



Winter Newsletter

"A Better Chance... For A Better Future"

February 2006

727 2nd Street SW • Rochester, MN 55902 • (507) 289-4370 • E-Mail: RBC727@aol.com • www.rochesterbetterchance.org

Annual Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction

Please join us for the annual fund-raising dinner and silent auction to benefit the Rochester Better Chance Foundation.

Friday, March 10, 2006 - Rochester Marriott Hotel
6:00pm - Reception, silent auction, and cash bar
7:00pm - Dinner

Tickets are \$65 per person or \$550 for a table of ten. Tickets include the three course dinner, keynote address, entertainment, silent auction, and the good company of RBC friends and supporters. *Please RSVP by March 1, 2006 to Rochester Better Chance, 727 2nd Street SW, Rochester, MN 55902.*



Scholar Alum Danny Pierre to Speak at Annual Banquet



Come to the annual banquet and listen to RBC Scholar alum Danny Pierre relate what RBC did for him! Danny Pierre was born July 1981. Originally from New York City, he is the youngest of seven children. Growing up in this large household, Danny was instilled with strong family values and learned the importance of education and personal responsibility. After spending the summer of 1994 with one of his older brothers in Maryland, Danny realized that he wanted to get out of New York. Therefore, during his senior year in junior high school, he inquired of his guidance counselor about schooling opportunities outside of New York and learned of the A Better Chance program. After the extensive application process and interviews with various boarding programs on the east coast, several offers were available. Unfortunately, these institutions were quoting astronomical financial

packages even after the academic scholarship. As a result, he decided to stay in N.Y. with his family and attend a local institution.

By late summer of 1995, Danny was registered for classes and enthusiastic about attending high school in N.Y. It was at this point when the Rochester Better Chance program had inadvertently acquired an opening for an additional student; a student who was scheduled to return to the program for his sophomore year decided to forfeit his place. Given the time constraint, the RBC and ABC programs went through an expedited process to acquire an additional student. By Labor Day weekend, Danny and his family were faced with a difficult decision. A few days later, he was on plane to Rochester, Minnesota. Looking back, Danny believes that accepting the offer was the best thing that ever happened to him; it opened the door to a plethora of opportunities.

Collegiate Achievements:

- Graduate 2006 Masters of Science Chemical Engineering, Tufts University
- Masters Thesis: Design of Au and Pt Cerium Oxide Based Catalysts for the Water Gas Shift Reaction
- American Society of Chemical Engineers (AIChE) Annual Meeting Research Presenter
- 2003 Graduate Bachelors of Science Chemical Engineering, Cum Laude Honors, Tufts University
- Balfour Scholar for Academic Excellence and Community Involvement
- National Collegiate Scholar for Academic Excellence and Engineering Award

High School Achievements:

- Graduated John Marshall High School in 1999 with a cumulative GPA of 3.95
- National Honor Society
- Kiwanis Student of the Month for Science
- Boys State Representative: Elected State Treasurer
- A Better Chance Scholar
- Affirmative Human Action Student Organization, Zumbro Valley Medical Society Youth Adolescent Committee, Math League, Science Club and Wrestling Team and Track and Field

Rochester Better Chance Web Site Extreme Makeover!

The RBC web site, www.RochesterBetterChance.org, has recently been redesigned and rebuilt. We're excited about the new look and hope you will be too! Along with information about RBC and how RBC serves talented inner-city youth, the web site has links to upcoming events and recent newsletters. It will also be used as a tool to acquire contact information for past RBC scholars. Because the web can reach more people than our paper newsletter, we hope to also use the site as a communication vehicle and to inspire our audience to donate to the education of our scholars. We owe many thanks to Dawn Daehn and Samantha Potter for volunteering their talents to improve our web site.

Rochester Better Chance - Providing a Chance for Talented Individuals to Reach Their Full Potential for Over 35 Years!

Support Rochester Better Chance (RBC) in their mission of helping talented inner-city youth to live in and attend high school in Rochester, MN by supporting RBC. You can help by:

- Supporting RBC through a tax-deductible cash contribution.
- Donating goods or services to be auctioned as part of RBC's annual fundraiser event.
- Helping RBC with your time as a volunteer, host parent, or board of director member.
- Sponsoring an RBC scholar.

