

Ensuring all Westchester's children are healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges.

Motivating Youth Justice: WCA's Journey in Criminal Justice Reform



Josh and Alexander support youth justice at #FREEnewYork Lobby Day in Albany on February 27, 2019.

#FREEnewYork supports advocate at Lobby Day in Albany on February 4, 2019.

Community members and stakeholders gather on the stage of the State Legislative Office Building on #FREEnewYork Lobby Day.

For the last six years, WCA has been the county-wide lead for Raise the Age NY (RTA), a campaign that works to improve policies and outcomes for justice-involved young people. Our experience with the RTA Campaign and awareness that the brain continues to develop until age 25 led us to recognize that the justice system needs to better support young people well into their 20s. We also saw the negative connection that “juvenile” has with “juvenile delinquent,” and so shifted our focus and terminology from ‘juvenile justice’ to a broader ‘youth justice’ agenda as did the statewide RTA campaign.

WCA first saw significant progress in 2017 when RTA legislation passed officially raising the New York State age of criminal responsibility from 16 to 18 and amending how the state treats its justice-involved youth. WCA has been monitoring RTA implementation in Westchester and can report that the legal system has adapted to the new law. Nearly two-thirds of felony-level cases involving 16-year-olds between October 2018 and January 2019 were nonviolent felonies transferred to Family Court, according to our rough calculation from information provided by the Westchester County Probation Department.

For those who must be imprisoned, the county's secure detention center, Woodfield Cottage, is being renovated and expanded to accommodate youth from Westchester and other counties across the state. WCA continues to advocate for a service-rich facility that maximizes services and resources. This initial phase of RTA implementation for 16-year-olds is an opportunity to get things right before the larger 17-year-old population is added in October 2019.

In 2017, WCA joined the Westchester Coalition of #FREEnewYork, a statewide criminal justice reform campaign led by JustLeadershipUSA that strives to ensure equal access to justice. This year, #FREEnewYork has influenced Governor

Despite these positive changes, there is plenty more work to do and WCA will support RTA advocacy efforts to:

- Raise Youthful Offender status to age 21
- Raise eligibility for juvenile delinquency from age 7 to age 12
- Increase opportunities for record sealing
- Increase support for prevention and diversion alternatives to incarceration that keep youth in their communities
- Ending adult correctional involvement in facilities housing youth

Cuomo's 2019-2020 State Budget to prioritize criminal justice reform. It also catalyzed New York State Assembly and Senate to pass bills that eliminate bail, improve discovery laws and speedy trial procedures. Locally, in January 2019, our new Executive Director, Allison Lake, met with the County Board of Legislators (BOL) along with #FREEnewYork Westchester Coalition partners to solicit their support of a pretrial reform resolution. WCA staff members, Josh and Alexander, journeyed to Albany on February 27th for #FREEnewYork Lobby Day and were deeply empowered and inspired by the testimonies, rallies, and legislative meetings they witnessed.

With its Raise the Age and #FREEnewYork work, WCA has been a proud leader in criminal justice reform across Westchester County. Our efforts have helped to change hearts and minds in our communities and we continue to commit to sustained support and improved outcomes for justice-involved youth and families.

To learn more, reach out to Josh Prywes at jprywes@wca4kids.org

Data Done Differently

One year ago, our collective impact initiative, Gathering Policy Solutions for Kids (GPS4Kids), released its 2018 GPS4Kids Baseline Report. GPS4Kids partners outlined six indicators to monitor as we march towards our goal: *By 2021, Westchester children and youth will thrive regardless of race and zip code.* The 6 indicators are pre-K enrollment, chronic absence, graduation rates, disconnected youth, out-of-school suspensions, and number of high school guidance counselors.

This spring, we are very excited to release an innovative and comprehensive tool, under the working title 'GPS4Kids Warehouse' culminating four years of work. It will provide the continuous communications and shared measurements required of a collective impact model. This new, interactive on-line resource will measure the progress towards positive learning environments and much more! The best thing about the Warehouse is it will be longitudinal, showing changes over time and move-



Cheryl Hunter-Grant, Diana Rosenthal, and Judy Mezey discuss aspects of the GPS4Kids project.



GPS4Kids partners at work on our collective impact initiative.

