



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

Since its founding 25 years ago, the Darien ABC program has flourished. Thirty-two young women have graduated from the program and all of them have attended four year colleges or universities. Many of our graduates have gone onto careers in law, finance, science, education and even architecture.

Darien ABC is an academic scholarship program requiring scholars to maintain a 3.0 grade point average, while fulfilling 30 hours of community service and belonging to at least one Darien High School club or sport. In addition, the girls participate in their own house government and are required to assist in nightly chores.

Each summer, several of our scholars enroll in academic programs that help develop their special interests or talents. Our 25th Anniversary Gala next May will be a celebration of our past and present ABC scholars. It will also be an opportunity to raise much needed funds to enrich the lives of our scholars while they are part of the program and to make sure their college education is not interrupted for financial reasons.

The success of the program is a testament to the scholars, our Resident Directors and the community at large, which supports our program in so many ways. This is a grass roots organization in which the Town of Darien can take great pride. With your ongoing support, ABC in Darien is making a difference in young women's lives, in ways that last a lifetime. To learn more about ABC in Darien visit our website at www.abcdarien.com.

Thank you for helping our town become a better place!
All the best,
Cokey Concannon and Doug Anderson

ABC FACTS

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

ENROLLMENT: Seven girls currently from New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts.

HISTORY: Twenty-five years in Darien; 32 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 and tutors, as needed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Twenty-seven local residents.

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

RESIDENCE: 11 Brookside Road—provided by the First Congregational Church, maintained by ABC Darien.

THE BUDGET: \$100,000 per year, covering staff, food, utilities, house maintenance, enrichment expenses and supplies.



A BETTER CHANCE

Opening the door to greater educational opportunities

Cokey Concannon Co-President
Doug Anderson Co-President
Jim Archibald
Joan Bergen
Doug Burke
Jennienne Burke
Valerie Cooper
Yvette Eenkema Van Dijk
Sandy Filmer
Bebe Fisher
Cherie Greene
Bill Hancock
Nancy Herling
Susie Littlefield
Phil Meyer
Jill Maguire
Sharon Moore
Susan Mulderrig
John Murphy
Kris Sauter
Jackie Scott
Mark Scott
Tony Shaw
Pam Spellane
Christine Stanitski
Jose Zepeda

ADVISORS/VOLUNTEERS
Peggy Hersam
Francis Janosco/Julie Parham
(Resident Directors)
Barbara Thorne
Susan Scott
Jean Shortliffe
Elisabeth Tullis

HOST FAMILIES
Wendy & Ned Brokaw
Susan & Ted Collins
Yvette & Pieter Eenkema Van Dijk
Cynthia & Randall Heck
Karen & Chris Hughan
Janet & Mark Kindy
Shirley & Carl Nichols
Dale & John O'Brien
Martha Rhein
Kathy & Andy Saulitis
Susan & Mark Scott
Lisa & Chris Stout
Susan & John Wilson

STUDENTS
Juanita Gyamera, 2007
Diana Morris, 2007
Whitney Dudley, 2009
Melinda Siew, 2009
Chidinma Amakari, 2010
Tasha Valentin, 2010
Caurice Wynter, 2010

FALL 2006

The Scholar

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 12

No 1

LOCAL BUILDING COMPANIES DONATE NEW BATHROOM TO *ABC House*

Darien, CT — At 7pm on Monday, September 18, ABC program scholars and members of its board gathered at the ABC house to honor representatives of local construction and building supply companies who donated time and materials to renovate a bathroom.

The renovation project, which was conducted throughout the months of July and August, updated a worn upstairs bathroom into one that is now, according to senior ABC scholar Juanita Gyamera, "soothing and calming." The new bathroom features a new granite countertop, and a new travertine limestone floor as well as new recessed lights that illuminate the spacious shower area.

All of the materials and construction hours were donated to the ABC program. Many members of local construction and building supply companies participated, including Bob Calve, Anthony Frate, Mike Giordano, and Frank Corenti of Fox Hill Builders; David Campbell of Rings End Lumber; Jim of Flaherty Plumbing; Mike of Brookside Electric; Bill Panapada, Vinnie Sciarretta, and Mayson Linn of Bella Pietra; and representatives of Mr. Shower Door.



