



The Scholar

Autumn 2002

A Better Chance in Darien Newsletter

Volume 7

Nº 1

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Students

Kendra Barber 2003
 Chadaé Chang 2003
 Melida Burgos, 2005
 Christina Gonzalez, 2005
 Silvia Puma, 2006
 Morgana Coombs, 2006

full house

On September 3 we welcomed our scholars back for another amazing year of study and activities. Once again the ABC behind-the-scenes beautification crew swept through the house as it does each summer, this year along with some landscaping, each of the girls' rooms was redone and the dining room floor was refinished. Our new freshmen, Morgana Coombs and Silvia Puma were greeted with open arms by sophomores, Melida Burgos and Christina Gonzales, and seniors Kendra Barber and Chadaé Chang, who will show them the finer points of student life in Darien! Our extraordinary resident directors Karyn and Steve LeXander and their four-year old son, Duncan, have returned for their fourth year. Their well deserved summer break couldn't have been more enjoyable, with Steve's sister getting married in Vermont, time spent in South Carolina with Karyn's family and discovering that shortly after the New Year Duncan will have a baby brother. Karyn continues to teach autistic children at Cooperative Educational Services in Trumbull. Steve has taken a new job acting as Community Liaison at Stamford High and is finishing his CT certification to teach English. Master Duncan is in his last year of pre-school. I am told that there is a positive aura permeating the house like it never has before. Nothing like combining serious study with laser tag, movies, the annual car wash and fun dinners to arrive at serendipity!



Celebrating back to school with a glorious picnic at the Tokeneke Club
 Chadaé, Morgana, Christina, Melida, Silvia and Kendra

Malika and Octavia
 The happy graduates at the Scott's graduation party

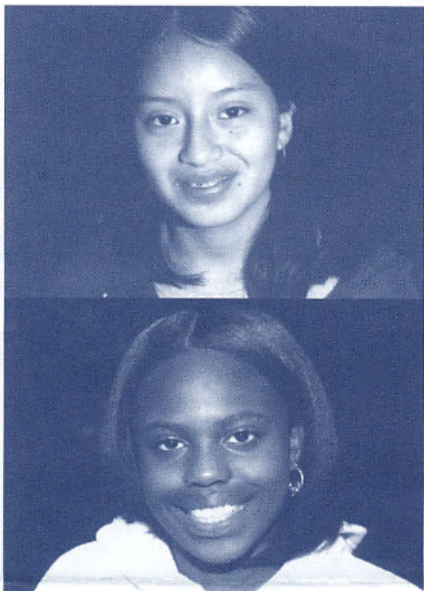
You go girls!

On June 14 Malika Willis and Octavia Donnelly proudly tossed their caps with all the other DHS graduates. Both girls left veritable legacies in their wakes. As President of DHS during her senior year, Malika worked with the administration to establish a Big Sister/Big Brother program pairing in-coming freshmen with upperclassmen and coordinating a volunteer project for the Home Front division of Americares. "The best part of being president was having a role in running the school. I was able to make a difference and have an influence on others." Outside her oval office, Malika pursued her shotput record making, once again participating in the State tournament and placing seventh. We're sure Malika is already beginning to make her mark at Cornell University. Octavia distinguished herself in so many ways at DHS, through her Blue Wave dancing and Theatre 308 productions, culminating with last spring's production of Kiss Me Kate. At the University of Virginia, Octavia plans to pursue her love of theater with a major in Theater Arts. We'll keep in touch.

we are the future

Silvia Puma arrives in town directly from New York City. After a fun summer spent with family—she is the oldest of four (two brothers and a sister)—and traveling back and forth to Darien to attend high school prep sessions, Silvia brings bright new energy to 11 Brookside. Her passion for science and space exploration has led her to NASA, performing experiments with clothes that will protect from radiation. She has worked with scientists at City College doing DNA experiments. After school she is beginning training classes at the Maritime Aquarium for future volunteer work, participating in Spanish Club and volunteering at the Darien YMCA.

Silvia

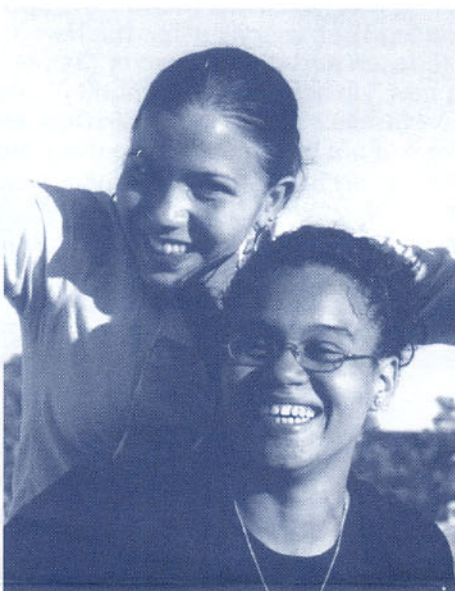


Morgana

Morgana Coombs comes to us also from Brooklyn. She got to know Darien a bit this summer when she attended high school prep sessions under the tutelage of ABC's Cheryl Faga. In addition to school work she made time for several jobs, one working for the NY Department of Youth and volunteering at various operations, including a daycare center. Her first weeks at DHS have proved to be an exciting and wonderful new experience—she's playing on the Freshman soccer team and hopes to make the Freshman basketball team. Her dreams are to attend Brown or perhaps UNC at Chapel Hill and eventually become a doctor. Not to worry!

