

ABC annual car wash



Niya's spirited energy and positive attitude at her first annual Car Wash was a special treat to see. Here she is advertising the event along Heights Road with Jay Jacobs.



DHS Orchestra

Caurice Wynter, ABC student and violinist in the DHS Orchestra, had the opportunity to perform recently in the high school auditorium with Barrage, "a high octane fiddle-fest that features an international, multi-talented cast performing an eclectic mix of music, song and dance." Caurice is seen here savoring the music with Kazzandra Tarnowsky.



The girls put an amazing effort into this year's Car Wash which helps fund their expenses when they head off to college. Shown here, Olaide Ajomagberin, Caurice Wynter and Meggie Wells take a break to smile for the camera between washes.

ABC FACTS

**MISSION:** To provide scholarships to academically talented minority girls from under-served areas allowing them to realize their academic and social potential while living in Darien and attending DHS.

**ENROLLMENT:** Six girls currently from New York and New Jersey.

**HISTORY:** Twenty-seven years in Darien; 34 girls have graduated from the program.

**WHERE DO THEY GO?** Graduates have entered colleges such as Columbia, Cornell, UVA and Syracuse.

**STAFF:** Two resident directors, cook, tutors, and part-time Program Director as needed.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Twenty-eight local residents.

**HOST FAMILIES:** Twelve families host the girls two weekends each month.

**RESIDENCE:** 11 Brookside Road—provided by the First Congregational Church, maintained by ABC Darien. The Budget: \$155,000 per year, covering staff, food, utilities, house maintenance, enrichment expenses and supplies.

**HOW TO GIVE:** If you would like to contribute to ABC in Darien, send donations to P.O. Box 3204, Darien, CT 06820 or Donate Online at [www.abcdarien.com](http://www.abcdarien.com)



Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1963

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Jennienne Burke, Co-President
- Susie Littlefield, Co-President
- Basheera Abdus-Sabur
- Robin Ackerman
- Doug Anderson
- Donna Berizzi
- Mary Bloomer
- Yvette Eenkema van Dijk
- Avery Flowers
- Sandy Filmer
- Anne Geissinger
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- Cindy Heck
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- Irene Hernandez
- Eliot Jacobs
- Janet Kindy
- Phil Meyer
- Sharon Moore
- Susan Mulderrig
- Aysa Ramseur
- Jackie Scott
- Tony Shaw
- Tamsin Sickinger
- Alison von Klemperer
- Susan Wilson
- Jane Yezzi

Francis Janosco, Resident Director  
Julie Parham, Resident Director  
Vyvyan Burns, Program Director

HOST FAMILIES

- Julia and Dan Anderson
- Delice and David Bolotin
- Wendy and Ned Brokaw
- Susan and Ted Collins
- Cokey and Jim Concannon
- Alexia and Richard Duker
- Yvette and Pieter Eenkema van Dijk
- Minina and Bob Johnston
- Dale and John O'Brien
- Callie and Tighe Sullivan
- Nancy and Doug Wells
- Susan and John Wilson

STUDENTS

- Melinda Siew, 2009
- Chidinma Amakiri, 2010
- Caurice Wynter, 2010
- Olaide Ajomagberin, 2011
- Anthia Diaz, 2011
- Niya Wright, 2012

The Scholar

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN NEWSLETTER

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A CHALLENGING COURSE OF A DIFFERENT KIND...

It was not the usual day in the park as ABC scholars and their host siblings spent a day challenging themselves and strengthening bonds at the Adventure Challenge Course at Scalzi Park in Stamford. This program, developed by the Stamford Parks and Recreation Department, offers an exciting and powerful educational experience promoting team development and personal growth. The groups worked physically and mentally together to push beyond perceived boundaries to achieve success in a series of high and low challenge elements.



The toughest challenge was traversing the Cat Walk, a telephone pole suspended 20 feet above ground as demonstrated here by Lila Sullivan and Melinda Siew. On the Cat Walk, they inched across to the center where they met their partner and then had to figure out how to pass one another without falling.



When the Cat Walk was completed, the girls repelled to the ground. An amazing accomplishment as exhibited here by Melinda Siew.



After donning brightly colored safety helmets, the group paused to pose for a photo. Pictured here are: (back row) Jessie Sullivan, Niya, Chiddy, Caurice, Lonneke Eenkema van Dijk, and AnnaRae Anderson; (front row) Olaide, Lila Sullivan, Melinda and Anthia.



The day ended with tubing on Holly Pond. If Anthia's and Olaide's smiles were any indication, everyone had a fantastic day!

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For our scholars  
and for all of  
Darien as well



Post Office Box 3204  
Darien, CT 06820



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## Host Family Experiences

Each ABC student is paired with two Darien families who host the students one weekend and one Sunday a month. This allows the students to form a closer relationship with people in the community. So much is learned by the students and their "host families" as they spend time together. Here are some photos of those moments shared.



While snacking on the fruits of their labor, (left to right) Lindsey Green, Meg Forelli, Anthia, Ana Johnston, and Lily Johnston bask in the fall sunshine at a local orchard.



The dolls may be "Ugly," but the celebration was charming. Shown here feting Anthia are: (back row) Niya, Caurice, Chiddy and Olaide; and (front row) Lila Sullivan, Tiger Sullivan, Anthia, Shannon Burke and Melinda.