Stay tuned for the launch of our 'GPS4Kids Warehouse' this spring!



wca4kids.org/issues/gps4kids

ment towards our goal. We will continue to share popular reports like our Community Snapshots and Data Bulletin, while also mapping the progress of our indicators as new information is received.

WCA will always base our advocacy on data and information that is pertinent to children and families in Westchester County. This new tool will provide additional context to local trends by gathering relevant information from different sources. This project will collect indicator-specific content from GPS4Kids member organizations, researchers, and media outlets. The Warehouse will also share local stories

about each indicator and showcase other features such as reports, data analysis projects, surveys, events, and media. As the backbone organization, we will add content such as podcasts, summary newsletters, and a new feature - issue briefs - for each indicator.

The 'GPS4Kids Warehouse' is a new, multi-media tool that will not only introduce important data metrics to measure our progress, but also facilitate a community conversation about what it takes to ensure children thrive *regardless of race or zip code.*

Join in! Get information by contacting Erica Ayala at eyala@wca4kids.org

Listen to our podcast 'Ground Truthing' to get insights from the ground up! wca4kids.org/wca-podcast/



Reveal your inner superhero: Become a WCA Defender Today!

When you become a WCA Defender for Children you give us steady funding to pursue important issues that affect the most vulnerable young people in Westchester.

Give a little each month to help young people thrive! When our children do well, our entire community benefits!

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Preserves high quality after-school and youth programs that our children deserve

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Helps us advocate for services to help more than 2,500 homeless children in Westchester

WCA In The Community



WCA staff visited Hope's Door's office in Hawthorne to donate our first batch of CubCoats on behalf of new monthly donors, the Defenders for Children! Left to right: Rebekah, CarlLa Horton - Executive Director of Hope's Door, Allison, and Onya.



Allison emceed the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Annual Literacy Celebration hosted by American Women of African Heritage (AWAH). Left to right: Francine Shorts - Co-chairperson of AWAH, and Allison.



Mighty superheroes in the making tried out our photo props and goodies at WCA's table in The Westchester Mall.



WCA staff spent an afternoon at The Westchester Mall teaching families about the importance of advocacy, while having a little fun dressing up as superheroes. Left to right: Jordana, Ilana, Limarie, and Onya.



John Tolomer, President & CEO of The Westchester Bank, was recently interviewed by Erica for an upcoming episode of our podcast 'Ground Truthing.'



Rebekah represented WCA at the Stronger Together Solidarity Fair on February 3rd at Temple Israel in New Rochelle with her daughter. The fair engaged the audience on issues of anti-Semitism and other social, racial, and economic injustices.

Vision 0 to 3



Did you know that we held a Vision 0 to 3 Conference last fall that focused on the importance of investing in babies, toddlers and families?

Follow this link to read our *Vision 0 to 3: Next Steps* report!
wca4kids.org/issues/home-visiting



Alexander Ingram, Intern

Alexander chose to complete his internship at WCA to build skills that would help him efficiently advocate for policy reform and social justice. Currently, he works closely with the Programs team. Previously, he completed an associate degree in arts at Westchester Community College, where he was inducted into two National Honor Societies: Phi Theta Kappa and Chi Alpha Epsilon. He is currently a senior at Mercy College majoring in Social Work. In his junior year at Mercy, Alexander was elected president of the Social Work Club. Alexander plans to continue his education and attend graduate school in fall 2019.

Josh Prywes, Program and Policy Associate

Josh started working part-time with WCA in May 2018 on the 2018 Community Snapshots. He really enjoyed the experience working alongside Lim to redesign the visualizations and data capacity of the Snapshots, and quickly learned a lot about Westchester's school districts in the process. After the Snapshots were launched, he joined WCA full time as Program and Policy Associate in October 2018. His passion for children's advocacy comes from his experiences mentoring children and youth, and a desire to ensure that today's kids have the best possible experiences and opportunities. Josh works on many issues as part of the Programs team, but his focus has been Youth Justice. As part of this work, he has coordinated with the Raise the Age NY coalition, planned WCA's "Raise the Age: 6 Months In" event, met with county and state legislators on the need for criminal justice reform, and attended a Youth Justice symposium at John Jay College of Criminal Justice and a Lobby Day in Albany. Josh studied Economics and Civic Engagement at Wesleyan University and received his BA in 2017.



