

## CELEBRATING 30 YEARS!

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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)

The success of Darien's ABC program is a tribute to our town, which has supported the program for 30 years! It has proved to be a beautiful partnership of people — the fine young women who have been our ABC students as well as the many dedicated Darien educators, organizations and volunteers who welcome the opportunity to help our ABC scholars achieve their promising potential.

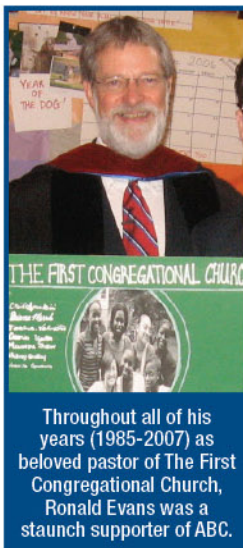
## HOW IT BEGAN

In the early spring of 1979, after an annual community outreach planning session, Person-to-Person and the YWCA of Darien/Norwalk were instrumental in bringing A Better Chance, a national organization, to the attention of Darien residents.

The Reverend Anne Kimball, in her role as Director of Person-to-Person, knew about the success of the recently (1973) established boys ABC House in New Canaan. Realizing that there could be a good fit, she gathered other interested parties and together they laid the groundwork for a girls program in Darien. The late Herbert West, one of those original supporters, became the first President of the Board.

With the draw of a great high school and a supportive community, ABC in Darien welcomed its first students in September of 1981 to their new home at 11 Brookside Road. The ABC house was the generous gift of the First Congregational Church of Darien on a \$1-a-year lease basis. Over the past 30 years it has served the girls well, fostering a strong program in which the girls are supported by Resident Directors who have made the house a home - providing the girls with a family environment in which they thrive.

A successful fundraising campaign, supported by hundreds of individuals and local companies and organizations, enabled the Board at that time to make the necessary renovations to the house. The ongoing relationship with The First Congregational Church has stood the test of time and grown even stronger. ABC in Darien will be forever indebted to the congregation for their ongoing support.



Throughout all of his years (1985-2007) as beloved pastor of The First Congregational Church, Ronald Evans was a staunch supporter of ABC.

## OUR MISSION

To provide four-year academic and boarding scholarships to highly motivated and academically promising, female, minority students from underserved areas. These young women come to Darien looking for better educational opportunities and to broaden their life experiences. Promising students, often identified by a middle school guidance counselor or teacher for their academic excellence and extracurricular involvement, undergo an extensive application process during their 8th grade year. Our local Selection Committee reviews approximately 50 applications referred to us by the national ABC organization from among the over 2600 that they receive. We interview 4-6 candidates and ultimately select one or two who will live in Darien's ABC House and attend DHS for four years. ABC scholars are smart, involved and motivated.

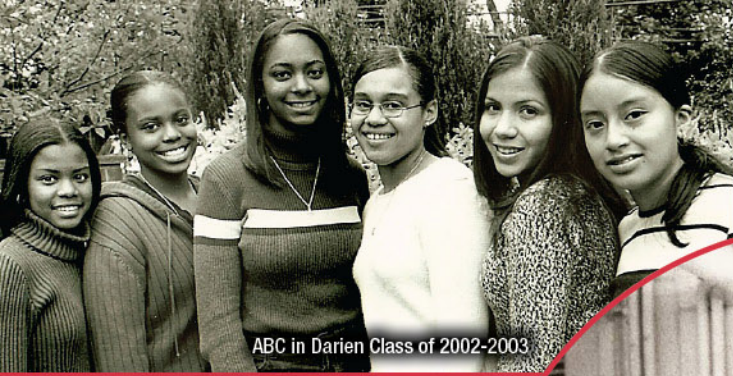


## WE ALL BENEFIT

Throughout their stay in Darien, ABC scholars bring new dimensions to all whose lives they touch. Darien teenagers become friends with students from environments and backgrounds different than their own. The ABC scholars contribute significantly to our High School programs in student government, academics, athletics, theatre, music and other activities. ABC scholars typically spend one or two weekends a month with their host families, who provide their student with additional emotional support and an opportunity to connect with our community in a different way. Host families usually feel that they learn and grow at least as much as their adopted daughter does over these four years. A Better Chance in Darien is a source of sustained pride and reflects positively on Darien's reputation and its commitment to be a more diverse and tolerant community with the highest values.

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Over the past 30 years, the depth and breadth of support for ABC is a testament to the good people who live and work in our community. Key program leaders have included 23 Board Presidents, 260 Board members, 142 Host Families and 20 Resident Directors. (see next page). As we celebrate our 30th Year in Darien, we reflect on the opportunities we have opened to the 39 scholars who have graduated from ABC in Darien, and also on the contributions they have made to the many whose lives they have touched here.