Mike Giordano, Cokey Concannon, Bob Calve and Anthony Frate (from left to right) standing in front of the newly renovated bathroom at the ABC House.

"I think the ABC program is a fine organization and the girls are great and it gives them a better environment here in Darien," said David Campbell of Rings End Lumber which donated the vanity, sheet rock, trim, and doors.

"One of my daughters was friends with one of the ABC girls when she was in high school," said Anthony Frate of Fox Hill Builders. "And through that experience I got to know the

(Continued on back page)

LOCAL BUILDING COMPANIES DONATE NEW BATHROOM (Continued from cover page)

program and I just wanted to help the girls out any way I could."

"On behalf of the entire ABC program I would like to extend my warmest thanks for the generosity and dedication of all who participated in this summer's renovations. The plywood doors and linoleum floors have been transformed into a beautiful and functional bathroom. The project was

completed on time much to the delight of our seven ABC scholars," said Cokey Concannon, Co-President of Darien ABC.

"I really like the floors and the granite countertops. They really liven up the room and will look good years after I leave," said senior ABC scholar Diana Morris.

In addition to the bathroom renova-

tions, Darien ABC would also like to extend its thanks to Vinnie of VAS Construction, who donated a much needed stovetop for the ABC House kitchen, as well as well as the people at 1-800-Mattress of Stamford, who helped in replacing four bedroom mattresses.

Thanks to all these helping hands, the house is in great shape.



A BETTER CHANCE

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ABC PAYS ITS RENT!



ABC resident director Francis Janosco presents a \$1 check to the Rev. Ron Evans of the First Congregational Church. The church owns the house at 11 Brookside Drive and generously rents it for \$1 a year to the ABC Program.

3 New Scholars ON THE BLOCK!



CHIDINMA AMAKARI, is an impressive, articulate young student with a radiant smile and a wonderful sense of humor. She is just 13 years old but carries herself with a great level of confidence and ease with her surroundings. During her young life she developed a deep rooted love of learning. She lives with her family in New Jersey and has three brothers (ages 12, 11, and 8). Originally her family is from Nigeria and maintains close ties there. She visited her homeland last year which made a big impact on her. She is looking forward to visiting again.

Her favorite subjects in school are English and Science/Biology. In her free time she enjoys singing and writing lyrics. As far as sports are concerned she likes baseball and track the best. The transition to DHS has gone quite smoothly for her. The experience of living in the ABC house with six other girls has been "awesome and a lot of fun!" Her host families in Darien are Andy & Kathy Saulitis and Dale & Robert O'Brien.



TASHA VALENTIN is a bright, responsible, and industrious 14 year old freshman from the Bronx, New York. She has a strikingly mature demeanor and a very positive outlook on life. "I love to have fun and I believe laughter is the only cure to grief". She is very proud of her mom and dad who have guided her and raised her to be the young woman she is today. Tasha has an older brother who is deaf and to whom she is very close. She uses sign language to communicate with him and he is a great inspiration for her. "Ramon is the wind beneath my wings. He helps me soar like an eagle".

Tasha loves to socialize; therefore spending time with family and friends is important to her. She has a passion for writing and singing as well as listening to music on her ipod. In regards to sports, volleyball is her game! Mark and Janet Kindy and Martha Rhein are her (host) "families away from home" during her four year stay in Darien.



CAURICE WYNTER, is a smart, thoughtful, easy going young woman with "a big heart" whose family lives in the Bronx. She has an older brother who once attended an ABC program himself. Caurice helped her mother study for college and went with her to school every night! From her she learned how tough it is to do it the "hard way" and vowed her life would be different. She would like to become a pediatrician in California.

Caurice learned about ABC through KIPP (Knowledge Is Power Program) Academy in the Bronx where she was an excellent student. Over the summer she attended a high school prep program to be better prepared for DHS. Caurice is adjusting very well in Darien and the ABC house. She very quickly made friends with the other students. Her favorite class is Geometry. Currently she is involved in volleyball and she is looking forward to either track or playing basketball. Her host family is the Wilson family (Susan and John) where she enjoys spending one weekend a month. Caurice is off to a great start!