Pretty as a picture....A group of DHS students gathered at the Eenkema van Dijk residence before heading off to the prom last May. Featured here are: Caurice, Dana Cary, Victor Tolliver, Melinda, Peter Kyriakos, Katherine Hedlund, Maarten Eenkema van Dijk, and Elizabeth Ropp.

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

(an excerpt from a recent letter from Kate Nkechi Ofikuru - DHS class of '01)

... I figured now would be a great time to reflect a little. Though it may seem so long ago, I have not forgotten the incredible blessing all of you have been to me in one way or another on the occasion of my Masters Graduation celebration (Teachers College, Columbia University.)

After I took my tour of graduations in the Northeast, I had to take my last certification exam and then get out my resume package to public schools here in the city. ... I had my first interview and I heard back that same night that I didn't get the position. ... I got called for another interview while I was in the first. If I could imagine what speed dating is like, that's how I would describe that second interview.

As of yesterday, my degree was officially confirmed and I was officially certified to teach in the State of New York... Hallelujah!!! So now I am looking at more schools to send my resume and resting in the knowledge that God is working everything out for my good. I am so grateful for the connections you have helped me to make; please pass on my thanks to those of your relatives and friends who have been such a blessing. Finally, keep me in your prayers and I do you. Thank you again for everything! Grace and peace. ... -Kate Nkechi Ofikuru

P.S. Since writing this letter, Kate accepted a position teaching 5th grade in the Bedford Stuyvesant section of Brooklyn, NY



## ABC DARIEN WELCOMES FRESHMAN NIYA WRIGHT

Our new freshman Niya Wright comes to us from East Orange, New Jersey. Niya is 14 years old and is the third of five children in her family with two older sisters, and a younger sister and brother. Being used to a full house, she feels right at home with her five new ABC sisters. Her enthusiasm and positive outlook have made the adjustment to her new home effortless.

Niya is an academically focused student who has always set high goals for herself. Some day she would like to attend an Ivy League college. Her favorite subjects are math and acting. Niya also has a passion for reading and loves discussing literature. In her spare time she enjoys dancing. With such varied interests, she imagines herself either pursuing a degree in medicine or working in the entertainment field.

Shortly after arriving in Darien, Niya joined Theater 308 and is currently rehearsing for the part of Holly in the fall production of Dead Man Walking. For the past five years she was a member of The Theater Workshop in East Orange.

While attending Whitney E. Houston Academy in New Jersey, Niya's thirst for knowledge led her to participate in the Odyssey of the Mind and to attend the Summer Institute for the Gifted at Drew University. Last year she also served as president of the National Junior Honor Society.

When asked how she is enjoying her new school so far Niya replied, "I like the high school curriculum very much. I chose to come to Darien to gain more knowledge and a better understanding of life and what you should expect from it."



## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends,

The year has gotten off to a wonderful start, thanks to the extraordinary efforts of our accomplished Resident Directors, Julie Parham and Francis Janosco, and to the energy and excitement of our six scholars. Summer was busy at the ABC house. We have a renovated bathroom and a nicely rearranged kitchen, thanks to Fox Hill Builders. Francis did some great work in the girls' rooms, and they now look very homey, with pictures of summer trips and friends and family.

In the year ahead we look forward to developing our long-standing relationship with the First Congregational Church, who has supported us so generously since the program began 27 years ago.

Vyvyan Burns has joined the ABC effort as our new Program Director and we are sure to benefit from her organization and leadership skills. As well, we have an outstanding Board of Directors this year, all keenly intent on helping make A Better Chance in Darien an outstanding example of the power of education and the importance of reaching across boundaries to make change. We relish the chance to share and celebrate the rewards that the program and our scholars bring to our community. In the year ahead, we look forward to your continued support.

Gratefully,  
Jennienne Burke and Susan Littlefield  
Co-Presidents, A Better Chance in Darien

*Jennienne Burke*  
*Susan Littlefield*

*class of '88  
gives to ABC*

Representative from the DHS Class of 1988 came to the house to present a check in the amount of \$3500 to the ABC Program. The money was raised at their 20th high school reunion this year. Standing here from left are: Dana Jonson, Niya, Loraine McCurdy-Little, and Steve DeMott. Seated in front are: Anthia, Chiddy, Caurice, Olaide and Melinda.



## PLEASE GIVE

**Yes!** I would like to support the ABC program in Darien.  
Please make checks to **A Better Chance in Darien**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Gift amount:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

For gifts of appreciated securities please contact Tony Shaw at 203-629-4767

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Credit Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_

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A BETTER CHANCE, P.O. BOX 3204, DARIEN, CT 06820

To donate online or for more information please  
visit our website: [www.abcdarien.com](http://www.abcdarien.com)

## ABC sends its Heartfelt Thanks To...

- Fox Hill Builders (Bob Calve, owner and Shaun Viola, project manager) for renovation assistance
- O'Hanlan and Robinson & Cole LLD, who have agreed to take us on as pro-bono clients
- Gretchen, Gregg and Geoff Dailey for help with moving furniture and general house cleanup (as well as dump runs) and the contribution and installation of air conditioners and a microwave
- Gilda and Mark Haranzo for donating a dresser
- Doctors Negus, Collins, Collins-Bayne's and Miner of Internal Medicine Associates of Darien for years of thoughtful care
- Thanks to the Von Klemperer's who have generously donated a new extra long twin mattress and box spring
- Darien office of Stamford Pediatrics for their warmth and generosity
- Family Centers for their wonderfully generous support
- Akiko Silver for her generous encouragement of music
- Steve Filmer of Redpoint Design for his wisdom and help with our website