

# The Scholar

Winter 2000

A Better Chance in Darien Newsletter

Volume 5

No 1

- Jackie Scott, Co-President
- Avery Flowers, Co-President
- Jennifer Boyd, Corp. Sec'y
- Cathy Mahoney, Recording Sec'y
- Jane Moloney, Treasurer
- Patty Schoknecht, Asst. Treasurer
- June Cobb, Comptroller
- Karyn Montague & Steven LeXander, Resident Directors
- Marilynn Aymar
- Judy Eaton
- Annie Feuerman
- Sandy Filmer
- Maureen Finnegan
- Marilyn Frank
- Cherie Greene
- B.A. Hand
- Dick Hand
- Kathy Jarrett
- Debi Lee
- Claire Locher
- Sandra McDonnell
- Susie McKittrick
- Bill Merritt
- John Murphy
- Diane Nava
- Spike Reed
- Donna Rosevear
- Linda Russell
- Tony Shaw
- Tamsin Sickinger
- Jean Shortliffe
- Vicki Smith
- Janet Soskin
- Bill Waters
- Jose Zepeda

#### Host Families

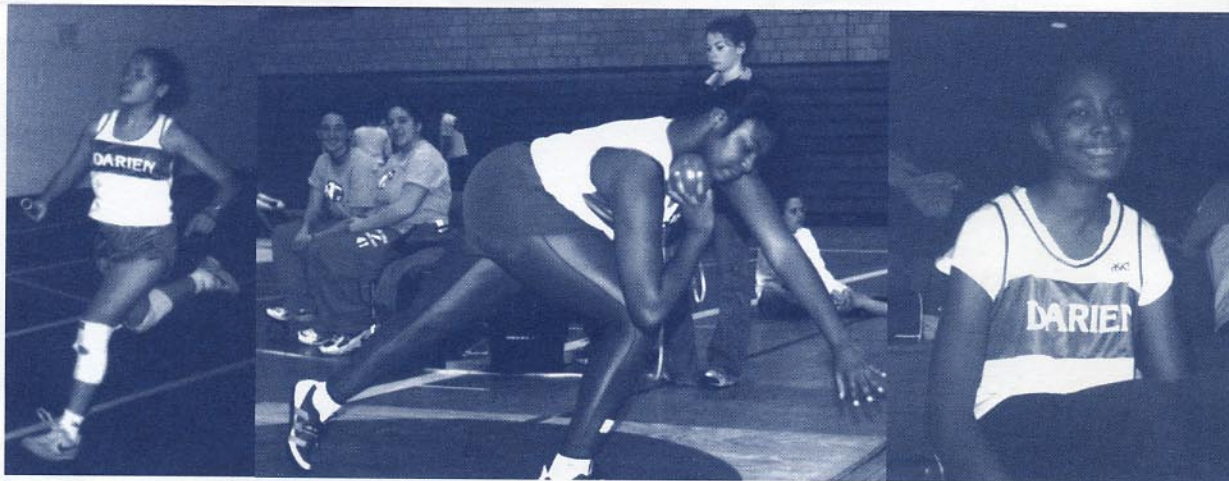
- Martha & Gary Banks
- Debbie & Anday Chakos
- Pam & David Dysenchuk
- Judy & Richard Groppa
- Kiki & Peter Karpen
- Diana & Stacey Lippmann
- Pam & Robert Lindberg
- Karen & Tim MacDonald
- Leanne & Bill Meyers
- Kaye & Michael Rabin
- Cathy & Craig Russell
- Kristine Sauter
- Cari & Geoff Scott
- Sarah & José Zepeda

#### Students

- Kate Ofikuru 2001
- Linet Martin 2001
- Octavia Donnelly 2002
- Malika Willis 2002
- Kendra Barber 2003
- Chadae Chang 2003
- Jennifer Stenson 2003

## the ABC House Rules!

Does positive attitude create excellence or does excellence generate positive attitude? Or do they simply come together in a serendipitous sort of way? There is a veritable symphony emanating from the house this school year with thrilling riffs being heard from every section of the orchestra. Drumroll please. Academic honors: Kendra Barber, one of sixteen DHS freshmen who received high honors; Malika Willis, one of 27 sophomores who received high honors; Octavia Donnelly, Linet Martin, and Kate Ofikuru made the honor roll. Let's hear the horns—all seven girls have taken up a sport. Bass please—there have been several opportunities to meet with students from the other Connecticut ABC programs—a great time was had by all at a party at the Depot this past fall. The girls very much enjoyed attending a conference and party at Fairfield University held by Fairfield Students Encouraging Excellence in Diversity (SEED), a program sponsored by Fairfield Prep. On keyboard—Chadae played one of Fagin's children in Theatre 308's production of *Oliver*, with Malika and Kendra working backstage. On tenor and alto sax—yes, there are now two "masters of the house!" Duncan, definitely a prince at the age of 15 months has completely won the hearts of each of the girls and everyone else he has held court with. Harmonizing on alto sax is father, Steven. Karyn, his Mom, provides the harmonizing chords for the entire house.



