

The Scholar

January 1996

A Better Chance in Darien Newsletter

Volume I

No I

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What's Happen

With school and evening study hours consuming a good twelve hours, five days a week it's a wonder there is any time for other activities! Youth makes it all happen. The girls volunteer at Person-to-Person on a daily basis and periodically at the Make-a-Wish Foundation. Home-coming began at 7:00, the morning of September 30 with a trip to the Adam Broderick Image Group in Ridgefield to be treated to hair cuts, styling and make-up. Trips to look at colleges began for Jackie and Danique with a visit to Smith College. Debbie Parnon took the girls to Boston in December to look at schools and to see a performance called, "Black Nativity." A trip to Washington, DC is planned for the Spring to visit some of the universities and to take in the sights-- perhaps even those magnificent cherry blossoms! Everyone participated in the World of Difference workshop Nov. 30. The girls were excited about the program and are looking forward to attending the follow-up workshop and dance at Fairfield Prep toward the end of the month.

Celebration

There's a lot to celebrate this season! Four of our students made honor roll first quarter and now all energies are being gathered to take mid-term exams, beginning January 24, by storm. How well would we do on a Chemistry, Physics or Neo!!! Math mid-term today?! Families and Board Members attended the House Christmas party on December 17. A great time was had by all and it provided a wonderful opportunity to get to know parents, relatives and siblings. Renata, who graduated last year and is now doing very well at St. John's University, surprised everyone by stopping by. Jackie's aunt has promised to return and cook a fabulous Spanish feast this Spring-- perhaps to celebrate mid-term results!



New Girls



Class of '99, House Fire Marshall

Chanelle Anderson

Hello, hello, my full name is Chanelle Renée Anderson, and I am from the Bronx. I came to Darien in September and have been really enjoying myself. I miss my old friends but I'm quickly making new ones here in town. Everyone is very warm and friendly and they make me feel right at home. I enjoy being around these new friends and in my classes, which are: Drama, Reading and Study Skills, Biology and Geometry. I would say my favorites are Drama and Geometry. I also have the greatest and most helpful teachers there for me. They are extremely supportive. I also volunteer at Person-to-Person at St. Luke's Church after school.



Class of '99, House Secretary

Erica Pardo

Hello! My name is Erica Pardo and I'm from Brooklyn, New York but this past summer moved, with my parents and sister to Pennsylvania. I am the youngest of five children--one brother and three sisters. They are basically on their own with careers and I guess I'm on my own now too!! My favorite subject is Algebra because of Mr. Jockers--my teacher--who makes me understand math. I can't believe I'm actually saying I like math--a great teacher sure does make a difference! My worst class is tennis--I'm not exactly Steffi Graff!! I would trade anything for that class but I'm trying. Monday through Thursday I volunteer at Person-to-Person. ABC is a new experience for me and I'm glad I was given the opportunity to take part in the program. I enjoy being in Darien. It's different, but I'll get used to it!!

New Adults



House Parents

Bob & Dianne Johnson

Lifelong residents of Norwalk, we've been married for three years. We had each been working two jobs to get a start in life, when we heard of the ABC House opportunity. While serving as Resident Directors is a job, we have been pleasantly surprised by the support we have gotten from the Board and the girls. We are impressed with the girls' willingness to work hard at their education and social activities. We consider ourselves extremely lucky to have this special group of young adults & hope to have a positive influence on their lives during these important High School years.



Cook

Olivia Finton

I came to New England six years ago from California to work in the childcare profession. When not working or cooking at ABC I attend Norwalk Community College, matriculating credits toward a degree in Business with a minor in French. I really love my cooking job at ABC, not only because I love to cook but also for the interaction with the girls. It's an experience I wouldn't want to miss!



Tutor

Lynn Branstrom

I came to ABC after having served as Head teacher for the 6th through 8th grades at the Plumfield School for twelve years. In addition to helping the ABC girls with their studies (a job that I adore!), I am a mother, private tutor for a number of other students, Superintendent of the Norwalk Methodist Sunday Schools and President of the Board of the Sunshine Christian Nursery School.

