

WELCOME ANGELICA!

Sharing comes naturally to Angelica Cortez. Growing up in Manhattan as the youngest of nine — she has seven older sisters and a brother — sharing was a prerequisite. Sharing the ABC house with five other girls won't faze her. In addition to the rigorous academics at DHS, Angelica, or Angie as she is known, was attracted to the ABC program for its supportive family-like atmosphere. We are happy to welcome Angie to her Darien home.

Academically, Angie enjoys Math and Science. Two summers ago she pushed herself to enroll in a Physics class at Breakthrough NY, an enrichment program for talented inner city students. Although the material was new to her, she persevered, mastered the concepts and took on extra problems for the added challenge. She admits, "I have no problem going the extra mile."

While attending Mott Hall II in New York, Angie was voted Most School Spirit. It doesn't take long to see why. She exudes enthusiasm. Angie can't wait to get involved in all DHS has to offer. Clubs and teams that peak her interest include debate, yearbook committee, student government, Theatre 308 and softball. In her free time she likes to write poetry, listen to music and cook.

When asked what someone needs to succeed, Angie replied: "Persistence is the key to my future. Persistence brings happiness, success and great achievement. It is important to persist at what you want because if you don't, you risk never getting it, never being happy and always regretting something in your life." No doubt, for Angie there will be no regrets in life. This mature young lady has a vision for herself, and clearly she will accomplish whatever she sets out to do.



ABC IN DARIEN 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-eight years in Darien; 35 girls have graduated from the program.

WHERE DO THEY GO? Graduates have attended 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 in 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



Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1981.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron Hammer, Co-President

Jane Yezzi, Co-President

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Perry Caminis

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Francis Janosco, Resident Director

Julie Parham, Resident Director

Vyvyann Burns, Program Director

HOST FAMILIES

Julia and Dan Anderson

Delice and David Bolotin

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Pat and Jeremy Cage

Cokey and Jim Concannon

Alexia and Richard Duker

Yvette & 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

Chidinma Amakiri, 2010

Caurice Wynter, 2010

Olaide Ajomagberin, 2011

Anthia Diaz, 2011

Niya Wright, 2012

Angelica Cortez, 2013

FALL 2009

The Scholar

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15

No 1

MILESTONES REACHED BY ABC IN DARIEN SCHOLARS

MELINDA SIEW GRADUATES FROM DHS

Blue and white caps fluttered through the air above stadium field as the Darien High School Class of 2009 celebrated its graduation this past June. One of the celebrants sending her cap skyward was A Better Chance scholar Melinda Siew. For Melinda the event marked the accumulation of four years of determination and hard work. It was one more step toward her goal of becoming an engineer.

At DHS Melinda excelled in a multitude of honors and AP classes, with mathematics consistently headlining as her favorite subject. In addition to tackling advanced academic classes, Melinda managed to find the time to be a four-year member of the DHS Math Team (serving as a co-captain her senior year,) a founding member and choreographer of the Dance Team, a flyer on the Blue Wave cheerleading squad and a participant on the Spring track team. For the past two years Melinda also spearheaded the Black History Month assembly committee.

While living in Darien Melinda had the good fortune to have Dr. Susan and Ted Collins and Wendy and Ned Brokaw welcome her into their homes as her host families.

This summer Melinda traveled to Ireland to visit relatives. In August, she headed to City College New York to study engineering and architecture where she will combine her well-honed mathematics skills with her love of drawing.

Her sense of fairness and justice will be missed in the house next year. Throughout her four years in Darien, Melinda displayed a fearless attitude to try new and foreign things. With the support of the community, we wish her the best in life.



Melinda won the Darien Chamber of Commerce (DCC) Scholarship this year.



The girls celebrated Melinda's graduation at the Heck's residence with Julie, Nikolai and Francis.

MALIKA WILLIS EARNS GRADUATE DEGREE

It was a jubilant afternoon for Malika Willis, 2002 DHS graduate, as she strode across the altar of The Riverside Church to accept her Master's Degree in Education from the Bank Street College of Education this past May.

During her tenure at DHS, Malika was a stalwart of the track team with her strength in shot put. She was elected President of DHS her senior year. Malika attended Cornell University after graduating from DHS where she majored in Education. Malika's can-do spirit and love of education are sure to make her an outstanding educator. Our hats are off to you, Malika!



Malika Willis proudly displays her Master's Diploma from The Bank Street College of Education.



Darien host family, Pam and Bob Lindberg, wouldn't miss the opportunity to congratulate Malika.

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For our scholars
and for all of
Darien as well



Opening the door to greater
educational opportunities since 1981.

A BETTER CHANCE



Post Office Box 3204
Darien, CT 06820

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH ASSEMBLY A RESOUNDING SUCCESS

This year's Black History Month assembly started off with a beautifully orchestrated power point presentation tracing the event's creation back to 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson put forth the idea to have a Negro History Week. In 1976, February was deemed Black History Month to coincide with the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln. The power point presentation was followed by poetry readings and dramatic monologues written and acted by the 12 committee members. Original choreography from the DHS Dance Team entertained students.

The assembly culminated with a rousing five-song performance by the Harlem Gospel Choir that had students dancing and clapping up to the last beat. Students and administration alike hailed the assembly a success. The Black History Month assembly was initiated by ABC alum Kendra Barber (DHS 2003). It has flourished under the guidance of Melinda Siew for the past two years.



