



**Celebrating 30 Years of ABC in Darien! 1981-2011**

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# The Scholar

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN NEWSLETTER

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## WELCOME MERLYN, DANIELLE, AND JOCELYN!

The ABC House welcomed two freshmen and one sophomore to our community in August. Last spring, we interviewed six girls as part of a rigorous selection process. After a tour of the town and the High School, the candidates spent a night at the House with the Resident Directors and scholars. Everyone in the house expressed enthusiastic support for the finalists, and the ABC Scholar Selection Committee was unanimous in its decision to extend offers of admission to these three young women. We are thrilled that each of them accepted!

It is our pleasure to introduce Merlyn Tejada, Danielle McIntosh, and Jocelyn Mendez.

Merlyn comes to us from New York City, where she attended Bronx Preparatory Charter School. Merlyn's interests include soccer, theater, reading and playing the violin. She has been active in environmental projects and

and participates in travel soccer. She loves the idea of living in a house with lots of 'sisters' and is excited about all the extra-curricular activities in which she can get involved in Darien High School.

Danielle wrote, "I am very excited for this new opportunity. Being a part of A Better Chance in Darien will definitely have a positive impact on my future. I can't wait to be with my new family." And we are glad that Danielle, who is always enthusiastic for any new challenge or task, is here.

Jocelyn hails from New Haven where she attended Hill Regional Career High School. Her interests include poetry, reading, drama, and music. She also enjoys fencing and playing tennis and volleyball. Jocelyn has taken part in acting classes, was involved with the yearbook committee, and is learning sign language.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

### J.Crew Fundraiser

ABC in Darien and ABC of New Canaan are joining together with J.Crew on Elm in New Canaan for an event on Thursday, September 22nd from 5:00 - 8:00 pm. Shoppers will receive a discount on all purchases at J.Crew and a portion of the proceeds will benefit the two organizations! So hold off on buying all of those back to school clothes and join us at J.Crew on Elm Street.

J.CREW

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22ND



### car wash

Is your car in need of a wash? Drive over to The Depot on Heights Road on Saturday, September 24th between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm and we will wash away the grime. Rain date is Sunday, September 25th - same time, same location.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 24TH

## 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:** Thirty years in Darien; 39 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-three local residents.

**HOST FAMILIES:** Eight families host the girls one week-end and one Sunday each month.

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

**THE BUDGET:** \$132,000 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)

[www.abcdarien.com](http://www.abcdarien.com)

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron Hammer, Co-President

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### HOST FAMILIES

Delice and David Bolotin

Rick and Carolyn Brook

Pat and Jeremy Cage

Denise and Jose Cara

Alexia and Richard Duker

Yvette and Pieter Eenkema van Dijk

Jane and Scott Pelley

Ellen and Charles Powis

### STUDENTS

Niya Wright (2012)

Angelica Cortez (2013)

Bettina Arkhurst (2014)

Jocelyn Mendez (2014)

Danielle McIntosh (2015)

Merlyn Tejada (2015)



Danielle (left) and Meryln

has participated in a variety of afterschool programs through the Fieldstone Enrichment Program.

When asked what the ABC program has taught her thus far, Merlyn replied: "I would have to say 'fight for what you want' because that is what I did to get here. My Mom was hesitant at first to let me go but I talked, argued, and did everything in my power to make her come with me to the interview. After I got in, I did my best to change my Mom's mind... she did after seeing Darien and talking to the people herself. That is how I made it—by not giving up!" Merlyn's fighting spirit but gentle demeanor will make her a dynamic member of the house.

Danielle lives in Bridgeport, where she completed her eighth grade year at Achievement First Bridgeport Academy. She loves music, dance and playing the piano

Jocelyn successfully completes one of the many evaluations required for admission to ABC.

Jocelyn wrote to us over the summer, saying, "I believe being in Darien will help me to break down barriers. It will not only change the way I see others, but it will change the way I see myself—a change that will only help me find success in years to come." We couldn't agree more with Jocelyn's eloquent assessment of the ABC program, and we are glad that she has joined us. Jocelyn is a sophomore at DHS.

Welcome, Merlyn, Danielle, and Jocelyn, to Darien and to the ABC House. We wish you success as you embark on this new journey—you've earned it!



# HOST FAMILIES CREATING A BRIDGE BETWEEN ABC HOUSE AND THE DARIEN COMMUNITY

*"providing a home away from home"*

An integral part of each ABC scholar's experience in Darien is the relationship that she develops with her host family. Each ABC student is paired with a Darien family (or two!) who host them one weekend and one Sunday a month. Host families whose scholars are now in college or graduate school describe their role with great affection; watching these young women mature and succeed over the years is incredibly meaningful. And the benefits are mutual: while the host family's own hobbies and interests will expose their scholar to many new experiences, the scholars also open the host families' eyes to another side of the world. Both families and scholars learn about cultures that may seem a world apart, even when they're only forty minutes away. The relationship that can develop between host families and scholars is special, enriching, and in many cases, lifelong.



