that make this program so rich. Dianne and Bob Johnson have been the dependable foundation upon which much of this year's success can be attributed. The Congregational Church has bestowed their blessing on us with a 5-year lease renewal. Consistent support of the DHS faculty and administrators continued to enhance the academic and personal lives of our students. Our Host & Back-Up Host Families provide loving homes away from home and the countless friends of ABC who are in touch with the girls throughout the year add the extras that we sometimes take for granted.

So another year has flown by and we are already anticipating next year's 15th Anniversary Celebration and happily all our students will be back in September. Again, we thank you for your generosity and we hope your overwhelmingly enthusiastic support will continue to make next year just as exciting and rewarding as this past year.

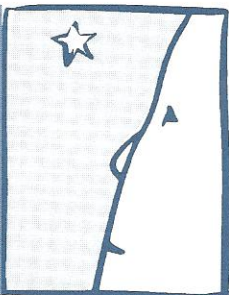
Debbie Parnon, President

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# Spring Semester PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS action! camera!



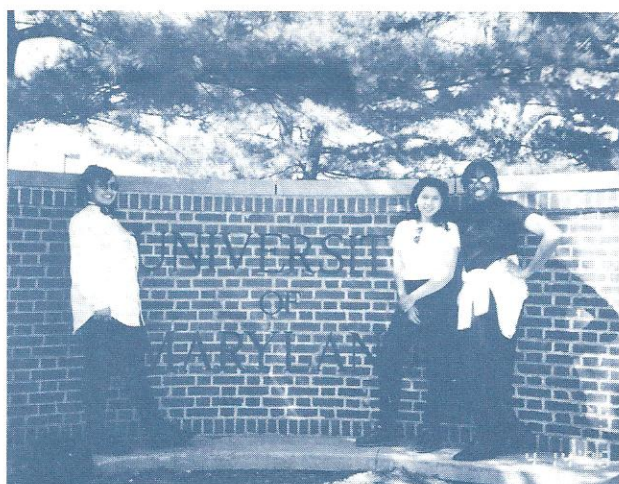
Chanelle as Manager of Boy's Lacrosse



Erica Getting Ready to Play Softball



Barbara Competes at State Meet



In Search of the Perfect College



June Cobb

June Cobb was nominated by the ABC Board to represent ABC at Volunteer Recognition Day on May 9. June was nominated because of her tireless efforts to support A Better Chance in her position on the Executive Board. She is always ready and willing to do whatever needs doing and quietly goes the extra mile without being asked. A board member since 1987, June has been our comptroller since 1990. She is the kind of board member every volunteer organization would love to have. We are very lucky to have her!



Posing With the Dodecapronics



Past Board Presidents Meeting to Plan 15th Anniversary



