

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



Our 2021 Spring Benefit *A Celebration Like No Other!*

On June 3, over 360 households tuned in to our 2021 Spring Benefit and joined WCA virtually to enjoy an evening of entertainment and enlightenment in celebration of Westchester's fiercest advocates for children and youth.

The hour-long event was held to appreciate the good fortune of surviving the pandemic as a nonprofit, while maintaining our focus on the issues that matter to Westchester's kids. We were excited to present our three awards to honorees who exemplify what can be achieved with enduring commitment and service to the well-being of children. Honorees included Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton, who accepted the Edith C. Macy Award for Distinguished Service. Greater Hudson Valley (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, through Chapter President Robin Williams, and Westchester County (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, through Chapter President Terry Joiner, both received the Children Champion's awards. Kate Weingarten, former WCA Board Member, was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for 2021.

Presentations included greetings from Dr. Ray Sanchez, Superintendent of the Ossining Union Free School District; Dr. Tahira DuPree Chase, Superintendent of the Greenburgh Central School District; Doug Gould, former WCA Board President; and a surprise message of support from United States Senator of New York, Chuck Schumer, for his friend Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton.

In addition, attendees fully enjoyed hearing the young voices of Westchester Children's Chorus, who sang sweetly even through their masks. Attendees came away from the evening enlightened by some of the day-to-day issues WCA fights for — including Youth Justice; Data and how it can help with Child and Youth Homelessness (and our current data work supporting this concern); and Project Engage, our civic engagement initiative that has empowered hundreds of young people to better their communities. This Fund-A-Need section featured testimonials by young people who have been impacted by our training including Sandra Adaremi of 'Westchester Students for Justice and Liberation' and Louis Elmore from the Youth Shelter of Westchester.

We surpassed our fundraising goal of \$200,000, thanks to generous donations from our sponsors including Kate and Seymour Weingarten; Becky Samberg; Colgate Bright Smiles, Bright Futures; Greater Hudson Valley (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated; Hudson Valley Credit Union; Janice Cook Roberts; Ann Umemoto, and many others whose names can be found on our website. WCA is rejuvenated in our mission to ensure that all children are healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges well beyond the pandemic. Thank you all for your support!

View the recording, see more photos, and leave well wishes at wcabenefit2021.org



Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton
honored with the Edith C. Macy Award for Distinguished Service



Robin Williams, Chapter President
Greater Hudson Valley (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated
honored with the Children's Champion Award



Terry Joyner, Chapter President
Westchester County (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated
honored with the Children's Champion Award



Kate Weingarten
honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award

WCA's New Child & Youth Homelessness Data Dashboard

The What, How, and Why...

WHAT'S IN IT?

Information about children and students in Westchester County who are experiencing homelessness will be available on an interactive platform for the entire county and by school district.

Users will see breakdowns by housing status, school year, race and ethnicity, age, and physical disability status. Information for children in the foster and shelter systems will also be included.

WHY DO THIS?

WCA created this Data Dashboard to shed light on the details of child and youth homelessness in Westchester County, highlight the racial inequities that persist, and provide a user-friendly tool that can help advocates access timely, comparative data trends. Different definitions of "homelessness" used by governing agencies have produced vastly inconsistent numbers and demographic profiles of children experiencing homelessness and gaps in information. These discrepancies represent children and families who are not receiving necessary services and lags in data availability that make it harder for service providers to help.

Westchester Children's Association Child & Youth Homelessness Data Dashboard - 2021



HOW DID WE GET THE DATA?

Much of this data that is broken down by race and ethnicity was not publicly available. In 2020, WCA filed a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request to obtain stratified public school data. Our research showed that racial data was crucial to illuminating trends and disparities in addition to income, location, and age. We also worked with the Westchester County Continuum of Care Partnership to End Homelessness to obtain data on children and families in the shelter system.

WHO HELPED US?

WCA is grateful for the collaboration of partners including the Department of Social Services (DSS), Westchester County Continuum of Care Partnership to End Homelessness, and the Mount Vernon City School District. Since 2018, WCA's workgroup has prioritized challenges of data collection and verification.

This information is crucial to help partners see cracks in the system and track the progress of children out of homeless situations. We hope that the data in the dashboard raises and answers questions on how we can do better to serve our youngest residents.

