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## ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE IN ARCHITECTURE!

Melinda Siew, ABC Darien 2009 graduate, received the Best Architecture Student: First Year Award, from the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture at City College of New York. Melinda was recognized by the department faculty for her exceptional design work and academic excellence. Currently she is studying general architecture. Her favorite classes are Studio (architecture), Physics, Psychology and Built Environment (Architecture class focusing on urban environments.)



Reflecting on her time at DHS, Melinda says, "High school definitely prepared me for the demands of college, especially in the field of writing. Most importantly, the analytical nature of English classes in high school helped me develop concepts and presentations for my architecture projects. Just having taken classes like physics in high school helped me to better understand the concepts in college. I have learned so much — I can't even begin to describe how independent I feel. ABC Darien helped me begin the transition towards independence and college completed that transition."

City life agrees with Melinda. "One of the best things about college is the diversity. It is not hard to find a group where you fit in. I found my niche in the architecture department and I am proud to say that our architecture department is just as diverse as the college itself."

This summer Melinda took a course on how to use the program AutoCAD and worked at the New York architecture firm of Kohn Pederson Fox. In her rare free time, she learned to skateboard, took aerial silk classes, rediscovered her love of sketching and attended various city art galleries.

We wish Melinda continued success in the years to come!

## ABC IN DARIEN 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:** Six girls currently from Connecticut, New York and New Jersey.

**HISTORY:** Twenty-nine years in Darien; 37 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, Program Director and tutors.

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

**HOST FAMILIES:** Ten 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:** \$117,000 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)

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### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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### HOST FAMILIES

Julia and Dan Anderson

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Wette & Pieter Eenkema van Dijk

Minina & Bob Johnston

Jane and Scott Pelley

Ellen & Charles Powis

Callie & Tighe Sullivan

### STUDENTS

Olaide Ajomagberin (2011)

Anthia Diaz (2011)

Niya Wright (2012)

Angelica Cortez (2013)

Bettina Arkhurst (2014)

Nneoma Obieshi (2014)

## ABC IN DARIEN WELCOMES TWO FRESHMAN ON THE RISE

### NNEOMA OBIESHI

The A Better Chance program is a familiar setting to Nneoma Obieshi who joins the DHS class of 2014 this fall. Her brother Ugochukwu is a high school junior at an ABC program in Pennsylvania. Born in New York City, Nneoma's family moved to Bridgeport, CT when she was four years old. In addition to her brother, she has a younger sister, Chidinma.



Education is the top priority for Nneoma. While at John Winthrop School in Bridgeport, CT Nneoma earned many academic accolades and participated in Bridgeport's Talented and Gifted program. For the past few summers she has attended the Johns Hopkins Summer Program for Talented Youth. Nneoma believes, "Education is the key to unlock the doors of life. My goal is to use all the knowledge acquired through this learning process to build up the strength to face tomorrow's challenges."

Nneoma loves to read both fiction and non-fiction, and finds it relaxing to curl up with a book, often choosing a title from J.K. Rowling, Roald Dahl or Edgar Allan Poe. Throughout middle school and on Sundays she has enjoyed mentoring younger children at St. Augustine's Church where she is a member of the Youth Ministry.

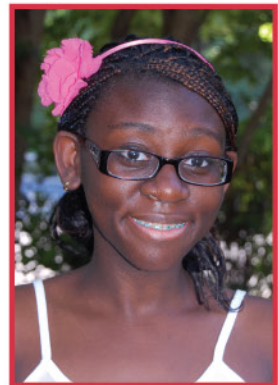
At DHS Nneoma envisions getting involved in Student Council (she served as Student Council Vice President at her previous school), community service projects and sports. For the past four years she has been a point guard on her school basketball team and has also participated in track and field and volleyball. She loves the camaraderie of team sports, and plans to continue with sports at DHS. In addition to sports, she enjoys singing and dancing. Could musical theater also be in her future?