Happy Return OF OUR SOPHOMORE AND SENIOR SCHOLARS



DIANA MORRIS is entering her last year at DHS and has not been sitting still. This past summer she attended a forensic science camp held by Lead America, at Bentley College in MA, where she learned about crime scene investigation and had the opportunity to examine a mock crime scene. Pretty cool, detective Diana!

Currently she completed her college search and she is working on her college applications. She is looking forward to the track season beginning and for a fun and productive senior year. No worries about Diana, she is right on top of things.



JUANITA GYAMERA, a senior, is very excited about her college search. Her major goal is to get into a college that suits her best. Ultimately she would like to do something in the medical field. She is working very hard to keep her grades up. Over the summer she studied for her SATS and spent one month at debate camp. This definitely helped her with public speaking. Juanita has no problem speaking up in the house and with her sharp wit she is keeping everyone in good spirits and on their toes! Juanita will be doing "Building with Books", outdoor track and, of course, the debate team for after school activities.



WHITNEY DUDLEY, a sophomore, is looking forward to a successful second year at DHS. She is proud of the two honors courses she made in Spanish and English. She is also excited about a new elective, Music Tech, in which she can produce her own original songs and music. She will be involved in the Buddy System, the Yearbook and possibly Current. With Freshman Tasha Valentin she has been trying out Art Club and liked it a lot. Over the summer Whitney tutored and taught young children, grades two to four, as part of her church's Vacation Bible School. She enjoyed this so much that she is thinking of doing this in the future. Whitney loves working with children. In the meantime she is ringing the bells with great skills in the Junior Bell Choir at the United Church in Rowayton.



MELINDA SIEV, in her own quiet but determined way is a highly intelligent sophomore going about her business in the ABC house and at DHS. She is a hard and ambitious worker. Her favorite subject is math, but in her free time she enjoys drawing, reading and sleeping! She barely missed a beat during the summer and took summer courses as well as a few dancing classes. On the weekends she finally had some time to relax at the pool, swimming.

At DHS she joined the Math Club, the Buddy System and the Yearbook committee. She is also planning with Whitney to do an internship at the art gallery of board member Valerie Cooper and is looking into some other volunteer opportunities.



SAVE THE DATE
25th Anniversary Gala of
A Better Chance in Darien
on May 19, 2007
at Woodway Country Club

Pictures tell all...



The 2006 school year began in typical whirlwind fashion as we welcomed not two, but three new freshmen and the college search began in earnest for our two seniors. Francis and Julie are still both teaching high school, and the girls are busy as ever with classes, extra curriculars, and volunteering. However, the question on everyone's mind has been, "Does seven girls make a difference?" The best answer is that it probably depends on the seven girls.

As far as these seven girls goes the answer is a definitive "Yes!" The house this year is bursting with enthusiasm, laughter, songs, practical jokes, and hard work. Francis and Julie consider themselves extremely fortunate to be a part of the ABC Darien family this year and thankful to have seven truly amazing young women in their care.

There was a wonderfully elegant and festive graduation party for Silvia Puma and Morgana Coombs at the house of board member Jackie Scott on the 4th of June. The party was attended by many board members, students, family and friends of the graduates. Hats off and good luck!!!



Touching speeches



Graduate Morgana Coombs



President Cokey Concannon handing out graduation presents.



Delicious Congratulations!



A radiant Silvia!



Jackie Scott saying farewell to the graduates



Silvia and Morgana cutting the cake!



A proud mom, Mrs Coombs, Morgana's mom (center)



Donna Holtz translating for a very grateful and emotional Mrs. Puma (Silvia's mom)



Sunday October 29th, the three freshman and two sophomores volunteered their time and helped out with the Halloween happening "Hoot & Howl" for the little trick or treaters at the Darien Nature Center.

The girls gather around with Lynn Hamlen, director of DNC.



More Pictures!



The girls visited the New Canaan Mounted Troop one Saturday as part of the activities enrichment program. They took a tour of the stables, chatted with the cadets and learned what "horsemanship" is all about. They were invited back to do some riding. NCMT is exploring the possibility of having some ABC scholars join the program. Wow!