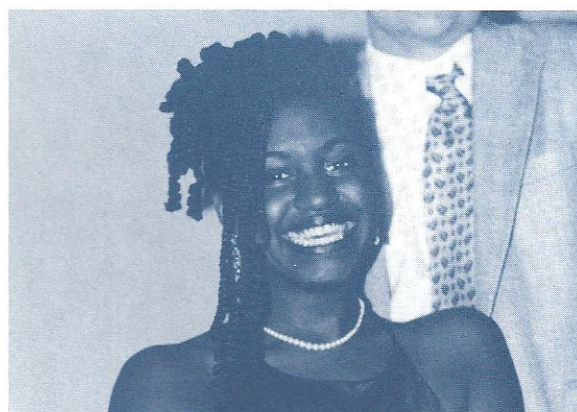
Familiar Faces



Class of '97, House Spokesperson

Jacqueline Ferrer

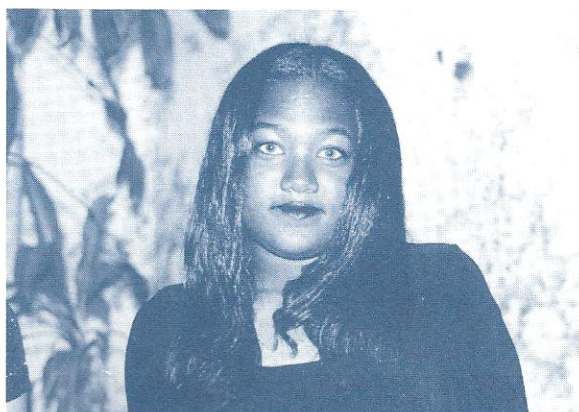
In June I left Darien and went to a new home--I now live with my aunt Rosa and my cousins. I spent most of my summer in school taking a writing course. Summer school made me realize I have to do my school work during the school year or face the consequences! Vacation also made me form a better relationship with my aunts, especially Aunt Emily and my sister, Brenda. I miss my whole family and love them a lot. I also spent a lot of time with Renata and really miss her. Even though it was so hard for me to leave everyone, I realized this would be the most important year of my high school career so here I am! Because I have some of the best teachers at DHS I love all my classes, from American Literature to Physics. After school I volunteer at Person-to-Person and Make A Wish Foundation. I also want to thank my host families, the Weymanns and the Places. I know they support me in everything I do - I really appreciate it. They always make me feel at home and I love both families.



Class '97, House Events Coordinator

Danique Clarke

Hello! My name is Danique and this is my third year here at ABC. I had a wonderful summer, spending the first part sleeping late!, hanging out with my old friends and meeting new ones. Toward the end of the summer I went to St. Thomas, U.S.V.I. to visit my Grandmother. The beautiful beaches, my Grandmother's wonderful friends and the sweet people on the island made it very difficult to leave. When I returned home there was a big surprise waiting for me--a new, bigger apartment for my family. After saying goodbye to the apartment I've known as home for the past ten years, I was ready to start a new year here in Darien. This year has proven to be challenging, with subjects like Pre-Calculus, American Literature and Physics keeping me more than busy! I am continuing with my afterschool job at Darien High School. I was glad to return to my friends and my host families in September, the Browns and the Gardners. I feel so lucky to have these people and many others enriching my life.



Class '98, House Treasurer

Barbara Lawrence

I had a great time this summer, visiting friends in Jamestown, New York and Pennsylvania. However, I'm really happy I chose to come back to Darien High School. This semester I'm taking English, Geometry, Reading and Study Skills, Spanish III, and Western Civ II. I am volunteering at Person-to-Person every day after school. I'm really, really happy to have my roommate, Migdalia, back! This year might turn out to be even better than last year. I'll keep you posted!



Class '98, Photographer

Migdalia Caraballo

I am definitely happy to be back with the girls, especially my roommate, Barbara. I'm not as homesick this year and am enjoying living in Darien much more. I spend most of my time studying (this year I'm really concentrating more on my studies and getting better grades!), but am looking very forward to being on the track team this Spring.