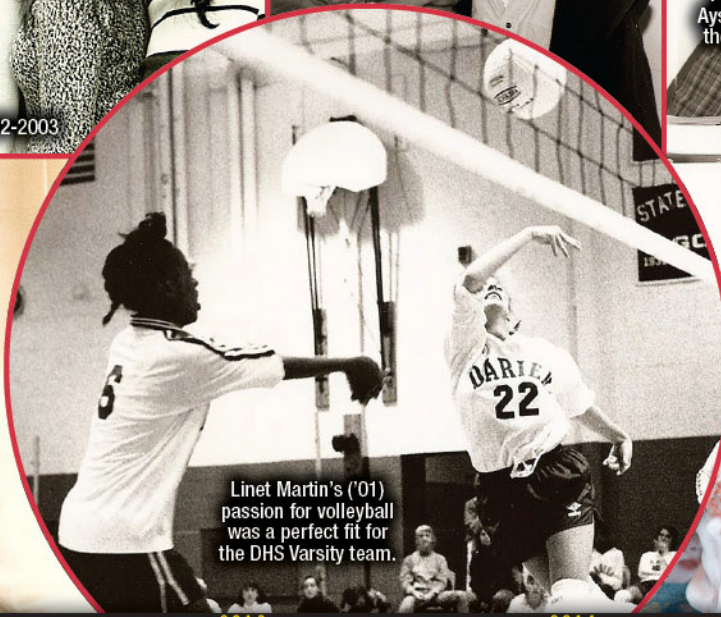
ABC in Darien Class of 2002-2003



ABC Board Member, Fred Martin, helping Aysa Ramseur ('93) in the computer room at ABC House



Two of ABC's earliest scholars, Rosa Garcia ('84) and Khisha Pratt ('86).



Linnet Martin's ('01) passion for volleyball was a perfect fit for the DHS Varsity team.



Alexa Aviles ('91) and Cielo Irizarry ('91) celebrate a second graduation together at Columbia.



**D**  
FUN/WALK  
In 1995, Darienites got moving and had fun while supporting ABC's major fundraiser.

# Where did they go from here?

## Denise Richards

DHS 1987

University of Pennsylvania 1991

Denise has spent her entire career in education, starting with Teach for America and for the past 18 years teaching Spanish to Bronx middle schoolers. Diana says 'My Darien experience taught me the importance of expanding your horizons and that no dream is out of reach as long as you put your mind to it.' Many of her students have gone on to top high schools and colleges and she feels good knowing that she has passed forward A Better Chance to another generation of young students.



## Cielo Irizarry

DHS 1991

Barnard 1995, Columbia 2002

At a young age Cielo understood the importance of her education and strove for academic excellence. She also grasped an early understanding of the cycle of poverty and worked to deconstruct it and uplift not only her family but her community. Cielo credits her significant accomplishments to the many mentors she has had in her life combined with lots of hard work, and acknowledges that it takes a village to raise a child. She has advised 'Do it all, push the envelope. Be proud and celebrate your milestones, but you must work smart and hard and be strategic. Most importantly, never forget to give back.'

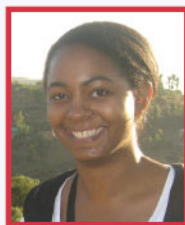


## Kendra Hadiya Barber

DHS 2003

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill 2007

After completing her dissertation, this ABC in Darien graduate will be known as Dr. Kendra Barber, with a PhD in Sociology from the University of Maryland, College Park.



## Sylvia Puma

DHS 2006

Columbia University 2010

After her interest was cultivated in the science labs at DHS, Sylvia followed a Pre-med track at Columbia University, with a major in Hispanic Studies. She is currently working at Bronx Lebanon Hospital in the Medical Case Management program and plans to apply to medical school this summer.



## Diana Morris

DHS 2007

Boston College 2011

Since leaving DHS Diana's leadership was further honed as an Orientation Leader and President of the Black Student Forum at BC. She also managed to study in Greece and pursue an internship in Ireland. Diana is beginning a Masters in Higher Education Administration in Boston and aspires to direct student affairs at a major university.



## ABC IN DARIEN ALUMNAE

Name	DHS year	College
LaRose Parris	1983	NYU (post grad at CUNY)
Tony Frost	1984	Northwestern
Joy Marshall	1984	Northwestern
Rosa Garcia	1984	Wesleyan
Elizabeth (Reyes) Tejada	1984	Cornell
Orglyn Clarke	1984	Wesleyan
Khisha (Pratt) Barnard	1986	Tufts (post grad at Simmons)
Denise Richards	1987	U. Penn
Shelley (Thomas) Dugas	1987	Amherst
Edwina Chapman	1989	Dartmouth
Julie Leung	1989	Connecticut College
Sohui Kim	1990	Bowdoin/Barnard
Alexa Aviles	1991	Columbia
Cielo Irizarry	1991	Barnard (post grad at Columbia)
Tamara Loatman	1992	UVA
Aysha Ramseur	1993	U. Penn
SoLan Liang	1993	Yale
Renata Alexis	1995	St. Johns
Jackie Ferrer	1997	Providence College
Danique Clarke	1997	SUNY Binghamton
Migdalia Caraballo	1998	NYU
Barbara Lawrence	1998	Temple
Erica Pardo	1999	Manhattan College
Linet Martin	2001	UVA
Kate Ofikura	2001	Cornell
Octavia Donnelly	2002	UVA
Malika Willis	2002	Cornell
Kendra Barber	2003	UNC Chapel Hill
Chadae Chang	2003	University of Maryland
Melida Burgos	2005	Syracuse
Sylvia Puma	2006	Columbia
Morgana Coombs	2006	Temple
Diana Morris	2007	Boston College
Juanita Gyamera	2007	Wesleyan
Melinda Siew	2009	CUNY
Chidinma Amakiri	2010	Loyola Marymount
Caurice Wynter	2010	Syracuse
Olaide Ajomagberin	2011	George Washington U.
Anthia Diaz	2011	Wesleyan