Octavia doesn't wait for anyone

Malika pushing the envelope

Kendra taking 5

## a Day at the Races

Malika Willis has earned quite a following with her shotput achievements, recently taking the FCIAC Eastern Division championship. She won't be satisfied until she breaks the 1987 36' 31/4" record of Penny Gunns. Her personal best currently stands at 33 + feet but she is shooting for 35 feet by the end of spring semester. The plan—after breaking the DHS record, Malika's going for the state record. Stay tuned. Chadae Chang and Kendra Barber are starting to make names for themselves in track. Octavia Donnelly's passion for track this school year has contributed to the success of the team with her top finishes. And Linet Martin continues to contribute to track team wins for her fourth season, recently qualifying for an invitational event with Malika. Jennifer Stenson has taken the opportunity to throw herself into her passion, basketball, and in spite of a knee injury has continued to contribute to the team effort. Kate Ofikuru continues to pursue her love of volleyball, hoping to play with the prestigious N.Y. Starlings this summer.

# sweet dreams are made of this

**KENDRA BARBER**Kendra's biggest challenge is sharing her food and juice. Otherwise things are a snap! In her former life she was a swimmer par excellence. She was totally surprised to find she was also in her element on the track since she had never tried sports. Now she even leaps hurdles. Kendra's dream is to become a marine biologist. Two of her aunts surprised her, attending the Christmas party. Favorite musician: Ginuwine--check out The Bachelor and 100% Ginuwine.

**JENNIFER STENSON**Jennifer's biggest challenge was keeping her cool when the snow plow knocked down the basketball hoop! In spite of a knee injury she is working with the basketball team to get them back on track. Her ultimate dream is to be chosen to play for the WNBA New York Liberty. Otherwise she is starting to imagine herself as a child psychologist. Stay tuned. Look for her in spring track and when not studying listening to music, perhaps DMX her favorite musician.

**CHADAE CHANG**Chadae's biggest challenge is to sit still and stay quiet, as she is bursting with energy and thoughts 20 hours a day. She loved participating in Theatre 308's Oliver in November. Her current dream is to become a forensic doctor. Can anyone introduce her to Dr. Lee?! You might be able to catch her on the track and at the long jump this spring. Her favorite musician is Jay-Z.



Dream Girls Kendra & Chadae

Jennifer putting on the Ritz

Chadae "we're having a party"

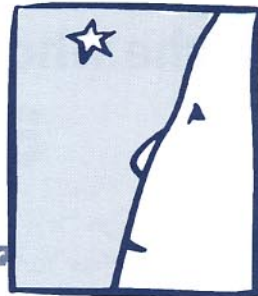
**KATE OFIKURU**Kate's biggest challenge was the segue into becoming a junior. The freedom of choice is a little frightening and there is so much more at stake with college applications(U Penn, Cornell, NYU) and the future seeming so much closer. Her dream is to become an international business woman who sings at night in a smokey cabaret in Paris. But right now singing with the Concert Choir and Modern Music Masters "Without You" from Rent will suffice. Catch her on the softball field this spring or in the main office at DHS where she works after school.

**OCTAVIA DONNELLY**Octavia's biggest challenge is fitting everything she wants to accomplish into a day. Her dream is to become a famous corporate lawyer. She has completely stunned herself with her new prowess on the track and now wants as her motto "I came, I saw, I ran". In between studying and activities she carefully and lovingly tends to the fish in her miniature aquarium. Recommends Sisqo "Unleash the Dragon" for your listening pleasure.

**MALIKA WILLIS**Malika's biggest challenge right now is in shotput—could the Olympics be her goal? See for yourself at the next meet. When not concentrating on the perfect shot, she is excited about her studies, at which she obviously excels. She is inspired by the music of Busta Rhymes, aka Trevor Smith. Her dream is to become a veterinarian, perhaps specializing in derma-tology or ophthamology.

