

FALL 2005

FOR THE KIDS,
FOR YOU,
AND ALL OF US

The Scholar

A BETTER CHANCE IN DARIEN NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 11

No 2

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STUDENTS

Morgana Coombs, 2006
 Silvia Puma, 2006
 Juanita Gyamera, 2007
 Diana Morris, 2007
 Whitney Dudley, 2009
 Melinda Siew, 2009

A FRESH START AT ABC!

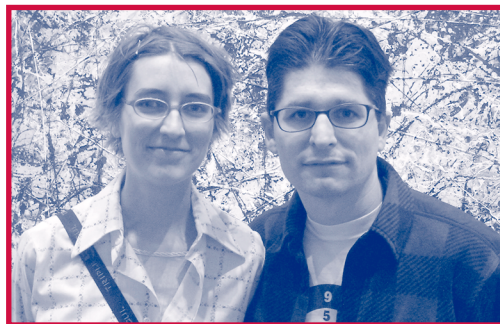


The girls on the door step of ABC and a promising future.
 (From top to bottom Diana, Morgana, Silvia, Juanita, and
 the two freshmen Melinda, Whitney)

IT IS GOING TO BE an exciting year at ABC. We are welcoming two new freshmen Whitney Dudley and Melinda Siew, two new resident directors Francis Janosco and Julie Parham, and all six students are attending a brand new, state of the art High School! Wow, how is that for a beginning!

Also the ABC house at Brookside road, right across from the First Congregational Church, which so gracefully lets the students use their space, got a thorough scrub and a fresh coat of paint with some very colorful, decorative accents. The red door in the white paneled siding gives the house a very warm and inviting entry. A little patio to the side of the house was added and enables the girls to sit outside, relax and even have a BBQ.

A WARM WELCOME TO OUR new resident Directors



Francis and Julie extend a heartfelt thanks to ABC board and host families for their continued patience, good humor and support, despite the kinks, surprises and minor floods that transitions always bring. There is no doubt that it is going to be a tremendous year!

FRANCIS JANOSCO AND JULIE PARHAM are delighted to be working as the resident directors of Darien ABC. Both are currently high school English teachers; Francis teaches at DHS, Julie at Fairfield Warde. Originally, Francis hails from potato-picking country in northern Maine. Julie comes from the Bread Basket of America-Kansas. They met while working on their master's degrees in English at the University of Cincinnati and were married last summer. When they are not planning for class or grading papers, Julie and Francis are both avid readers and film buffs who enjoy a jog or a good game of tennis. In July, they both attended a National Endowment for Humanities summer institute entitled "Teaching Jazz as American Culture" at Washington University in St. Louis.

New resident directors continued on back page

MEET THE *new scholars* ON THE BLOCK



WHITNEY DUDLEY is a charming, soft spoken teenager with a beautiful smile who grew up in North Carolina. Three years ago Whitney moved back with her mom Giselle to Springfield Massachusetts, where she was born.

At only 13 years of age, Whitney is the youngest student in the house. She combined 5th and 6th grade at her charter school in Springfield, jumping ahead of her grade level peers. Through her principal she found out about ABC and together with her mom she pursued her dream and applied for the program.

While her mom is very proud and happy for Whitney that she was chosen to attend Darien High School, she is also sad to see her only child go. Luckily, Whitney is welcomed with open arms by her new house "parents" Francis Janosco and Julie Parham and her two new host families, the Stouts and the Eenkema van Dijks, who will each "share" her one weekend and one Sunday a month. Whitney is an avid reader and likes to write fiction stories and poetry. Morgana has taken Whitney under her wings and introduced her to the Buddy Program. This is a DHS after school program where she will be involved in working with mentally challenged and/or physically handicapped students once a week.



MELINDA SIEW is a petite, studious, bright eyed 14 year old from Brooklyn, New York. She lives there with her parents, grandparents and her brother Derek who is 11 years old. Melinda brings strong ties to the rich Asian culture to ABC. Both her parents are Chinese. Her mom's family is from Hong Kong

and her dad's family has its roots in Malaysia. They are very proud of their daughter and have high expectations of her. She is an excellent student!

This summer Melinda visited family friends in the suburbs of Hong Kong. One week she stayed in the city proper, where she enjoyed sightseeing and shopping. Melinda is fluent in Cantonese.

It is a big change from China to Darien and being away from her family in Brooklyn but Melinda is adjusting to her new life and is getting used to her fellow students at DHS. She quickly signed on as a member of the Math (her favorite subject in school) Team and joined the Buddy System. In her free time she likes to snuggle up with a good book. Drawing is another favorite past time.

Susan and Ted Collins together with Wendy and Ned Brokaw will represent the "family away from home" for Melinda. The two families will alternate hosting her one weekend and Sunday per month for the coming four years.

