

Working to ensure that all children are healthy, safe and prepared for life's challenges.



Erica Ayala, GPS4Kids Project Manager



Keshia Carter, Guidance Center of Westchester



Lutonya Russell-Humes, WCA Board Member.



Youth stakeholder speaking his mind.

GPS4Kids Takes Action at Community Gathering

On February 22, after months of planning, the GPS4Kids Community Gathering took place at Sam's of Gedney Way in White Plains. This gathering was the first time the entire collective came back together since it announced its goal "*Westchester children & youth thrive regardless of race or zip code*", back in August 2016. Since August, three smaller working groups - Data & Measurement, Communications & Community Outreach and Strategic Action Planning - met regularly to refine goals and action steps.

After six months of working separately, the working groups presented what was discussed over the past six months as well as proposed actions for GPS4Kids, to the larger stakeholder body.

Roughly 100 GPS4Kids stakeholders filled the room, eager to hear from the working groups and approve the next steps for the GPS4Kids collective. At the conclusion of the working group presentations, participants were divided into small discussion groups to ask clarifying questions and suggest next steps. Participants included students, educators, service providers and more from across the county. Through activities and small group discussions, stakeholders were able to share their vision for the future of GPS4Kids and Westchester County as a whole.



GPS stakeholder voting on next steps.

We finished the day by having stakeholders vote on the proposed next action steps, allowing GPS4Kids to have a firm direction to move forward in this year. The following actions were the top four among voting stakeholders:

- **Prioritize youth involvement (91%)**
- **Collect Stakeholder Commitment forms (91%)**
- **Review Raise the Bar data (87%)**
- **Finalize Indicators (85%)**

WCA staff will partner with the GPS4Kids Leadership Advisory to review the meeting notes, while the working groups coordinate the specifics of the phase one action plan.

To become a GPS4Kids stakeholder, please contact Erica Ayala at EAyala@wca4kids.org.

Elevating New Voices for Raise the Age Reform

Westchester Children's Association has continued our work to pass comprehensive raise the age reform in New York. Our inaugural year of the Teen Advocacy Leadership program focused the advocacy lessons around Raise the Age. During the fall and winter, we trained nearly 30 youth from White Plains, New Rochelle and the Youth Shelter Program of Westchester on



Sarah Yergeau, WCA Program & Policy Associate delivers letters to Speaker Heastie.

how to become advocates. They have used their newly developed skills to share their perspective in blog posts and on social media, and participated in the Raise the Age NY lobby day on March 7th. Read their posts on our Children by the Numbers blog: <http://bit.ly/RTAYouthBlog>. WCA also thanks the Westchester Community Foundation for their generous support of the Teen Advocacy Leadership program.

Faith leaders from throughout Westchester County have also been raising their voices in support of the Raise the Age campaign. Eighteen faith communities participated in our Week of Action from January 13th – 22nd. In addition to educating their congregations, clergy collected over 1,100 letters in support of raising the age of criminal responsibility from members of their congregations. Letters were hand delivered to the offices of Governor Andrew Cuomo, Majority Leader John Flanagan, Speaker Carl Heastie,



Youth advocates and faith leaders stand with Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins on Lobby Day.

Senator Jeffrey Klein, and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins in early February.

Through these new voices and the work of many advocates across the state, momentum has continued to build for the passage of comprehensive Raise the Age reform during the 2017 legislative session.

For the latest updates on the campaign, please go to our website: www.wca4kids.org

A Record Year for "Let's Take the Kids to a Show!"

Every year, we ask our donors to support an appeal we call "Let's Take the Kids to a Show!" For every \$100 that we receive, we send one foster or low-income young person to an event. Tickets cost considerably less than \$100 and, therefore after buying the ticket, we use the balance of the donation to support our advocacy work on behalf of all kids in the county.

Our idea is that you can give ONE kid a fun and memorable experience, and at the same time, help WCA make sure that ALL kids have their needs met.

This year, we invited kids to watch the Westchester Knicks, a new partner for WCA. Thanks to our donors, we received enough funding to send **196 kids** – the most we have ever sent – and we were able to use 75% of their donations to continue our advocacy work on behalf of all young people in Westchester.

This was a win/win! And the Westchester Knicks won too, over the Northern Arizona Suns! The score was tied for much of the 2nd



and 3rd quarters, but in the 4th quarter, our team pulled ahead to win 114-103, in a very exciting final few minutes.

We are now in the planning stages for next year's event. Many thanks to our generous donors for providing such a wonderful experience for foster and low-income kids, who otherwise might not have the opportunity to go to a Westchester Knicks game, and for supporting WCA's work on behalf of all kids at the same time.

How Does Implicit Bias Affect Our Children?

The 2017 Advocacy Breakfast and Kathryn W. Davis Child Advocacy Lecture will be hosted by Doral Arrowwood Hotel and Conference Center in Rye Brook on April 20, 2017.

This year, our keynote address will come from Dr. Walter S. Gilliam, Director of The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy and Associate Professor of Child Psychiatry and Psychology at the Yale University Child Study Center. Dr. Gilliam's recent research, "Do Early Educators' Implicit Biases Regarding Sex and Race Relate to Behavior Expectations and Recommendations of Preschool Expulsions and Suspensions?" will help us understand how children can become disconnected from school at a very young age, and what is needed to change this phenomenon.

Regular Ticket: \$45 • Student Ticket: \$25

Please join us at this very exciting event.

To register online: <http://bit.ly/17AdvoBfast>.



Dr. Walter S. Gilliam

WCA's Director of Development Named Fundraiser of the Year!

The Association of Development Officers has named WCA's Director of Development, Betsy Steward, as Fundraiser of the Year.

We, at WCA, are extremely proud of Betsy and were very excited to celebrate her award at the 2017 ADO Philanthropy Awards Breakfast, which was on March 8th, 2017 at Tappan Hill.

Over the last 10 years, Betsy has led the effort that raised over \$7 million for Westchester Children's Association, including spearheading WCA's 5-year Centennial Campaign, which we completed in early 2016.



Betsy Steward



The Data Bulletin is Coming!

We have a date! Our annual Data Bulletin will be released on April 20, 2017, just in time for this year's Advocacy Breakfast, featuring Dr. Walter Gilliam. Printed copies will be made available at the event, and the online launch will occur later in the day.

An announcement on our blog can be found here: <http://wp.me/p5Cyqo-19v>

As we gear up to tell the story of Westchester's children and youth through numbers, we want your input. We would love to hear from you about what worked, and more importantly, what DID NOT work (we have thick skins – don't worry). Because we have limited room on the bulletin, and because people's attention spans can be short, we want to make sure that the data presented on our bulletin is the data that really matters.

save the date

Please Join Us at Our 2017 Spring Gala: The Legacy of Tomorrow Starts Today

Thursday, May 18th, 2017 • 6:00 p.m.
Tarrytown House, Tarrytown, N.Y.

Honoring
Eileen Fisher and The Westchester Bank



WCA will present Eileen Fisher with the **2017 Edith C. Macy Award for Distinguished Service** in recognition of her work as founder of the Eileen Fisher Leadership Institute, whose mission is to promote leadership in young women and men through self-empowerment, connection with others and activism in their communities. The Westchester Bank will be presented with the **2017 Corporate Children's Champion Award** for its support of multiple non-profit organizations and initiatives in Westchester that benefit children and families. The strong commitments for the betterment of children and families by both of our honorees mirrors WCA's mission and goals, and we are pleased to recognize their work throughout Westchester and beyond.

Make your reservations now! <http://bit.ly/2017wcagala>

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