# SERMON ON THE MOUNT

*every generation must seek its mission*  
france banyon



delivered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial on August 28, 1963 by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity. But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition. In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness . . . Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check—a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism . . . Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. . . . I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal." I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of



Linet pondering her next move   American Beauties rapping with John Forté   Homecoming: Octavia & Kate   A night at the Depot: Linet

former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood. I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state, sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. I have a dream that my four children will one day live in a nation where they will be not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character . . . I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers. . . . I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted . . . This is the faith with which I return to the South. . . . With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day. . . . And if America is to be a great nation this must become true. So let freedom ring . . . When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, "Free at last! free at last! thank God Almighty, we are free at last!"

# the whole world's a stage

Although "it's not summertime, the livin' is easy" at the New York State Theater at Lincoln Center. Fourteen performances of George and Ira Gershwin's immortal American opera, *Porgy and Bess*, will be performed between March 3rd and 25th. This poignant story about life on Catfish Row, the Charleston waterfront of the early 1900's, has become an American classic with what some feel is one of the greatest scores ever to have been produced for the Broadway theater. Opening in 1935, *Porgy and Bess* was the first dramatization of African American life to be performed on the Broadway stage. It is a remarkable story with haunting melodies that has withstood the test of time. Go see it!! Tickets available through Ticketmaster: 212-307-4100

## culture club

The Lady "A" Blues Band  
*Blues Train*

Ziggy Marley  
*Spirit of Music*

Ben Harper  
*Burn to Shine*

Macy Gray  
*On How Life Is*

## at the Home Movies

Can't You Hear the Wind Howl  
Autumn Tale  
Autobiography: Sidney Poitier  
The Power of One  
I'll Make Me A World



# books!!

*soul food*

**African Ceremonies** Carol Beckwith (author/editor)

2 magnificent volumes of stunning photographs and eloquent essays depicting religious customs of several dozen peoples. Ms. Beckwith says, "Sometimes people see that there's only one way to live . . . There are many ways to get married, many ways to become a man, many ways to become a woman, and it's a marvelous acceptance that we want to give to the world."

**Africana: The Encyclopedia of Africa and the African American Experience** by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Kwame Anthony Appiah

Brilliant historical record of African history and culture on both sides of the Atlantic. American history classes would do well to incorporate this text into the curriculum.

**Parting the Waters** by Taylor Branch

Recipient of the 1988 Nat'l Book Critics Circle Award, profiles the key players and events that helped shape the American landscape from WWII until civil rights—"most masterful story . . . of the American civil rights movement"

**Black Profiles in Courage** Kareem Abdul Jabbar

A most important and superbly written collection portraying some of America's great African American heroes.

## wish list

**Desperately seeking large Suburban type vehicle**(preferably one that holds at least six people), dining room table(must seat at least 10 people), chest of drawers, large casserole dishes, refrigerator, piano bench, coffee table.

If you have a service or talent you think would enrich the lives of seven young scholars, please contact us.

## in memoriam

A Better Chance will miss Richard Groppa who, so graciously, gave of himself in so many community service activities and as an ABC host parent with his wife, Judy.

## PLEDGE *ledge*

Contributions should be sent to:

A Better Chance of Darien, Inc.  
P.O. Box 3204  
Darien, CT 06820

*I am pleased to support ABC in Darien.*

Please make check payable to "A Better Chance." Thank you.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

