

FAMILY VALUES

Fifteen Years with A Better Chance in Darien and Still Going Strong

Yvette Eenkema van Dijk has been supporting ABC since she and her husband Pieter moved to Darien in 1993 and found the ABC newsletter in their mailbox. "I really liked that this organization was right in Darien and that we as a community were supporting these young, bright students who otherwise would not have the chance to go to a good school. There are so many organizations you can donate to, it is hard to choose; but with ABC right here in town I felt that our money was (and still is!) going directly to support the girls and the house that they all live in together."

While their three young children were growing up, she took on a more active role at A Better Chance, serving on a number of different committees. Her favorite and new involvement has been serving as a host parent. The Eenkema van Dijks are the host family for Tasha Valentin together with the Kindys, which means that they have Tasha with them for one weekend every month.

"For me and my teenage kids it is one of the most rewarding of all tasks. Hosting an ABC student brings you very close to the "grass roots" of the organization," Yvette explains. "We have gotten to know our host child on a very personal basis; she is an integral part of our family and we support her through the good and the bad times, just like we do with our own kids. At the same time, providing a home away from home gives Tasha a place to



Tasha shares great food, fun and laughter with her host family. Below, roles reversed: the Eenkema van Dijks invited for dinner at the ABC house.



relax and experience family life. Our kids love her: when she gets here they all get together in her room to catch up on what has been going on in their lives. It is good for the girls to have a break from the house on weekends, and to have time to become part of our community. Our children get every bit as much out of the experience as Tasha does. They all learn from each other. I think it is a privilege to see them grow up together during these very important, formative and sensitive years of their lives."

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: Six girls currently from New York, and New Jersey.

HISTORY: Twenty-six years in Darien; 36 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, tutors, and part-time Program Director as needed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Twenty-eight local residents.

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

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

THE BUDGET: \$135,000 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

Doug Anderson Co-President
Susan Littlefield Co-President
Basheera Abdus-Sabur
Donna Berizzi
Doug Burke
Jennienne Burke
Cokey Concannon
Yvette Eenkema Van Dijk
Sandy Filmer
Bebe Fisher
Marilyn Giannos
Cherie Greene
Joanne Hennessy
Nancy Herling
Eliot Jacobs
Janet Kindy
Phil Meyer
Jill Maguire
Sharon Moore
Susan Mulderrig
Shirley Nichols
Aysha Ramseur
Jackie Scott
Mark Scott
Tony Shaw
Pam Spellane
Deb Wohlberg
Jane Yezzi

ADVISORS/VOLUNTEERS

Victoria Crane
(Program Director)
Francis Janosco/Julie Parham
(Resident Directors)
Jera Flood
Michele Monson
Jean Shortliffe
Elisabeth Tullis

HOST FAMILIES

Lisa & Michael Alfieri
Julia & Dan Anderson
Wendy & Ned Brokaw
Susan & Ted Collins
Cokey & Jim Concannon
Yvette & Pieter Eenkema Van Dijk
Minina & Bob Johnston
Janet & Mark Kindy
Dale & John O'Brien
Callie & Tighe Sullivan
Susan & John Wilson
Nancy & Doug Wells

STUDENTS

Melinda Siew, 2009
Chidinma Amakari, 2010
Tasha Valentin, 2010
Caurice Wynter, 2010
Olaide Ajomagberin, 2011
Anthia Diaz, 2011

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ASSEMBLY



This year's Assembly focused on coming together as people, regardless of class or culture. The Assembly committee included, from left to right: Melinda Siew, Anthia Diaz, Sabrina Desruisseaux, Annabet van Munching, Caurice Wynter, Natalie Carmona, Olaide Ajomagberin, Tasha Valentin, Allison Townsend, Mike Mune and Chidinma Amakari.

**"We may have all come on different ships,
but we're in the same boat now." — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.**

This year's Black History Month Assembly featured A Better Chance in Darien alum Kendra Barber who started the Assembly when she was at the high school, and spoke eloquently of the need to continue the tradition.

Dennis Watlington, film-maker and author, reflected on his memories of growing up in the South when Jim Crow laws were still being enforced. He was one of the early participants in the ABC program, starting two years before the Voting Rights Act guaranteed black Americans the right to vote. Special thanks to Host Family Tom and Wendy Brokaw for introducing Mr. Watlington to A Better Chance in Darien.

The third panelist was Dr. Donna Andrade,

(continued on page 2)



Assembly speakers, left to right: Dr. Donna Andrade, Kendra Barber, and Dennis Watlington. Kendra, who graduated from A Better Chance in Darien in 2003 and started the Assembly, was delighted to be back in Darien.