Onya West, Communications Manager

I am honored to be chosen as the first to hold this new staff position. After working at WCA for 5 months, my excitement has not faded as I have a better understanding of the unique challenges and the new horizons possible in non-profit communications. In this role, I find myself drawing often upon my entrepreneurial experiences starting my own lifestyle and fitness business, Socamotion Fitness and Wellness, in order to attune myself to the perspective of our supporters. WCA has a loyal following that understands the vital role of advocacy, want to stay updated with our activities, and enjoy learning about our new projects. I strive each day to find effective ways to share our progress in a way to strengthen the relationship with our supporters and donors and to make our message accessible to anyone who can hear us. I have worked as a public health policy consultant with numerous Caribbean non-

governmental organizations developing policy briefs and media communications. I am a proud graduate of Brown University where I received my BA with honors in an Independent Concentration within Medical Anthropology and completed my Masters of Public Health (MPH) studies at the University of the West Indies - Cave Hill. All this and my creative instincts are used to help WCA grow even stronger in the coming years.

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A New Approach to Data at WCA

We will launch not one, but two data tools this year, which reflect a significant shift in the way we share information. We are bringing together the power of storytelling with the authority of numbers to share information more effectively and to bring more emphasis to the issues affecting our children today.

Our first project is the most ambitious and powerful. It will not only update stakeholders on the longitudinal progress of six main indicators that were reported in the GPS4Kids Baseline Report, but it will also incorporate narratives from people affected and encourage feedback from partners who are working on these issues. The “GPS4Kids Warehouse” will launch in spring 2019! Our second project will update the WCA Data Bulletin to show how priority indicators in Westchester County have changed, and complement it with qualitative information. The bulletin to be released fall 2019 will be an opportunity to unite strong data analytics with powerful storytelling.

These projects may seem to be distinct and separate, but they actually represent a fundamental change in philosophy that shapes the way that WCA presents data to our audience. We consistently strive to be clear and accessible in our approach to sharing information with those who can use it. Now, we will



also highlight the story and message of a particular issue, rather than just give the statistics.

Numbers alone do not express urgency. How can mere digits express the struggle and the emotional toll facing Westchester’s children, parents, families, and direct service workers as they try to create the best start for our children? By merging the efficiency of data with the emotional pull of narrative, we will convey how important it is to find and implement policy solutions to issues that continue to divide us into the haves and have nots. We believe that this new approach will improve the tools that continue to help those who advocate for Westchester’s children.

Learn more about our data projects at wca4kids.org/data or contact Limarie Cabrera at lcabrera@wca4kids.org

Making Every County Dollar Count for Children and Youth



Allison and Josh champion the causes for Campaign for Kids at the 2018 County Budget hearing.

The coalition successfully advocated to maintain over \$2 million in funding for 49 community-based, youth development programs through Invest In Kids...

Every fall, WCA examines the Westchester County Operating Budget to ensure funds adequately support children, youth, and families. WCA leads the Campaign for Kids (CFK) coalition of more than 50 community-based organizations that leverage their collective power to support positive youth development. At the 2019 public budget hearings, WCA alongside members of CFK, submitted written comments and recommendations to county legislators and gave live testimony.

We had wins across the board! **The coalition successfully advocated to maintain over \$2 million in funding for 49 community-based, youth development programs through Invest In Kids (IIK),** and to reevaluate the application, evaluation, and award processes for the next cycle. CFK also helped raise reimbursement rates for childcare providers and the number of subsidy slots for low-income families. Together we are stronger, so WCA partnered with Nonprofit Westchester and Westchester Women’s Agenda to secure a 2% increase for non-profit contracts with the county.

... and Every State Dollar, too!

Did you know that WCA also monitors the New York State budget every year?

We do. Money allocated at the state level directly impacts our county’s youth and families. WCA attended public budget hearings to advocate for our agenda including justice-involved youth, child welfare preventive services, early childhood supports, youth development, and Census 2020. Hearings were hosted by the Westchester delegation of the Assembly and the Senate. In addition, we participated in the legislative breakfast of the Westchester Women’s Agenda. The State Budget is slated to pass in April 2019.



To learn more, contact Jordana Lorenzo at jlorenzo@wca4kids.org

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