



## MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

As we are coming to a close of another school year, the ABC House is as active and dynamic as ever. The girls have been working hard at DHS and are looking forward to spending time with their own families. In addition, they are lining up for challenging summer jobs and internships.

Our senior, Melida Burgos, launches off to Syracuse University to continue her educational journey. We congratulate Melida, the recipient of the DHS Faculty Award, and wish her success! We also are very proud of Silvia Puma

and her accomplishments in her leprosy science project. Thanks to her research, DHS received the science award from the Governor's office of Connecticut!

The numerous volunteers and generous donors have been extraordinary this year. We want to especially note the thorough and successful job Doug Anderson did with the search of our new Resident Directors; and Jackie Scott's amazing leadership in the selection process for our new incoming freshmen.

ABC in Darien experienced a difficult and "soft" fundraising year in 2004 / 2005, and we hope the next three months bring additional contributions to balance our budget.

We are very grateful for the grant we received once again this year from the Tribune Foundation.

As we head into the summer months we have a "wish list" for the House. If you are still interested in donating please consider a targeted donation from our wish list.

Thank you for you continued support!

Sincerely,

Mark C. Scott  
Co-President

Nancy Herling  
Co-President

### ABC WISH LIST

Washer/Dryer

Bathroom renovations

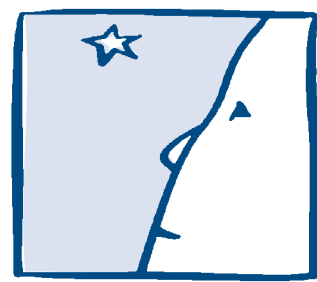
A patio next  
to the house

Sanding and  
finishing of the  
dining room floor

Tree removal

Computer wiring for  
the computer room

Painting of the  
living room quarters



FOR THE KIDS,  
FOR YOU,  
AND ALL OF US

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#### HOST FAMILIES

Donna Holt & Jim Archibald

Joan & Mark Bergen

Cokey & Jim Concannon

Lisa & Kent Eppley

Cynthia & Randall Heck

Shirley & Carl Nichols

Susan & Mark Scott

Barb & Lary Simms

Terrie & Jay Woods

#### STUDENTS

Melida Burgos, 2005

Morgana Coombs, 2006

Silvia Puma, 2006

Juanita Gyamera, 2007

Diana Morris, 2007

SPRING 2005

# The Scholar

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN NEWSLETTER

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## GOOD BYE AND GOOD LUCK TO MELIDA!



After four years of studying and blossoming in the ABC program Melida is graduating from Darien High School. Here is what she has to say....

Four years ago I was in 8th grade. I was living in Washington Heights and waiting for things to change in my life.

I am the oldest of 5 girls. My mother is a single parent, always putting herself last. She is the central strength of my family. I am a lot like her. She taught me to always strive for excellence. For her it is not about the A's and the awards, it is about trying your hardest.

My family was very happy for me when I was accepted in to the ABC program in Darien. They knew they would miss me, but they also knew that it would mean so much for my future. Now my mother says the program made me a better person who is equipped to handle all obstacles in the world.

It was a scary thing to join ABC. I was the first one in the family to ever go away to boarding school. Luckily for me there was a shining light at the program in Darien - Malika (ABC graduate, 2004). I never had an older sister and what better role model to have!

Darien High School took some time to get used to, but again I had wonderful friends to help me along the way. The teachers were terrific, always pushing you to succeed and helping you when it was needed.

(Continued on back page)

## SILVIA PUMA;

## ABC's SHINING SCIENCE STAR

## FROM *california* to *china*

Silvia Puma (11th grade) worked over the summer at Rockefeller University and conducted her own highly scientific experiment on the topic of Leprosy with help of Dr. Anura Rambukkana. Her project is entitled 'Role of ErbB2 receptor tyrosine kinase in M.leprae-induced Schwann cell signaling and fate'. The purpose of this experiment was to prove that the receptor ErbB2 plays a role in the pathogenesis of leprosy.

Silvia has participated in various science fairs while at Darien High School. She won second place in the "Life Category" of the Westport Science Fair and the Governor's science award of Connecticut. She also was invited to orally present her project at the Science Symposium at UCONN in Storrs, CT. It was something that she thought she would never be able to do. She overcame her fear of public speaking and was named one of the five top presenters! In recognition for her performance at UCONN, she was chosen as a delegate for the state of Connecticut to take part in the national Science Symposium (about 48 states participated!) in San Diego, California.

In the summer Silvia is going to travel with the Science Symposium group to China to present their research studies there. Way to go Silvia, good luck!



*Silvia and her science teacher, David Lewis.*

*A Better Chance*

FOR THE KIDS, FOR YOU, AND ALL OF US

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# Farewell to

## ABC RESIDENT DIRECTORS KARYN AND STEVE AND THEIR GROWING FAMILY, DUNCAN, TRISTAN, AND RAVEN!

After six years of true dedication and taking care of 13 ABC girls, like they were their own, Steve and Karyn are resigning from their position as Resident Directors.