MESSAGE FROM OUR CO-PRESIDENTS

Dear Friends:

This has been a busy year at A Better Chance in Darien. Our six scholars are working hard in their classrooms, on athletic fields, in music rooms and dance studios, and around town as well. Perhaps you have crossed their paths at Person to Person or the YMCA, at the Congregational Church Antiques Show or in line for a smoothie at Robeks?

Our Board has been active as well. We have been encouraged by the positive response to our Annual Appeal, particularly after the spectacular success of the 25th Anniversary Gala last spring. Thank you very much if you have already contributed this year; and if you haven't, please consider giving now. Help us do all that we can to make A Better Chance in Darien the best it possibly can be, for our scholars and for the community as well.

Gratefully,



Doug Anderson and Susie Littlefield, Co-Presidents



Putting their heads together:

Math Team members Melinda (Class of '09) and Anthia (Class of '11), solving a math problem with the help of Jie Zhou (Class of '08).



Hard at work: Olaide at the computer room back home at 11 Brookside Road.

Thanks and a Smile

We are deeply grateful to so many local people and organizations for their help. Here are some who have been particularly outstanding recently:

- The Arrowhead Foundation
- Dr. Donna Andrade for support of the girls and Black History Month
- Nicasio Arroyo for transforming the common room
- Kendra Barber for the perspective that she brought to the Black History Month Assembly
- The Darien YMCA for support with memberships and lessons
- Fairfield Electric for their generous help
- Family Centers for counseling support
- The Darien Sports Shop for underwriting ski rentals
- Susan Cameron for technological support and expertise
- Boy Scout Troop 35 for helping with the common room project
- The Rainbow Shoppe for their gift of Vera Bradley bags
- Al Rosetti and Executive Printing for spirited assistance
- Susan and Mark Scott for hosting the January ski weekend
- Starbuck's in Darien and Charles Okonji for their generosity
- Dennis Watlington for participating in the Black History Month Assembly
- Eileen Whalen and Dian Preston for sharing their insight
- And always, the First Congregational Church of Darien for their generous support

PLEASE GIVE

I am pleased to support the ABC house in Darien. Make checks payable to A BETTER CHANCE

Name _____

Address _____

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ other _____

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

☐ MC ☐ VISA

Card Number _____ Exp. Date _____

Signature _____
A BETTER CHANCE, P.O. Box 3204, Darien, CT 06820
THANK YOU!

For more information, visit our website. www.abcdarien.com

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ASSEMBLY

(continued from page 1)

Academic Dean at Fairfield Preparatory School. She was a great source of encouragement, direction and support to our scholars as they started the process of organizing the Assembly. Her command of current statistics and her ability to connect Civil Rights reforms with a string of subsequent social reforms were enlightening. She pulled



BHM scholars celebrate: Olaide, Anthia and Caurice celebrate with one of the Committee's faculty advisors, Christina Taylor. The Assembly included singing, dancing, and skits in addition to the talk-show format guest speaker program.

the program together by quoting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.: "We may have all come on different ships, but we're all in the same boat now."

Kate Ofikuru, who was just ahead of Kendra in the program, also attended the assembly. Both women were invited to participate in a program honoring Black History Month at Middlesex Middle School where they spoke honestly and passionately about their experiences as students in Darien.

Overall, it was a great day. The girls did an outstanding job, both in front of the audience and behind the scenes; and they enjoyed the opportunity to engage with the speakers, the alumnae, and their fellow students.



A succesful program: Left to right is ABC scholar Chidinma Amakiri, Mike Hickey, Allison Townsend, and on the right is Sabrina Desruisseaux.



Dynamic Duo: Co-President Doug Anderson happily accepting a contribution from Mackenzie Williams, left, and Emily Crump, right. The freshman hosted a holiday dance party to benefit A Better Chance in Darien. Together, they raised almost \$1,000.



Seeing the sights in New York City: This winter weekend visit included lunch, lots of walking, from Rockefeller Center to the skating rink in the park. The outing was organized by Board Member Jennienne Burke, who chairs the Enrichment Committee.

Sound bodies make sound minds:



Swimming practice at the YMCA, left to right: YMCA lifeguard Teddy Udain, Caurice, Olaide, Chiddy, YMCA coach Susanna Zandman, and Anthia enjoy a swim.



Getting ready for track season: Chiddy and Caurice working out at the Y. Generously, the the Darien YMCA has donated memberships to our scholars and to Resident Directors Francis Janosco and Julie Parham as well.