In 2006, Nneoma traveled to Africa with her parents to visit her grandmother's village in Nigeria. The small village had no electricity and no running water. At first she missed her electronic entertainments, but soon she learned enough of the local language, Ibo, to play with her cousins and join in with the rhythm of daily life. Reflecting on the trip she said, "I felt very proud that I was able to adapt in that environment and yet had fun helping the old folks. It was just like a reality TV show."

She is excited to come to Darien to meet new people and get to know the town. Welcome, Nneoma, we are excited to get to know you, too.

### BETTINA ARKHURST

Bettina Arkhurst comes to Darien from Jamesburg, New Jersey where she attended Immaculate Conception School in Spotswood. She lives with her mother and sister, Dianna, who is a sophomore at Rutgers University.



Academically, Bettina is well balanced — enjoying math, reading, sciences and Spanish in equal measure. Her stellar grades across disciplines are a testament to her work ethic and academic abilities. Writing fiction and art, however, are her passions. "I love art because it gives me the opportunity to express myself through drawing and painting. I take my studies very seriously and always strive to be among the top five percent."

Bettina began playing the piano at age 8 and several years ago took up tap, jazz and ballet. She hopes to continue to pursue these favored pastimes during high school. Serving as Class Treasurer during eighth grade piqued her interest in school government.

Bettina enjoys new adventures. Last year Bettina joined the cross-country team despite the fact that she had not previously run long distances. She quickly established herself as a team leader and was elected co-captain. Her profound determination and positive energy buoyed the team, according to her coach. Bettina says it was a wonderful experience and is proud of her performance.

Bettina spent her fifth and sixth grade school years studying in Ghana where her mother grew up. While in Ghana, she excelled in her studies, and was awarded the Most Improved Student her second year. She said the hardest part was mastering the Ghanaian Language.

Bettina recently commented, "I plan to study hard and focus on my work. As I enter a new school, I feel as if it is new phase of my life and a fresh start to do something new. I believe in the philosophy that you have one life to live, so make the best of it."

With her positive attitude and determination, Bettina is sure to make the best of everything life gives her!



# PHOTO GALLERY



Gathering for a barrage of digital flashes, the prom-goers include: (Left to right) Anthia Diaz, Olaide Ajomagberin, Lonneke Eenkema van Dijk, Niya Wright, Kerry Daigle, Kathleen Sullivan, Colleen Henn and Katie Nolan.



Chiddy and Caurice's graduation and party above.

Host sister Laura Powis with incoming freshman Bettina Arkhurst



Nneoma with her little sister Chidinma (in red) being welcomed by Olaide, Melinda and Anthia



Smiling comes easy for Anthia Diaz and her Host "Mother" Minina Johnston as they celebrate at Chiddy and Caurice's graduation party.



Niya and Angie working at the new computers provided by the Darien Technology and Community Foundation



## car wash OCTOBER 3RD

Is your car in need of a wash? Drive on by The Depot on Heights Road on Sunday, October 3rd between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm and we will wash away the grime. Tickets are \$12 per car. In case of inclement weather, a rain date is set for Saturday, Oct 16th – same time, same location.

## save the Date OCTOBER 14TH

Mark your calendars.... Sample delicious local fare, try wines from around the globe and bid on fantastic deals! – all while enjoying live music.

ABC in Darien will be a beneficiary again this year at The Darien Chamber of Commerce Wine Tasting and Charity Auction on Thursday Oct 14th, from 6 pm to 9 pm at Nielsen's Greenhouse, 1405 Boston Post Road. Proceeds from the fundraiser will be shared with the DCC Scholarships Fund, YWCA Darien/Norwalk and the Lion's Club/Freddie Fund.

Tickets may be purchased in advance from the Chamber website at [www.DarienChamberOnline.com](http://www.DarienChamberOnline.com) or via phone at 203-655-3600. Advance tickets are \$50, and tickets at the door will be \$65.

## CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2010 GRADUATES!

Last June, ABC Darien scholars Chidinma "Chiddy" Amakiri and Caurice Wynter received their diplomas. Four years ago they arrived in Darien nervously looking forward to the academic challenges posed by Darien High School. Now, as college freshmen, they are faced with the same anticipation – the major difference is their self-confidence.

Chiddy is a biology major at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, while Caurice is a pre-med student at Syracuse University. These accomplished young women will be remembered for their exuberance, strong academics and willingness to help others. Best wishes for great success in college and after.

For an update on their summer activities, please check our website [www.ABCdarien.com](http://www.ABCdarien.com)



Resident directors Julie and Francis welcomed a new addition to the house – Alexei was born on June 3rd. Clearly Nikolai is thrilled to have a little brother. Congratulations to all!

# MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends,

After spending a "quiet" summer at the ABC House in Darien with their two children, Nikolai, age 3, and Alexei, age three months, Resident Directors Julie Parham and Francis Janosco, have welcomed back the six ABC scholars for the new school year.

The scholars are very excited to share the highlights of their summer scholastic, travel, and employment experiences, as well as the latest news about their hometown families and friends. Travel is always exciting and we had a scholar attend a program in Spain, a rising senior interested in fashion design attend a pre-college fashion program in California, a trip with a host family to Holland, and another to a host family's home in Lake George. There was a tour of southern colleges with ABC National for our rising junior and a program in New York that a scholar attended for several weeks to help prepare for the college application process.

The scholars are thrilled with the new computers that have been installed at the ABC House. We are very thankful for the grant from The Darien Technology and Community Foundation that enabled us to purchase all new computers and software for the House.

Our Program Director, Vyvyan Burns, has a calendar 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 annual Vespa raffle.

A Better Chance in Darien is committed to helping our scholars achieve their dreams by providing them with the education and tools they need to reach their potential. We hope that you will support this wonderful program.

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

*Ron Hammer  
Jane C. Yezzi*



ABC Darien scholars Caurice, Anthia, Angelica, Olaide and Chiddy and Host sister Leila Sullivan, gave it their all to help out with Darien's Annual Townwide Clean-up last May.

## ABC in Darien sends its Heartfelt Thanks To...

- Our generous donors, supporters, host families and drivers – since 1981 our commitment has sustained ABC in Darien's grass roots program.
- The Darien Technology and Community Foundation for a generous grant to update the House computer equipment.
- First Congregational Church of Darien for generously dedicating their winter Antiques Preview Party proceeds to benefit our program and for leasing the ABC House to us for \$1 a year.
- The Darien Chamber of Commerce for dedicating a portion of the proceeds of their Wine Tasting Event to ABC.
- The YMCA of Darien for providing memberships for our students and resident directors.
- The YWCA of Darien & Norwalk for opening its studio doors to our students for dance rehearsal time and for providing students and resident directors with memberships.
- EC Scott Group for their support and creation of an internship for an ABC Scholar.
- Darien High School PA and local merchants including Darien Sport Shop, Darien Donut, Palmers, Espresso Neat and Stop & Shop for their support with Vespa raffle ticket sales.
- Susan Scott for hosting a Silpada jewelry fundraising event to benefit our scholars.
- Akiko Silver and the Nutmeg Chamber Players for performing a Chamber Concert to benefit ABC in Darien.
- Carnegie & Pollak for SAT preparatory classes.
- Dennis Cummings, Jr. for his wonderful tutoring at the House.
- Dr. Jamie Roach and her partners at Stamford Pediatrics for their warmth & generosity.
- Steve Filmer of Redpoint Design for his in-kind website and graphic design support.
- Susan Cameron for her IT support.
- Ginny Gray of Family Centers for her support and ready ear.
- Alison vonKemperer for donating Broadway tickets and backstage access to the scholars.
- Microsoft Corporation for the contribution of Software for the House computers.

## PLEASE GIVE

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

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