

is now looking  
spectacular.

The ABC scholars themselves have been active in community service this spring, too; they helped out at the Easter Egg hunt and Healthy Kids Day at the YMCA. Each of them continue to be involved with other service programs, such as Person to Person, the YMCA after-school program, Darien Book Aid, and Building With Books.

Next year there will be one more addition to the ABC House. A little Janosco-Parham is expected to make its entrance around August 8. Much to the chagrin of the girls, it turns out that Francis will not be the only guy in the house...!



The currently enrolled ABC students in Darien  
from left to right: Chidinma, Whitney, Diana,  
Melinda, Caurice, Tasha and Juanita.

A SILVER CELEBRATION HONORING 25 YEARS OF ABC IN DARIEN (continued from insert)



Above, big event planners,  
Doug Anderson, Sharon Moore  
and Mark Scott.

Right, Jackie Scott and  
Nancy Herling materialized a very  
successful silent and live auction..



as a reunion for former volunteers (i.e. current and past Board members, host families and many others).

The evening started with cocktails for about 300 people and progressed to the silent auction. The silent auction was a big hit with items ranging from pampering spa items, golf outings, food and wine...to paintings and portraits. The evening also included a

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; 34 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-six 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 in Darien.

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

brief history of how ABC in Darien was started by two of its founders Anne Kimball and Michael Armstrong, memorable stories from graduates and a heartfelt poem by the current scholars. One of the highlights was a live auction that was conducted by Calle Sullivan and Andy Hersam. Winning items included: 1) Golf paradise at Baltusrol, 2) Caribbean getaway to Tortola BVI, and 3) Dining at the ABC house.

The evening concluded with dancing to the sounds of the Butch Taylor Band.

A big thank you to all who helped us celebrate the program's rich past, it's lively present and vital future!

A BETTER  
CHANCE IN  
DARIEN  
NEWSLETTER

**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**  
**Susan 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**  
**Victoria Crane**  
**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



A BETTER CHANCE  
Opening the door to greater  
educational opportunities



25<sup>TH</sup> SILVER CELEBRATION ISSUE

VOLUME 13

Nº 2

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENTS



Susan Littlefield (incoming co-president), Doug Anderson (co-president),  
Cokey Concannon (departing co-president)

In May, we celebrated ABC in Darien's Silver Anniversary – twenty-five excellent years in Darien. It was a wonderful event, and given the spirit and enthusiasm that evening, we feel certain that at least twenty-five successful years are sure to follow.

Ours is a program that offers so much to so many. Students, resident directors, host families, the Board members, and the Darien community are all touched in different ways by ABC. At the April 2007 Board Meeting we were humbled by a visit from a returning scholar, Aysha Ramseur, who graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1997 and now lives in Stamford. She sat and spoke to us eloquently about her present life as a lawyer and the mother of two beautiful children. As she looked back on her years in Darien, she remembered many chal-

lenges, yet she was very grateful for all of the effort made by the Darien community and the Board to provide a residence, board, tutors, rides, entertainment, enrichment, and a home away from home. "All of the sacrifices involved were small in retrospect — and so worthwhile, from my perspective today."

In this newsletter you will hear about our two graduating seniors; Juanita Gyamera, who is going on to Wesleyan University, and Diana

Morris, who will head off to Boston College. Their years in Darien have been extraordinary, and have flown by. It is hard to imagine that in just two months the cycle will start again, with the arrival of two new freshmen, both anxious and excited about a new year.

Many of you reading this have given to the program in some way. Thank you very much for that support. But remember — there is much work yet to be done! Together, we are all making a difference, not just to the ABC program and the Darien community, but to a greater world.

With both pride and passion,

*Cokey Concannon* *Susan Littlefield* *Doug Anderson*  
Cokey Concannon (departing co-president) Susan Littlefield (incoming co-president) Doug Anderson (co-president)

Happy reunion  
with the alumnae!

The search for 32 alumnae from 25 years of ABC in Darien by Susan Mulderrig (Board member and former president) started in March 2006. Although she was able to locate quite a few through their Darien host families with whom they had stayed in touch, the further back she went the more challenging the search became. Thanks to Susan's endless effort in digging through old ABC binders, internet searches, announcements on the ABC National website, and many phone calls, 24 alumnae responded and 15 of them were able to make it to the Gala!



ABC Alumnae at the Gala

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IN DARIEN

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# A Farewell

FROM OUR  
GRADUATING SENIORS



Diana Morris

*“The height of great men reached and kept  
were not attained by a sudden flight but they,  
while their companions slept, were toiling upward  
through the nights.”*

My four years in Darien have been filled with support, laughter, and excitement. In the beginning I was filled with the expected nervousness and apprehension but as time went on, I found the support and kindness one would expect from a family. I can honestly say that I have a home here and the memories and relationships I have formed will last a lifetime. As I go onto Boston College this fall, the skills and lessons I have gained from this program will be put to use everyday — from time management to people skills. I would like to thank everyone who made this experience all that it has been — my host families the Bletzers, Hecks, and Hughans, the Board, friends, the girls in the house who I now come to see as my sisters, and of course Francis and Julie, who spent two years reading my essays and enjoying my random moments.