Christina Gonzalez comes to us from the Bronx. Having looked after various younger extended family members all summer, Christina returned to school with new wisdom at being a "big sister". She has hit the ground running this year co-managing Varsity Volleyball with Melida Burgos, participating in the Building with Books program, Spanish Club and taking her love for children to the Stepping Stones Children's Museum where she volunteers two days each week. She also returned to school this year with a new career goal, to be a speech pathologist. Favorite subject: English.

Christina

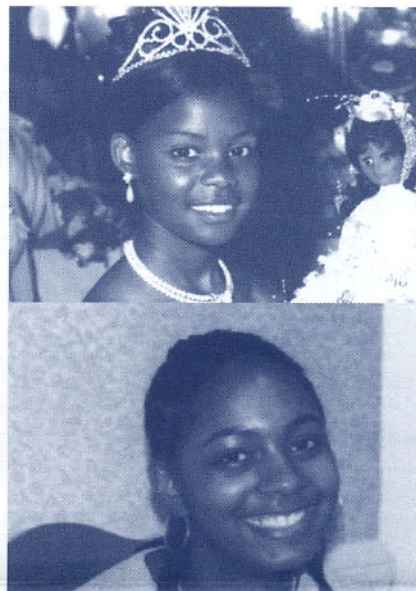


Melida

Melida Burgos's family bought their first home in Teaneck, NJ this summer. The eldest of five sisters, she returns to Darien having attended numerous trials with her uncle, Alexander Hunter, who is a New York Supreme Court Justice. She loved the experience, learning so much about the litigation process. She loves mathematics—taking on Algebra 2 and Geometry—and has a passion for music—classical during study time, Salsa and Merengue for entertainment. Melida is the head manager of the DHS Varsity Volleyball Team, participates in the Spanish Club and is trying to arrange a volunteer position with **Kids in Crisis**.

Chadaé Chang hails from Brooklyn, New York. Her summer was spent seeing friends, relaxing and working with the Brooklyn Board of Education. Here in Darien she has made her mark as an All-American Cheerleader. This year Chadaé has been recognized for her accomplishments in dance by the Darien Arts Center with a scholarship. Chadaé has taken on the challenge of AP Biology and Calculus. In the next several months she will be making that momentous decision as to which institution of higher learning to grace her presence with where she intends to major in dance and minor in biology.

Chadaé



Kendra

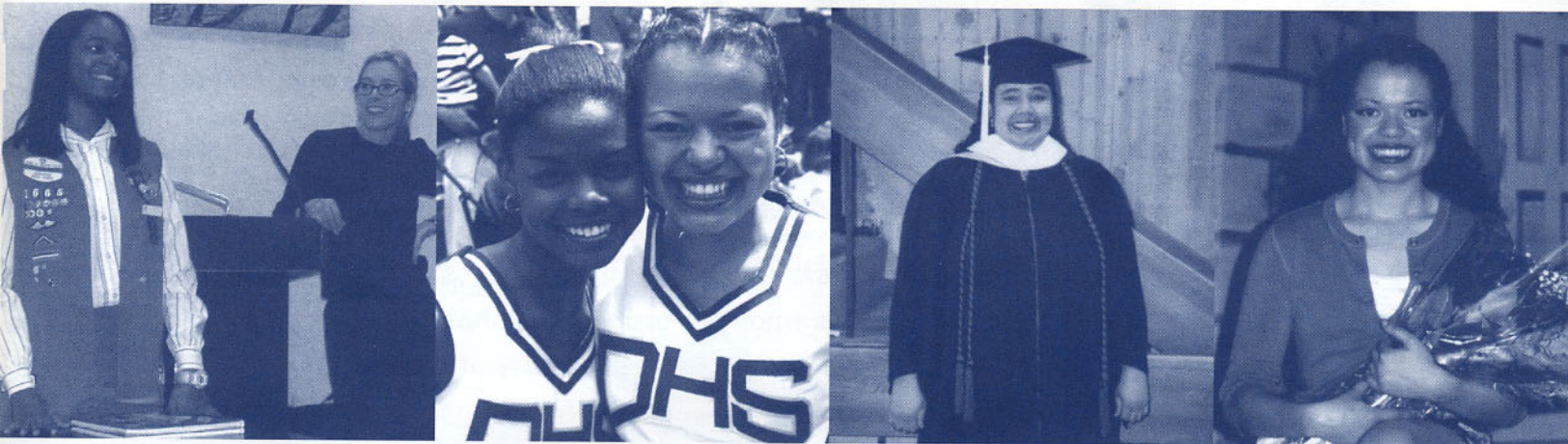
Kendra Barber also proudly hails from Brooklyn. This past summer she did not stray far from the world of academia. Brown University was the location and Ancient Egypt was her chosen subject for 3 weeks. Kendra's name can already be found in several books, appearing in *Who's Who Among American High School Students* (1999-2000 & 2001-2002 editions) and received the Young Achievers Award earlier this year. Back at DHS Kendra is studying hard, volunteering at the Maritime Aquarium, serving as editor of the yearbook and continuing to play an active role in the Girl Scouts—she was one of two delegates, chosen to represent New York at the Girl Scouts convention in Long Beach, CA in October.