Angie and Kyra Brook



Host Families: The Sullivans and Johnstons with Anthia

### The following Darien families will host our new scholars:

- Merlyn - Denise & Jose Cara
- Danielle - Yvette & Pieter Eenkema van Dijk
- Jocelyn - Jane & Scott Pelley

### Our returning students will be reuniting with their host families:

- Niya - Alexia and Richard Duker, Delice and David Bolotin
- Angelica - Carolyn and Rick Brook, Pat and Jeremy Cage
- Bettina - Ellen and Charles Powis

## Photo Gallery

▼ Angie, Anthia and Olaide readying for an All Star evening!



Resident Director Julie Parham celebrated DHS graduation day in June with Olaide and Anthia who are now freshmen at George Washington and Wesleyan Universities respectively. ABC in Darien is succeeding in its mission of creating "A Better Chance!"

Niya posing with Dancing with the Teachers winners Ms. Messineo and Mr. Cross. ▼



▲ Togetherness is an ongoing theme among the ABC scholars!

## OUR RESIDENT DIRECTORS

Julie and Francis return for their seventh year, bringing warmth, good humor and a special sort of leadership to their roles as Resident Directors. We are blessed to have them as they are largely responsible for creating a *home* for our scholars in ABC House.



## Niya Takes the Reigns

We salute Niya, the newly elected President of the Darien High School Community Council! Niya's successful event "Dancing with the Teachers" last spring showed her talents of nurturing the seed of an idea, bringing people together, and working diligently and persevering despite many obstacles. (It also showcased her copious talents as an M.C.) That's what leadership is all about. Good luck, Niya!



## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

We hope everyone had a wonderful and relaxing summer! At 11 Brookside Road, it was a time of well-earned rest for our very hard working Resident Directors Francis Janosco and Julie Parham. Together with their two young sons they enjoyed a little relative peace and quiet and also had the opportunity to visit friends and family in both Maine and in Kansas.

As folks may know, two wonderful seniors graduated from Darien High School and ABC in June. We will miss Anthia and Olaide but we join in their excitement as they head off to Wesleyan and George Washington Universities. Our returning scholars all had interesting and varied summers with activities that included film school in California, community service work in the Andes, and creative writing classes at Andover Academy! They all return with great enthusiasm and excitement about the upcoming year. Niya is particularly looking forward to her final year at DHS as she fulfills the role of Community Council President! We know she will cap her time spent in Darien with the same passionate involvement that has been her hallmark these past three years. We are thrilled to welcome three new students. Entering the program this year are two freshmen and one sophomore. We cannot think of a better group in place to help guide them to a fun and fulfilling high school experience.

Our Program Director, Vyvyan Burns, has also worked hard with a number of board members over the summer putting in place a calendar for the 2011-2012 school year that is filled with host family weekends, social and community activities for the scholars, weekends away, car wash and Vespa fundraisers, as well as interesting and exciting cultural activities.

A Better Chance in Darien was established in our community 30 years ago to help provide full academic and boarding scholarships to deserving young women of color who are capable of assuming positions of responsibility and leadership in our society. It is only because our local community continues to recognize the value in this mission that we are able to achieve our goals. We hope that you will continue to support this special program.

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

*Ron Hammer*  
*Jane C. Yezi*



Dawan Julien (center) joined in the DHS graduation festivities of Olaide and Anthia, two of her former middle school students from KIPP NYC, a network of free, public charter schools that prepare students for success in college and life.



## 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.
- First Congregational Church of Darien for leasing ABC House for \$1/year, and for their ongoing support.
- 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 scholars and Resident Directors.
- The Youth Community Fund of the Darien Community Fund for their grant in support of tutoring and summer college tours for our scholars.
- The YMCA of Darien & Norwalk for opening its studio doors to our students for dance rehearsal time and for providing scholars and Resident Directors with memberships.
- EC Scott Group for their support and providing an Internship for an ABC Scholar.
- Nielsen's Florist for designating the proceeds of their Holiday Design Preview to ABC.
- Bob Flowers for designating ABC as the recipient of the proceeds of his fundraising for the New York City Marathon.
- Dennis Cummings, Jr. and Cara Delaney for their wonderful tutoring.
- 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.
- Family Centers, including Thomas Miller, Amanda Romaniello and Ginny Gray for their support and ready ears.
- Marie and Eric Litchfield for the new piano and to piano movers Ashwin Basu, David Hammer, Dirk Heideklang, Nick Johnston, Spencer Matson and Andrew Wood.
- Carnegie Pollack for SAT preparatory classes.
- Darien High School PA and local merchants including Darien Sport Shop, Darien Doughnut, Palmer's Market, Espresso Neat and Stop & Shop for their support with Vespa raffle ticket sales.

## PLEASE GIVE

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

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

Email (kept private) \_\_\_\_\_

Gift amount:

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For gifts of appreciated securities please contact Debbie Coley at 203-662-9892

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