*Diana is from Springfield, Massachusetts and would like to pursue a career in forensic psychology and criminology*



Diana with her own family and her two host families the Hecks and the Hughans



Juanita Gyamera

It is hard to believe that four years have passed since I was welcomed into the ABC House. It has ultimately been a great experience. There are a lot of people that I have to thank for their support along the way: my own family, my host families, the Scotts and the Nichols, the girls at the house, my friends, Julie and Francis. They have played such an essential role in my success here and I am truly grateful for all that they have done. What I will miss the most is living in the house with my ABC “sisters”, their “comradery” and not to forget the Starbucks runs! What I have to say to the girls now and those to come is that it is important that they make the most out of this experience both on an academic and a social level.

Defeating the obstacles that will inevitably come in their way will ultimately contribute to what makes ABC a life changing adventure. I will be going to Wesleyan University next year and I am very excited, however, I will never forget my friends in Darien.

*Juanita is from the Bronx, New York. Her parents are originally from Ghana. She is interested in Pre-Med and International Studies.*



Juanita with her own family and her host families the Scotts and the Nichols.

## Another Farewell... AND A HEARTFELT THANK YOU FROM ABC IN DARIEN TO RON AND JANET EVANS



Under the leadership of Ron Evans, the senior minister of the First Congregational Church of Darien for the past 23 years, the ABC house has been allowed to remain tenants of the Congregational Church for \$1 per year. More importantly, the warmth and welcome to the ABC Scholars of both Ron and Janet have been extraordinary during all this time.

As Ron and Janet venture off to retirement in California their friendship and support for the program will always be remembered. We wish them all the best and hope to keep in touch!

## A turbulent, wet but nevertheless exciting spring ....an update from the resident directors Julie and Francis

The Great Spring Break Flood of '07 created some excitement at the ABC House at Brookside Road. While Diana basked in the Caribbean on a senior trip and Caurice had a great time playing time playing the violin in Orlando, with the DHS orchestra, the rest of us did our best to stay high and dry. We were mostly successful, but it would have been a tragic tale if it weren't for some serious help from Nancy Herling and Congregational Church pastor Ron Evans; the two of them waded through the overflowing parking lot at Brookside Road and rescued Francis's poor red

Beetle, as well as a trailer full of donated furniture. Luckily, the only residual effect of the flood was a foot of mud in the parking lot—the house itself emerged dry as can be.

The floods did not prevent a group of twenty Eagle Scouts, under the inspired leadership of DHS freshman Nicasio Arroyo and his parents, from completing the renovation of the TV lounge of the house. Nicasio spearheaded many long hours (225!) knocking down walls, moving pipes, and painting. According to Nicasio, this community service project, which was part of his Eagle certification, is a triple



win for ABC, Troop 35, and himself. “We all benefit in different ways” he said. Thanks to Niciasso and the Eagle Scouts' hard work, a new set of furniture from Debbie Lee, carpeting from Redi-Made Carpet in Westport, and generously donated materials from Ring's End, the room

*(continued on back page)*



### THE GIVING TREE IS STILL IN NEED OF SOME ITEMS.

I am pleased to support the ABC house in Darien and help their tree grow.  
Make checks payable to **A BETTER CHANCE**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100 \_\_\_\_\_ Giving Tree item \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_

For gifts of appreciated securities, please contact Tony Shaw at 212-272-4499

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**A BETTER CHANCE**, P.O. Box 3204, Darien, CT 06820

THANK YOU!

### PLEASE CONSIDER:

Amtrak Vouchers-\$75

Birthday cakes-\$40

Books for the ABC library-\$25

College visits-\$250

DHS field trips-\$40

Freshman orientation-\$1000

Friday night out-\$150

Metro North tickets-\$20

New York Times for 2 months-\$40

SAT prep-\$500

A Ropes course-\$300

Summer enrichment-\$3,500

Summer leadership-\$500

An hour of tutoring-\$50



# *A Silver celebration Honoring 25 years of ABC in Darien*

**M**ay 19, 2007 will go down as a great day in the history of ABC in Darien. Twenty five years of providing four-year academic and boarding scholarships to Darien High School for highly motivated and academically promising minority girls from disadvantaged environments were celebrated at Woodway Country Club.

Thanks to an outpouring of support from the community and friends of ABC Darien we were able to achieve our goals:

- 1) raise public awareness of the organization;
- 2) raise funds for summer enrichment programs for the scholars; and
- 3) bring together graduates to share their stories, as well

*(continued on back page)*







*Hugs and Tears...a poem  
written and recited at the gala by the  
currently enrolled ABC students*

Hugs and tears to start our years  
Ready for a world unknown  
Excited to start despite our fears  
Young girls, not yet grown



Partially excited, parents delighted  
To see us get this far  
At first divided, though with love provided  
We took steps to reach the star

Defeating the walls of prejudice  
That sometimes stood in our way  
We never allowed ourselves to settle for less  
And stayed focused each and every day



With hugs and tears we end our years  
Ready for a world unknown  
Excited to start despite the fears  
Young women, almost grown

In years past and those to come  
ABC has shown the way  
Though times have changed and people  
have grown we all celebrate on this day