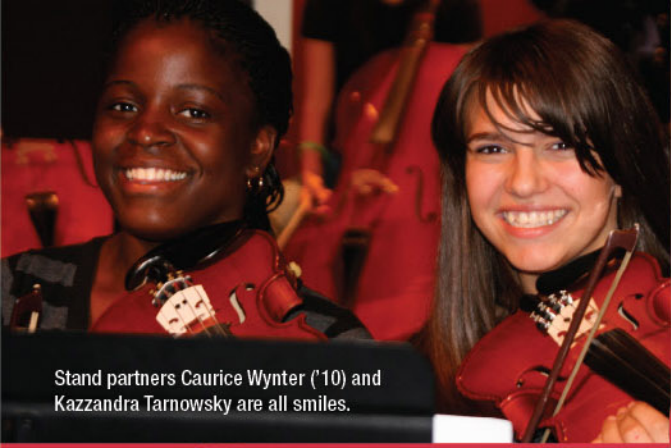
## Chidinma Amakiri

DHS 2010

Loyola Marymount University 2014

Chiddy has continued her style of getting involved and giving back to her community as a student at LMU. She is a Peer Educator with Student Psychological Services, Treasurer of the local chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers and the Secretary for the MEKWA Association. Chiddy wrote recently: 'I really couldn't do all this without the help of ABC. I appreciate everything everyone at ABC in Darien has done and continues to do.'





Stand partners Caurice Wynter ('10) and Kazzandra Tarnowsky are all smiles.



It's a family affair...host sibs and their ABC sisters have some laughs.



Kendra Barber ('03) conceived and organized the first ever DHS Black History Assembly, an event that was repeated many times, including here in 2007.



Olaide Ajomagberin ('11) was inducted into the National Honor Society.



'Actually Mr. Hammer, it's like this!'



The annual car wash fundraiser isn't all work!



# THE SUCCESS OF A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN HAS BEEN POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE GENEROSITY OF INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES IN OUR COMMUNITY.

## ABC BOARD MEMBERS 1981-2012 *Each person below gave of their time and expertise for at least one year, some for many years.*

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Judy Betty  
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Mary Biggs  
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Ann Feuerman  
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Tana Gilmore  
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Sheila Sherwood  
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Jose Zepeda

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### PROGRAM DIRECTORS

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Vyvyan Burrs 2008-2012

## HOST FAMILIES, 1981-2012 *Each family provided support to a scholar for her four years in Darien, opening up their homes and hearts.*

Joan & Rick Agresta  
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| DARIEN

## A BETTER CHANCE

Opening the door to greater educational opportunities since 1981.



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

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## THE STORY OF NIYA

"To handle yourself use your head; to handle others use your heart."

-Eleanor Roosevelt

Niya Wright, ABC's graduating 2012 scholar, uses her head and heart in all that she does. Over her four years at Darien High School, Niya has grown into a remarkable young woman who exemplifies all that ABC stands for and more. Her list of awards speak for themselves:

- Darien High School Student Body President, 2012
- YWCA Young Woman of Distinction, 2012
- Daughters of the American Revolution Citizenship Award, 2011
- Trinity College Book Award, 2011

As a scholar, Niya Wright has met the rigorous academic challenges of Darien's excellent school system through dedication and hard work.

As a leader, she has championed new initiatives at the High School that have benefitted the community as a whole – including Dancing with the Teachers, a block buster fundraiser that brought faculty, administration and students together and to their feet.

As an athlete, she placed 5th in the county for shot-put her sophomore year; 6th in the county her junior year.

As a facilitator in the high school's anti-bullying program, she put herself out there, speaking candidly of her own experiences before the entire school.

And last, but not least, she has served as an advocate, role model and big sister to her "sisters" in the ABC House – listening, moderating and communicating in her supportive and gentle way.

Niya Wright has approached life's challenges with an open heart. Coupled with her inquiring mind, these qualities will serve her well as she heads west to her top choice school, Loyola Marymount University. Darien has been privileged to be a integral part of her journey.



## 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:** Nine 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.org](http://www.abcdarien.org)

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