Letter from the President

As we make our way through the winter doldrums, I realize how quickly time flies, beginning with getting the house ready for the girls, welcoming them back to school and coming this far -- June seems like it's just around the corner! My thoughts turn to mulling over everything that a school year holds and all the support these activities require from everyone involved with the program. You will see, as you look through the Newsletter, that this is a year of many new beginnings. We have welcomed two new freshmen, new

Resident Directors, a cook and a new president. The changes have been embraced with general enthusiasm. I guess the best indication of how well things are going is the success exhibited by our students. We finished the fall term with one of the strongest fall marking periods we've seen in a long time.

One of the few constants this year is our need to raise the funds to support our budget. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Chris Filmer and the members of his committee we started our fund raising season with the Fun Walk in September. Our efforts to date have brought in approximately \$36,000 which makes us \$27,000 shy of the \$63,000 needed to keep the house running. I am extremely excited about what the remainder of this year promises. The girls are working hard, the Resident Directors are maintaining a nurturing home for the girls, our cook is cooking up marvelous meals and the Board is behind the scene performing all the necessary duties crucial to the operation of the ABC program.

All these components along with your financial support will guarantee a healthy, a happy and successful year.

Debbie Parnon
President

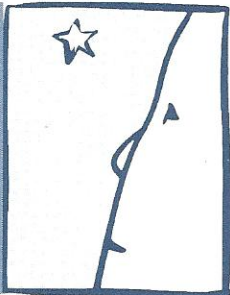
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Catching the Dream for Gifted Children

by Judith B. Griffin
A Better Chance, Inc.

A Better Chance is a national academic talent search agency. We work with a network of dedicated volunteers who scout minority communities throughout the country on a perpetual mission to find overlooked gifted children . . . year after year, ABC's visits to these communities uncover trove after trove of diamonds -- uncut, unpolished but of untold value. In 29 years we have discovered more than 8,000 such children. And in return for their gifts, we have offered one--access to an excellent education.

We find our children as they are ready to enter high school. We work with 160 member schools across the nation to offer them outstanding places to learn --places where these young students' gifts can be opened, shared, and celebrated. Most of ABC's member schools are private day and boarding schools. And they are among the most highly selective and most academically rigorous schools in the country, schools like Phillips Exeter, Choate Rosemary Hall, and Lawrenceville. Each year, we place about 300 students in schools like these.

Another 60 children are placed annually in the outstanding public high schools of 23 affluent communities like Edina, Minnesota, Wellesley and Amherst, Massachusetts, and New Canaan & Darien, CT. Citizens of these communities also want to offer our children a better chance at life. So residents generously open their hearts and homes and pocketbooks, contributing each year some \$60,000 to provide funding for an ABC House in which anywhere from 6 to 12 young ABC scholars live while attending the local high school. Contributions are used to furnish and maintain the house, hire a resident director to live there with the children, hire a cook, buy food. Residents act as host families on weekends, attend parent-

teacher conferences, and are on hand to cheer at track meets, school plays and ball games.

Today, over 1,000 ABC scholars are enrolled at our member schools, preparing themselves for college and for successful lives. Most have come to these schools fresh from communities infamous for the problems of their education systems--high drop-out rates, overcrowded classrooms, outdated equipment, and inadequate materials . . . We send them on their way after 3 days of orientation, days crammed full of good wishes, practical advice, encouragement and love. Thus armed, bearing their gifts of intelligence and tenacity and courage and their dreams of achievement, they enter schools which have educated many of our country's presidents, corporate executives and high-achieving professionals. And day after day, year after year, our children perform, far above and beyond anyone's expectations -- except perhaps their own.