The Harlem Gospel Choir had students and faculty standing in the aisles and clapping to their rousing vocals.



Black History Month Committee Members share in the afterglow of the assembly's success with Harlem Gospel Choir singers.

Save the Date OCTOBER 8TH

Please mark your calendars and join us for a Wine Tasting at Nielsen's Florist & Garden Shop on October 8, 2009 from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The Darien Chamber of Commerce will be hosting the event complete with live and silent auctions. The event will benefit A Better Chance in Darien and the YWCA. Tickets for the evening's festivities featuring gourmet foods and fine wines will be \$50 per person. For ticket information, contact the Darien Chamber at 655-3600.

SPRING PHOTO GALLERY



Niya's acting talent was apparent as she garnered roles in Theatre 308 productions of Dead Man Walking in the fall, and Les Miserables which ran in March. Shown here, she sings in the chorus of Les Mis.



Olaide awaits the starter's gun for the 4 x 100 relay.



Chiddy leaps through the air as she attempts the long jump at a spring meet.



Pretty in pink and orange... Melinda, Chiddy and Caurice pause for a photo op before heading off to the DHS Prom.



The girls with Julie and Nikolai in the backyard at 11 Brookside Road.

MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends,

After a busy summer, the six scholars have returned to the ABC House ready for a new year at Darien High School. They have been sharing with us highlights of the many scholastic and employment experiences they had over the summer: a travel and educational program in Spain, working with a physician in Texas, attending a summer ABC program in California, interning with a fashion company, working at a day care center, as well as many hours reconnecting with family and friends from their hometowns.

Our wonderful Resident Directors, Julie Parham and Francis Janosco, are also back after traveling to Kansas and Maine with their two year old son, Nikolai. All are very excited to have the scholars back and to share their home across the street from the First Congregational Church. Again, we are so fortunate to enjoy the incredible support the church has provided since the program began 28 years ago.

Our Program Director, Vyvyan Burns, has been busy all summer long as well, coordinating everything that must get done to insure the ABC program runs smoothly all year long. With the help of a very active Board of Directors, she has a calendar all set for the coming year filled with host family weekends and activities, special dinner events with "Distinguished Women", activities with other local ABC Houses, and fund raising events such as the annual car wash and Silpada jewelry sale. Additionally, keep a look out around town for our new Vespa, which will be raffled off by Santa at the annual Christmas tree lighting in town.

This year we have two seniors who will be spending much of their spare time working on college applications. Chiddy and Caurice have been excellent students while at DHS and their drive and determination to succeed in all they do is apparent to all of us.

Six teenage girls with very distinct personalities and interests are part of this program because they all realize the value of a good education. We hope that you will support this wonderful program, which helps our scholars to reach their potential.



Gratefully,
Ron Hammer and Jane Yezzi
Co-Presidents, A Better Chance in Darien

Ron Hammer
Jane C. Yezzi

Vespa Raffle to benefit ABC in Darien

Putting the fun into fundraising... This fall, A Better Chance in Darien will raffle off a Capri Blue Vespa LX50. The eco-friendly motor-scooter, with a 2.3 gallon capacity, boasts 95-100 miles per gallon. Tickets will be available at business locations around town at a cost of \$20 per ticket. Santa will draw the winning ticket at the Annual Darien Sport Shop/Chamber of Commerce Tree Lighting on November 29, 2009 at 5 p.m. at the Grove Street Plaza. Don't miss out on your chance to go green on this stylish blue scooter. More information on tickets is available on our website: www.abcdarien.com



ABC in Darien sends its Heartfelt Thanks To...

- Our generous donors, supporters, host families and drivers — since 1981 your commitment has sustained ABC in Darien's grass roots program!
- Darien Public Library for the gift of two revolving book trees, which have provided great space savings in the house.
- Jennifer Boyd for counsel regarding our new Charter with National A Better Chance.
- The First Congregational Church of Darien for generously dedicating their winter Antiques Preview Party proceeds to benefit our program.
- Lynn Carnegie and Bud Pollack for offering scholarships for SAT preparatory classes for our Juniors Chidinma Amakiri and Caurice Wynter.
- Lisa & David Schlakman for their guidance with our fundraising & long-range planning.
- The YMCA for providing much appreciated memberships and swimming lessons to our students.
- The YWCA for graciously opening its studio doors to our students for dance rehearsal time, and for providing students and resident directors with memberships.
- Susan Scott for hosting a Silpada jewelry fundraising event to benefit our scholars.
- Kristin Manley for her guidance and expertise regarding summer programs.
- Attorney Ted O'Hanlan, & the staff of Robinson & Cole, for their pro bono assistance.
- Susan Cameron for her faithful IT support.
- The First Congregational Sunday School for the gift of a portable Ipod dock/stereo.
- Bobbi Landers for her timely donation of SAT/AP prep books and school supplies.
- Steve Filmer of Redpoint Design for his in-kind website & graphic design assistance.
- Outgoing co-presidents, Jennienne Burke and Susie Littlefield, for their selfless efforts on behalf of A Better Chance in Darien over the past two years.

PLEASE GIVE

Yes! I would like to support the ABC in Darien. Please make checks payable 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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To donate online or for more information please visit our website: www.abcdarien.com