every girl tells a Story

Kendra Barber was chosen to appear in photographer and documentary filmmaker, Carolyn Jones', latest book, **every girl tells a story: a celebration of girls speaking their minds.** Ms Jones got together with the Girl Scouts of the USA to paint a portrait of today's American girl, delving into the hearts and minds of 85 young women from across the country. In her foreword, First Lady Laura Bush says, "My hope for every girl, everywhere, is that she, too, will find her voice and achieve her dreams." This compilation of stories is truly "a joyous celebration of the girls' complexity, depth, honesty and glorious, soaring optimism."

Upon publication last year, Kendra got a taste of being a celebrity at several book signings and opportunities to be interviewed by the press.

"I feel like I always have to do my best in everything, since otherwise I'd hear about it, even from other kids. Like, 'Oh, I thought she was supposed to be smart. What happened?' I feel I always will do my best in everything because my dad's always telling me, 'Whatever you do, do it to your best ability.' I think that because of being labeled 'gifted and talented,' I have to work harder so I can live up to that title. I want to do a Black History assembly in school this year. It kind of made me angry that last year no one mentioned that February is Black History Month, and there are six black kids in the school. We're not doing anything to recognize it. It's celebrated all over . . . I want to stage an assembly to enlighten students about Black history. If people don't want to celebrate then they don't have to. But I just want people to be aware of it."



Kendra speaking at book signing

Chadae and Octavia: Cheerleaders

Jackie Ferrar graduates, Providence College
DHS Graduate Class of 1997

Octavia in Kiss Me Kate

letters from abroad

Hey Everyone, . . . For me UVA is good, I have met many new people and it is a definite change being so independent. . . I loved seeing Kendra and the Barbers a few weeks ago and I would love if Kendra is considering UVA . . . it is a great place to be!! Adjusting to college was a bit odd, because I didn't have to adjust to everything. Being away from home...did that. Meeting new people...that was old news. Getting up at 8am for a 9am class...what a nice break! Oh yeah no longer sleeping (there is too much I want to do!!) . . . I am accepting it as a fact of life. Joining organizations . . . everyone wants you to join and there are so many opportunities to do so. I feel like I am starting all over again academically, it is a challenge and it is really fun at times, I get to see my professors on a whole new level and its all up to me to make my years here benefit me. Socially, I am fine, its not that hard making friends, plus people love me (Hehe! Just kidding!!) All in all, I think I love it here . . . Well, . . . that's all for now. Love ya & miss ya'll . . . please tell everyone on the board I said hello!! THANK YOU!!! Linet Martin, DHS Graduate 2001

Hi Everyone! I'm happy I have the chance to update everyone on life here "high above Cayuga's waters". I am now exactly half way through my second semester here at Cornell and though the prelims are coming on strong, I am thoroughly enjoying myself. With a major such as mine (Industrial and Labor Relations), I have had the luxury of studying such topics as 19th and 20th Century Labor History and Organizational Behavior on both a micro and macro scale. It has certainly been a learning experience adjusting to roughly 60(big) pages of reading every other night . . . Outside of my academics, I am a member of Pamoja-Ni Gospel Choir, the Balch Women's Residence Hall Council, and I work in the Office of Minority Educational Affairs. In addition, I am involved with Campus Crusade for Christ Christian Fellowship . . . and with the Festival of Black Gospel . . . I am definitely getting my feet wet here on campus, all the while finding a way to meet wonderful people that I know I will be friends with for a long time. . . I really love it here at Cornell . . . Until then, blessings. Kate Ofikuru DHS Graduate 2001

A Better Chance

FOR THE KIDS. FOR YOU. FOR ALL OF US

T H E F A C T S

MISSION: To provide four-year academic and boarding scholarships to Darien High School for highly motivated and academically promising minority girls from disadvantaged environments.

ENROLLMENT: Six girls currently from the New York Metropolitan area and New Jersey.

HISTORY: Twenty-one years in Darien; 29 girls have completed the program.

WHERE DO OUR STUDENTS COME FROM? The top 10% of inner city middle school classes with a grade average of at least 85%.

WHERE DO THEY GO? Graduates have attended Amherst, Barnard, Bowdoin, Columbia, Cornell, Dartmouth, Fordham, Manhattan College, New York University, Providence College, University of Pennsylvania, St. John's, Stern School of Business(NYU), SUNY Binghamton, Temple, University of Virginia, Wesleyan and Yale.

STAFF: Two resident directors, cook and tutors, as needed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Thirty-one local residents.

HOST FAMILIES: Six families host the girls one weekend each month; six back-up host families invite the girls to spend one Sunday each month with their families.

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

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

All funds to cover expenses are raised through donations!