Here are some of the dreamers and the dreams that ABC has caught over the years: Jesse, tenth-born in a family of Georgia sharecroppers. A teacher at Jesse's school contacted ABC, and Jesse was accepted at a public school program in Hanover, New Hampshire, where he soon began to blossom. His classroom performance and leadership ability earned him admission to Dartmouth College, from which he graduated, with honors, a Rhodes Scholar. After 2 years of study at Oxford, he returned to America to enter Harvard Law School. He then went home to his native Georgia, settling only a few miles from the small community in which he grew up. He is presently a partner in one of Atlanta's leading law firms. And there is Miguel, from a small Hispanic community in California. At the Thacher School he excelled academically doing exceptional work in

several advanced placement courses. In his senior year, Miguel was elected school chairman. Thacher's highest elected office. Accepted at Stanford, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, Miguel is presently a senior at Georgetown University. He has written of his ABC experiences: While my school has given me its very best opportunities, my self-respect and self-assertiveness have steered my life into a bigger arena of the world. **I can** make a difference; **I will** make a difference." . . .

Some might be tempted to dismiss these dream-come-true anecdotes as aberrations. But to date, ABC has compiled more than 8,000 of them--far too many to be dismissed. In effect, **A Better Chance** has become a clearinghouse of dreams, built on a solid foundation of proven individual performance. And if we have done nothing else in our 29 years, we have successfully defied the myth that there are few, if any, gifted to be found among communities of those labeled "culturally different" or "disadvantaged."

So ABC's 8,000 anecdotes have become a body of research constituting empirical evidence that gifted children of color, often of poverty, are out there, waiting to be discovered, waiting to prove their potential and America's promise.

It is our challenge, yours and mine, to find those children, to believe in them, to guide them, to teach them. It is our challenge, to country and to self, to catch these dreams. For they are slipping through the hands of so many others, leaving our country bereft of some of its best potential . . .

Excerpt from *Gifted Child Quarterly*.
To be continued Spring issue of "The Scholar"

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

AT THE HOME Movies

A Far Off Place



The Power of One



A Month by the Lake



Cinema Paradiso



Books!!

An American Town Goes To War

by Tony Pavia

DHS's own Assistant principal has written an insightful historical portrayal of WWII on the local level, based on experiences, relayed to him, by veterans living in Stamford.

B. Smith's Entertaining and Cooking for Friends

by Barbara Smith

Founding partner and creative genius behind B.N. Smith's restaurants in New York's theater district and Washington D.C., Ms. Smith speaks with a jazzy rhythm, sharing her entertainment style and providing a global perspective as she addresses the entertaining needs of a new generation. Try the Grilled Salmon & Wild Mushroom Salad & Sweet Potato Pecan Pie with Praline Sauce!

Having Our Say, The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years

by Sarah Delany & A. Elizabeth Delany

"The Delany Sisters are a national treasure... They are remarkable members of a remarkable American family... The Delany sisters were taught to participate in history, not just witness it, and they have the wit to shape their history with style..."

Motherwit: An Alabama Midwife's Story

by Onnie Lee Logan as Told to Katherine Clark.

"An amazing story. A heroic woman..."

Do I Dare Disturb the Universe? *by Charlise Lyles*

A powerful and vivid memoir of an African American woman coming of age with the legacy of the civil rights movement... race riots, the Black Panthers and school and scholarship programs... A compelling portrait of the girl she was and the woman she became."

PLEDGE

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A Better Chance of Darien, Inc.

P.O. Box 3204

Darien, CT 06820

Name:

Address:

★ \$50

★ \$100

★ Other _____

Please make check payable to "A Better Chance." Thank you.

Thanks!

We especially appreciate the generous contributions from local merchants and members of our community!!!!

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Money Fundraising

Don't Forget: The dumpster behind the ABC House. Bring all your magazines, catalogues, office paper, shirt cardboards, newspapers, corrugated card board (yes you can throw this all together!!!) Everytime the dumpster is filled ABC gets paid.

Upcoming Events:

Super Bowl Parties

Washington Trip

Wishes Desires

Computer

Computer Printer

After School Drivers

Dehumidifier

Window Fans

VCR

I am pleased to support ABC in Darien.

FOR THE KIDS

FOR YOU

FOR ALL OF US