MANY *Helping Hands...*

This summer the house got a complete make over initiated by Julie and Francis who were moving in as new resident directors. This could not have been done without the help of the many local merchants and volunteers.

We owe a BIG THANK YOU to:

- Darien Carpet for the rugs and bathroom floors
- Rings End for the paint, new doors and hardware
- Marcel Borst for the stonemasonry on the new terrace
- Andy Fox for the donation of the flagstone
- The Bisko family for the donation of terrace furniture
- Karen Hughan for the garden design
- Growing Concern for the plants and hours of landscaping
- Peter Geissinger for mowing the lawn all summer
- Fairfield Electric for a full day of repairs
- Vic Benzyck for computer and phone wiring
- The Concannon family for 2 beautiful couches
- The United Way for "A day of Caring" which included a major cleanup day in and around the house
- Mark Chiodo and the Eagle Scouts who are working on the stonewall around the house and finishing up outside projects.
- Flaherty Plumbing for always being available.

HAPPY RETURN OF OUR JUNIOR AND SENIOR SCHOLARS



DIANA MORRIS, a junior, spent her summer up in Springfield Massachusetts where her family relocated to a year ago. She worked at a Friendly's restaurant, started to gear up for her junior year and still found time to relax. She said goodbye (for now) to the clarinet and managing volleyball. This year it is going to be in and outdoor track that will take up her spare time. Diana is doing well in school with Math being one of her favored subjects.



SILVIA PUMA, a senior, returned to work this summer at Rockefeller University as she did last year. She continued to work on her leprosy project, taking it a step further and studying another receptor that might be a factor in the

pathogenesis of the disease. The limited free time she had, she spent with her family and working on her college essay.

The high point of Silvia's summer was a trip to China. Silvia was invited to attend the Shanghai International Science and Engineering exposition with a group of boys from DHS. At the exposition she gave an oral presentation on her leprosy study. Luckily it was not all business and our scientist got a chance to visit different sites in China during her 10 day stay. Way to go girl!!!

JUANITA GYAMERA, in her 3rd year at DHS, is going strong. With the support of ABC, she went to Chicago for two weeks this summer to take part in a National Youth Leadership Forum on medicine. It enabled her to explore various career opportunities in the medical field. It was an unforgettable experience and encouraged her even more to pursue her dream of becoming a medical scientist.

For after school activities she will keep herself fit as a valued member of both the indoor and outdoor track teams. She also signed up for the club "Building with Books". All in all Juanita is looking forward to a great junior year ahead as well as good grades.



MORGANA COOMBS, a senior, spend her summer at home with her mom in New York City and started researching and applying to different colleges she found interesting. The college search and application process is going to be her main focus for the school year. Cheerleading and the Buddy System are the extracurricular activities that she allows herself right now and with her outgoing and sparkling personality there is no one better at that!

Car Wash!



Board members and students working together at the car wash.



IN ADDITION to these many contributing forces, the girls roll up their sleeves as well.... Every year the ABC students organize a big car wash at the Depot. This year Morgana took the lead together with board member Doug Anderson. On September 12 they held a very successful, super soaking car wash which raised about \$4500.00. These funds will go towards the college application process for each student.

Many thanks go to Palmer's and the Donut Inn for allowing pre sale tickets, and, to all the people in town who had their car washed by the ABC team!



MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENTS

WE ARE VERY EXCITED TO BE THE CO-PRESIDENTS OF ABC this year. 2006 will mark the 25th anniversary of ABC in Darien and plans are underway for a spectacular celebration. 36 Young women have graduated from our program and gone on to impressive colleges and rewarding careers. Many of these girls have formed life-long bonds with their host families and fellow ABC students. They will be returning to help us celebrate and share their experiences.

This year has been notably difficult for many of our own US citizens and those abroad. We applaud all of those who have so generously donated to help these people rebuild their lives. We ask, however, that you not forget such a special program in our own community. It is only through donations that we are able to keep Darien ABC running. When you receive our annual appeal card please remember these exceptional young girls and how this program is helping to change their futures. You can also go to our newly developed web site (thanks to Sandy Filmer and son!): **www.abcdarien.com** and click on **“Get Involved”**. Thank you for helping our town become a better place by supporting A Better Chance.

Cokey Concannon, co president

Nancy Herling, co president

*New resident directors
continued from first page*

In August the two gave up their residence in South Norwalk and moved with their two cats to the ABC house in Darien. They have been contributing their own style, color and nutritious tasting habits to the house. Their dedication and caring attitudes are sure to enhance the life style at ABC. We consider ourselves very lucky to have such a committed couple taking care of the students.

Welcome and best wishes!

ABC FACTS

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 New York and Massachusetts.

HISTORY: Twenty-five 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 and tutors, as needed.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Twenty-seven 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: \$100,000 per year, covering staff, food, utilities, house maintenance, enrichment expenses and supplies.

A Better Chance

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