To donate, send your check to Rochester Better Chance, 727 2nd St. SW., Rochester, MN 55902. Please include your full name, address, and phone number. For goods or service donations or to sponsor a scholar, write to the above address including your contact information, or e-mail WebMaster@RochesterBetterChance.org for more information or to arrange pickup.

1981 RBC Graduate Reflects on His Rochester Experience



My name is Tony Mitchell and I turned 42 years of age on November 5, 2005. I live in Nacogdoches, Texas [East Texas] with my wife Stephanie of 4 years and our 3 year old daughter

Halle. We've been in East Texas just over two years and I am still adjusting to some major cultural differences. You see I am a product of Cleveland, Ohio [lived there for just about 40 years]. Down here I'm a Northerner, a Yankee. I talk too fast, and think differently. I don't think my character is so much a result of Cleveland, Ohio, but rather it is a direct result of being a graduate of A Better Chance [ABC].

My life took an incredible turn in 1978 when, at the age of 14, I was awarded an academic scholarship to Rochester Better Chance [RBC] in Rochester, Minnesota. My high school experience probably changed my outlook on life as well as my approach to living. I was able to gain extra value from a pre-professional program at IBM in Rochester, where I spent two summers after graduating High School. Through RBC I was able to develop good study habits and critical thinking skills that helped me to persevere and succeed at work, and ultimately to graduate from college. More than anything the diversity of the RBC household and extended family gave me priceless people skills that have allowed me to handle a variety of situations throughout my adult life.

My collegiate career spanned a period of 17 years due to a series of financial mistakes due to inexperience. Proudly, I went back to school and graduated with two degrees on Mother's Day in 1999. The only thing I would change would be to have my mother alive to see me walk and accept the degree. In a period of 3 years from 1993-1995, my family lost our grandmother in 1993, our mother in 1994 and a brother in 1995. With that all weighing on me heavily, my inspection of my life left me needing more; so I went back to college [full time] to complete what I started.

I had been working full-time and going to college sporadically over the last 5 years. My plan of working my way through school was not realizing

the results I had envisioned, it was now time to do something drastic. Once I stopped relying on my job to pay for my college, and allowing every personal incident to be an excuse to drop a class or not enroll, progress was quickly realized. In a matter of three years I had two Degrees, and had started other post graduate classes for certification.

Between my maturity and my ability to think outside the box, I was able to complete what I had started. Not only did I accomplish my goal, but the rewards have far exceeded my expectations. While in Cleveland, I worked for several non-profit organizations, got involved in mentoring and tutoring youth, and got to meet some incredible people in the process. I've also worked for Case Western Reserve University and took some classes while there, Cleveland Housing Network, and the NBA [Cleveland Cavaliers].

With my CIS degree, I've been very blessed to work within a hospital, school system, theater organization, three universities and a professional sports organization. The best part of my life is the community service I do and lending ideas and support to civic issues that need to be addressed. I've also been involved with the School District since I got here. I started working as Substitute Math teacher, and have now left the school district to work at the University.

My current position is Assistant Director of Career Services and Student Employment at Stephen F. Austin State University (SFASU). Half of my job requires me to work on our computer and software needs; the other half is directing students toward successful employment, both during school and after graduation. SFASU has been around for 80 years and it has strong Fine Arts, Music, Teaching and Nursing programs.

My life is even busier after work! I am the Education Chair for the NAACP, and the Advisor for a campus Fraternity, and the Campus Chapter of the NAACP. My wife is the Assistant Athletic Director for Collegiate Affairs, handling the academic needs of the students. Together we are meeting, planning for, and enjoying the youth of this city.

My main objective while we live here is to work toward improving race relations by educating the community. The NAACP recently had its freedom fund banquet, with Martin Luther King III as serving as guest speaker and a tribute for Mrs. Rosa

Parks, who died at the end of October.

To the young men of RBC/ABC, I am writing this article because 25 years ago you were not even born, and now you have the opportunity to take advantage of an incredible education. Our country was founded by people who went beyond the call of duty; today so many people just want to pass, or get by. Just getting by does not improve your status! Doing your best, having passion, goals, dreams, and a sense of pride was the difference for me between finishing college and becoming a statistic.

I believe God puts us where he wants us to be, to help us grow and become ready for the next level. I received great religious support while in Rochester, MN from the McGee Family [one of my Host Families]. My time at RBC was some of my best as a teenager/student. The things I am doing now are all results of the great mentoring and guidance from/partnership between John Marshall High School, IBM, Mayo Clinic, RBC and so many other caring individuals. Right now I just want to say thank you to everyone who has spent a minute with not just me, but any RBC student. Hopefully we all are better for the experience, and better for the love and care that Rochester showed us.