★ \$50

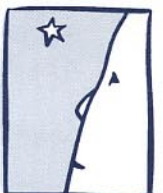
★ \$100

★ Other \_\_\_\_\_



Enclosed is a matching Gift Form from my employer

FOR THE KIDS  
FOR YOU  
FOR ALL OF US



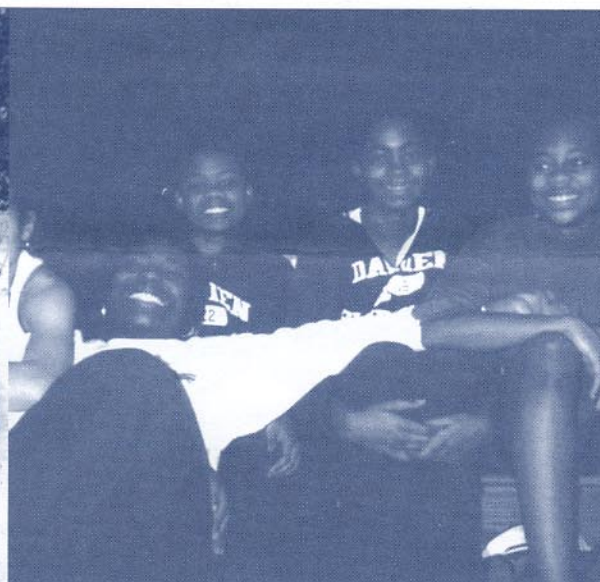
# we are family

## *I got all my sisters with me*

**KAREN MONTAGUE & STEVEN LE XANDER** Meeting in the athletic room in college, Karyn and Steven fell in love and eventually married. From early on in their relationship they decided they wanted to do something to give back, something that would make a positive difference in this world. When Steven's friend, Bruce Hall, approached them with the opportunity to serve as resident directors of ABC they jumped at the chance. During the weekdays Karen teaches special needs children in Trumbull and Steve teaches English Literature at New Canaan High. From the beginning of the school year, the house has been filled with the boisterous and joyous sounds of one big happy family. It's very obvious to anyone visiting the house that Karen and Steven put terrific amounts of energy into their role as surrogate parents, from constant communication and counseling to trips to pumpkin patches, beach barbeques and Christmas tree farms. If there's a tournament, they're right there to cheer on whoever is competing, if there's a drama production they're in the audience. It's a sensitive combination of parental guidance and discipline and being in tune with teenage interests. A highlight of this past fall was a surprise visit by John Forté, a rap artist friend of Steven and Karen. Even though he was in the middle of producing his second album he took time to talk with the girls and tell them about his parallel experiences as a scholarship student. Each of the girls was inspired by his sage advice to stretch themselves to each of their limits in order to reap the greatest rewards from this extraordinary academic opportunity.



"I love snow days" Duncan to Mom



Malika basking in glory



Octavia Donnelly decking the halls

**LINET MARTIN** Linet's biggest challenge has been to accept people for who they are. Realizing that most people, however different they may be from yourself, have a lot to offer has been a sort of epiphany for Linet. She dreams of a career that allows her to bring logic into the creative—any ideas, let her know. Is smitten with the singer Maxwell—is there anyone who can make an introduction???

**JOHN FORTE** Though not a member of the House, the girls would like him to come for dinner anytime he's free! He's a guy as savvy on the New York Stock Exchange as he is in the recording studio. Mr. Forté is a rap artist whose lyrics reflect the rich color of his native Brooklyn neighborhood of Brownsville and the intelligence reaped from his studies at one of the finest prep schools in the country, Phillips Exeter Academy, and from NYU. One of his fondest memories from prep school was the camaraderie of the students all trying to succeed together—*It was really one mind in 1,000 kids' bodies—a mind to help each other and come out with flying colors.* Mr. Forte started rhyming in the second grade as a defense tactic in the hood. He was quick to figure out that thoughts inspired by his studies wouldn't be so threatening to his neighborhood friends when expressed in the hip hop format—*I found a way to introduce big words in a cool way. I could put into a rhyme that I was reading Dostoyevsky and make it cool to read him. In a rhyme form it was like I can read it and so can you. Then everybody backed down . . .* From his debut album *Poly Sci Right, left/North, south/two sides balance out/black, white/either, or/God is love, God is war.* Check it out.

# letter *from our* presidents



**W**elcome to the 21st Century. As calendars flip to reveal "2000," it is time for reflection. Upon reviewing years past we often resolve to make lifestyle changes, to try new hobbies or exercises, to appreciate all we have, or perhaps to commit our energies to organizations dear to us.

It is with the latter idea in mind that we, at A Better Chance, head in to the dawning century. When asked to become co-presidents of A Better Chance in Darien, we knew our commitment had to be 150%. The task would be daunting, if not for the support of the 35 local residents comprising the Board of Directors, the 14 families of the host family program, our scholars' families, the staff at DHS and the community-at-large.

It has been said it takes a village to raise a child. At A Better Chance in Darien we have seen the efforts of a community cultivate the fertile minds and broaden the potentials of its young women. This program relies on the efforts of many. Our sincere thanks go out to all of you who have had a part in our success. From driving after school, to assisting in college searches, to offering a financial gift—it all counts. We couldn't do it without your lasting dedication and assistance. We would like to invite all of you in the wider ABC Darien family to recommit to your important cause, whatever it may be. Strong community involvement makes Darien the special place it is. We hope that the turn of the 21st Century finds you happy and healthy. Best regards,

Jackie Scott Avery Flowers

Managing Editors: Judy Eaton, Sandra McDonnell

Art Direction & Design: Sandra McDonnell, **SJM**Design

*A Better Chance*

FOR THE KIDS. FOR YOU. FOR ALL OF US

Post Office Box 3204 Darien, Connecticut 06820

US POSTAGE PAID  
Non-Profit Org.  
Permit No. 58  
Darien, CT 06820