Not only were they the house parents of the students, they also had their own jobs when the girls were in school.

Steve was the former New Canaan High School Boys and Girls Soccer coach. Now he is currently the Community Liaison at Rippowam Middle School in Stamford and the Academy Director for Coerver (Soccer) Coaching.

Karyn has been teaching autistic children at C.E.S. (Cooperative Educational Services) in Trumbull. And if that was not enough, their family was growing...When they came on board in the summer of 1999, they had little Duncan who was 11 months old. His brother Tristan followed him on New Year's Eve 2002, and recently a little girl, Raven, was born in November 2004.

Following are excerpts of an open, at times emotional interview that took place on a rainy Sunday afternoon this Spring.

**What is it like to take care of 6 high school students (13 in total) under one roof for 6 years?**

**Steve:** It has been a wonderful, intense and rewarding experience, but at the same time it was a huge responsibility. Luckily all the girls who lived in the house with us were very good and made the job look easy. In the beginning we even started out with seven students!

**What is the job of a resident director like?**

**Steve:** It ranges from catching up with their stories at the dinner table, to emergency visits to the hospital (including a ruptured appendix!), to sport events, school shows, movies and Post Corner Pizza! In the beginning we even tutored the students. (Now there are tutors coming to the house.) After 6 p.m., Karyn or I drive the girls to where ever they have to go.

**Karyn:** It all comes down to respect and treating the girls as your own family. Every evening I sit down with them for dinner, if possible at breakfast, too, and we talk. As a resident director you do a lot of listening! I always would ask myself what their parents would do if they were here. I will never forget a mother whose daughter was accepted in the program telling me "you are going to spend more time with my daughter than I will in the next four very important years of her life, you will have more influence on her than I have..." That made me so aware of our responsibilities.



**Steve and Karyn with their children, from left to right, Tristan, Duncan, and Raven.**

**What were the most memorable highlights?**

**Steve:** There are so many highlights that I can't even name them all. We went ice skating at Rockefeller Center, and we went to see several Broadway shows - thanks to tickets generously donated by Members of the Board. There were the track meets, the plays, the graduations, the science fairs...and, of course, there were the proms with the limos... We loved it all!

**So what is next for you and your family...**

**Steve:** Well, we are not 100% decided, but it looks like we are going to move to North Carolina. Karyn grew up in South Carolina (moving to North Carolina will bring them closer to her family).

I got a great job offer to head the Coerver soccer program in the State of Carolina. But really the main reason for us to move on is that we need more space for our family. There is really not enough room for our children to grow. The five of us share two tiny bedrooms and a small living area. We would love to stay on. We love the girls, and we will have a very hard time leaving them.

**Karyn:** The ABC girls really feel like our children. You grow so close to them during their four years here. They have been such good role models for our own children. They have been like big sisters.

**What would you like to wish or say to the girls and the new resident director?**

It has been a wonderful program. We left it in good step and we hope it continues to thrive. We wish the girls and the new resident directors all the best and for sure, we will stay in touch! We will miss you all!

## A HOME AWAY FROM HOME: A PICTURE COLLAGE OF OUR ABC *host families in Darien*

Each ABC student is paired with two host families. They spend one weekend and one Sunday a month with their respective host family. This enables the student to form a closer relationship with people in the community. So much is learned by both the students and their host families as their relationships evolve.

*"We have been blessed to have Melida Burgos as our host daughter for the the last four years. Timid as a freshman, Melida has matured into a confident and knowledgeable young lady."*

*Melida with the Cocannon family*



*"The experience is very rewarding and fun...you get to welcome another person into your life and gain a sister!"*

*Melida with the Wood family*



*"The experience with an ABC student has been nothing but a positive experience for all of us. How nice that we, as a family, could give something back to a special individual with ambitions to do better for herself and her family given the opportunity to do so and with such success. We could not be more proud of Silvia and her accomplishments here in Darien. We are so lucky to have experienced this. Thank you Silvia, thank you ABC!"*

*Lisa Eppey*



**Diana with the Bletzer family**



**Juanita with the Scott family**

*"We love having Morgana as part of our extended families."*

*Joan Bergen*



*"Hosting Silvia is simply a small way that our family can support one of the young women in ABC, all of whom have taken a courageous step outside their own family circles to further their education and expand their options. We enjoy hearing about her experiences in Darien and at DHS, and seeing the passion and skill she displays in science."*

*The Holt/Archibald Family*

*"Being a host family to Juanita has been a wonderful experience for us all-firstly because Juanita is so much fun and is so easy going; secondly, it has been a treat to watch her blossom from her earliest days at the high school and thirdly-she's a girl and we love having female company in our very "boy" house..."*

*The Nichols family*