Rochester has good people caring enough to invest in youth, no matter what color, shape, or size. These people are trying to guarantee not just their futures, but the futures of countless others. I wish there were even more programs like RBC, and more people who give back in support of equal opportunity for all. Racial barriers will disappear when educational obstacles are removed. Systematic hindrances will cease when we look at each other as assets, not liabilities. RBC did not give me a HAND-OUT, they gave me a HAND-UP, which allowed me some direction and control over my own life. God has ultimate control, but my destiny is not limited by education. It easily could have been! I am the product of a formula that can work for many more inner-city youth. I was born one of ten kids to a single parent household. My mother did it all. Her best decision was to give me a chance for something better through RBC. She could have said no, but she gave me that opportunity.

I am glad to be where I am, but it is mostly because of where I came from and who took time out to show me the way. Thank you RBC! Please keep up the good work!

Scholar Alums Celebrate the Holidays with RBC Family

When RBC scholars graduate from John Marshall and head off to college, they don't leave Rochester forever. Some of them return to live here, and some return to visit their RBC family.

This past Thanksgiving, eight scholar alums joined the Gwaltney family to celebrate the holidays. These included Eddie Abarca (1996 JM graduate), Jong Lim (1994), Danny Leon (2005), LeVaur Livingstone (1998), Jonathan Meade



(2004), Greg Monegro (2001), Juan Vasquez (2000), and Endy Wong (1994). Pictured below are some of these alums.

Paul Duvall (Andy) Wins Beat the Odds Scholarship

Paul Duvall (Andy), our senior scholar in RBC, is a recipient of one of the 2006 Beat the Odds Scholarships, which recognizes high school seniors who face challenges and tremendous odds to



achieve personal and academic success. On January 26, 2006, Duvall honored with a \$2,500 scholarship at the Rochester Community & Technical College Foundation and Children's Defense Fund Sixth Annual Beat the Odds Scholarship Celebration, co-

sponsored by Wells Fargo and Post-Bulletin Company, with additional support from Think Federal Credit Union and Mayo Clinic. The

following is an excerpt from the celebration program:

“Andy Duvall was born in southern California to a Hispanic family lacking education or opportunity. Both parents have large extended families but unfortunately a sense of kinship and care does not exist on either side.

“As a child, Andy and his sister were with their mother, rarely seeing their father. He has vague memories of those years, recollecting pleasant times in addition to periods of confusion, chaos and uncertainty. One incident stands out as the trigger to a series of events that began a journey of homelessness, abandonment and apprehension.

“Andy’s mother was a troubled woman who struggled with mental illness. Irrational thinking led to irrational acts. An impulsive drive to New Mexico with the kids ended with coming home to an apartment that was stripped of all possessions. Soon they were evicted and spent the next year living on the streets. They found shelter where they could, frequently sleeping in their car. Meals were at soup kitchens or they went hungry. Andy’s mother harbored paranoid fear of her family and would not turn to them for help. Andy never attended school that year. At one shelter, a staff person reported Andy’s mother to authorities for dereliction of parental duties. She was taken away and Andy and his sister placed in a children’s home.

“After six months they were placed with a foster family. Andy’s memories of those months were not happy. Finally their father heard about their plight and was awarded custody. He was in a relationship with a woman and had a young son. The woman was a Mexican national and was unable to remain in the United States. The family moved to Mexico for Andy’s sixth grade and returned to California the following year.

“Living conditions remained substandard with time spent living in a garage. But somehow Andy put his focus and effort on academic excellence. In seventh grade he applied for A Better Chance program. Since eighth grade, Andy has lived at the Rochester Better Chance house, attended John Marshall High School and is excelling academically and personally.

“Since childhood Andy has dreamed of becoming an architect. Andy is not looking back at this former life. He escaped a life with no opportunity and now looks ahead to a bright future.”

Scholar Alum Serves as RBC House Coordinator

John Marshall High School graduate and former RBC scholar, Eduardo (Eddie) Abarca has assumed the role of RBC House Coordinator for the 2005-



2006 school year. Eddie assists Robin and Scott Gwaltney, resident directors, with providing a home for our six scholars.

Eddie graduated from John Marshall High School in 1996, after three years as an RBC scholar. That summer he stayed on at the RBC house to work in a pharmacology lab at Mayo Clinic. Then he headed back to his home state, California, for college. In 2000, he graduated from Pomona College with a B. A. in Anthropology.

Uncertain of what to do with his degree, Eddie decided to return to his “home away from home” – Rochester. Since returning to Rochester, he has been working on a bachelor’s degree in accounting at Winona State University’s Rochester Center, which he will finish this May. Ultimately, Eddie’s goal is to become a Certified Public Accountant.

In addition to his role as house coordinator, Eddie is also employed at Vision World at Apache Mall and holds a work-study position at the University Center.



Come meet this year's scholars at the silent auction/banquet on March 10, 2006:

Back row, from left to right: Paul (Andy) Duvall, William Orquiz, Ranferi Cruz, John Buycks. Front row, from left to right: Jonathan Orquiz, Demetrius Champen.

President's Corner by Roger Dearth

The time for our annual silent auction/banquet is fast approaching. In about a month, on Friday, March 10, 2006, we will be gathering at the Marriott Hotel for the fundraiser which is essential to RBC's operation. We at RBC are looking forward to spending an evening with you.

Hopefully, you have noticed the theme of this newsletter - the idea that RBC does make a difference. We know that our scholar alumni have been positively affected by their time in Rochester. Danny Pierre will be sharing the difference RBC has made in his life when he speaks at the banquet. Tony Mitchell has taken the time to express in writing what RBC did for him.

On a more subtle level, we have a handful of scholar alums who have returned to live and work in the Rochester area; RBC house coordinator Eduardo Abarca is just one of those. And, there are the alums of RBC who frequently visit to their Rochester friends and RBC family; the Gwaltneys hosted 40 people for Thanksgiving Dinner, including the five of the six resident scholars and eight scholar alums.

Of course, senior scholar Paul Duvall's receipt of a Beat the Odds Scholarship is testimony to the difference that RBC and Rochester has made in his life. Undoubtedly, our underclass scholars are also experiencing the RBC difference.

Please join us to celebrate the difference RBC has made in the lives of many scholars, and please consider making a contribution to help us to continue to make that difference.

Please consider these Donation Options:

Donations to RBC during the summer are slow, so your contribution now is vital to the operations and success of RBC and its scholars. As a result, we enter the fall school year financially stretched, so donations regardless of amount really help maintain ongoing expenses. If you can give \$75, 50, or 25 per month over the next few months it would help tremendously. Thank you for any gift you may be able to give.

I can HELP!

Name _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

E-mail _____

My pledge is: \$ 200 ___ one time ___ per month \$ 75 ___ one time ___ per month
 \$ 100 ___ one time ___ per month \$ 50 ___ one time ___ per month
Other \$ ___ ___ one time ___ per month

Special Projects I'd like to help with time or materials (Name/Items): _____

Annual Fund Raiser Project: _____

Board of Directors Membership: _____

Please mail form/donation to:

Rochester Better Chance
727 2nd Street SW
Rochester, MN 55902

Additional Options to Consider:

Rochester Better Chance is a 501c3 Non-Profit organization so your donations (including in-kind gifts) are tax deductible. There are a variety of ways to contribute other than a traditional one-time donation that may make it easy and work best for you. RBC enjoys minimal administrative expenses; the working board and resident directors contribute their time and personal funds, this enables RBC to put 100 percent of donations toward educating the students and operational expenses.

IRS Tax Exemption Certificate #: 41-1237746
MN State Tax Exemption Certificate #: ES 26189

Endowments – Consider Rochester Better Chance in your estate planning. RBC is a supporting member of Greater Rochester Area Leave a Legacy Foundation. It's an excellent way to leave your legacy with the program. Consult your estate planner/lawyer for the best method for using this option.

Payroll Deductions – Are easy and automatic, and if your employer has electronic deposits, donations can automatically be transferred with each pay period. (Contact (507) 287-6876 for electronic route #'s)

Stock Certificate Transfers – Stock certificates may be transferred to RBC as a one-time gift. Value of the Donation will be based on the unit stock price and quantity of shares transferred over on date of transaction.

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Robin & Scott Gwaltney

We would like to extend our thanks
to all our friends and supporters who have
supported our community program for 31 years!
Thank you Rochester!

*A very special thank you from all of us at RBC to
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