Stay tuned for updates at wca4kids.org/our-work/interactive-data

Beyond RTA to Greater Youth Justice

On June 10, the New York State legislative session concluded a period of hard work for WCA and our youth justice partners that reaped significant progress in policies for both the youngest children and older youth who interact with the justice system. This broadened the reach of Raise the Age reforms, which WCA has championed since 2013.

Two major pieces of legislation have passed the State Assembly and Senate and have been sent to Governor Cuomo to sign, as required by New York State law:

- The first bill ended the arrest and prosecution of children under age 12 as juvenile delinquents.
- The second bill provided opportunities for youthful offender protections for individuals convicted of a crime while under 19 years old.

Previously, children as young as 7 years old could be arrested and prosecuted under New York State law. If Governor Cuomo confirms this proposed law, sponsored by NYS Assemblyperson Ellen Jaffee and NYS Senator Velmanette Montgomery, children under age 12 will not be arrested and prosecuted (with few exceptions for violent crimes). Instead, they will be supported by local, community-based services referred to as “differential response programs” that are more age-appropriate. This is an important step forward towards dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline and addressing racial disparities in our youth justice system. When signed into law, elementary school children will not be criminalized, arrested and handcuffed, or managed by adults ill-trained to deal with developing, young children.

The Youthful Offender (YO) Second Chance Bill pertains to previous convictions of youth under age 19. When this bill becomes law, those who were previously denied “youthful offender” status can re-apply for protections, such as record sealing five (5) years after their conviction. Record sealing



makes the information inaccessible to the public through routine background checks often used by employers and landlords and is a preventive factor for lifelong challenges, which a criminal record creates for thousands of people across Westchester County and New York State. This will empower young people to chart a surer path to rehabilitation and societal reintegration instead of being hindered and judged by mistakes made during their teenage years.

As part of the process for passing these bills, WCA collaborated with a network of direct service providers, formerly incarcerated young people, community organizations, and legislators across New York State, including the New York State Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus. The Caucus has been supportive of a broader youth justice agenda. WCA joined the Caucus in May 2021 for a virtual conversation around the need for youth justice reform.

The Solutions Not Suspensions Act, a bill aimed at preventing justice involvement and changing school discipline practices that have been used disproportionately for students of color and proven ineffective, continues to be stalled in the legislation for over twelve (12) years. WCA, as part of the Solutions Not Suspensions Coalition, has met with legislators and the New York State United Teachers Union as part of a continuous effort to limit the use of suspensions. We have also connected with the New York State Education Department to solicit their feedback on the legislation, and we plan to connect with the Board of Regents over the summer. The pandemic has brought about a heightened need for reform in the context of hybrid and remote learning.

Progress has been made, but the fight continues as we wait for Governor Cuomo to sign passed bills into law.

TAKE ACTION! Send a message to support the YO Second Chance Act at wca4kids.org/alert



[L to R] Dominic Petramale, Senior Vice President, Retail Banking Officer & Director of Cash Management Services of PCSB Bank and WCA Board Member; Allison Lake, WCA Executive Director; Steve Elser, Vice President and Director of Marketing for PCSB Bank.

THANK YOU to PCSB Bank for supporting our work towards education equity by sponsoring our Advocacy Breakfast on March 31, 2021.



See a recording at  youtube.com/wca4kids

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Children's Champions Since 1914

470 Mamaroneck Avenue, Suite 304
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SPREAD THE WORD!

Tell your friends and family why
you love WCA and invite them to
join our mailing list at

wca4kids.org/joinus



new faces @ WCA

Westchester Children's Association is thrilled to introduce two new members to the Board of Directors. Each will serve a three-year term.



Stephen (Steve) J. Godin, PhD is currently the Director of Toxicology at Regeneron Pharmaceuticals in Tarrytown, NY. Steve has Bachelor of Science degrees in biology and chemistry from Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts. He received his Ph.D. in Toxicology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has more than thirteen years of experience in risk assessment and drug safety evaluation. Steve's experience in both environmental toxicology and pharmaceutical safety assessment has fueled his passion for risk-benefit analysis and the impact these analyses have on making data-driven decisions. His love for the mission of WCA was sparked in 2020 when he led the Regeneron team in evaluating our data through the *Using Data for Good* initiative directed by Taproot Foundation and Volunteer NY. Steve lives in Putnam County with his wife, two children, and two dogs where they enjoy exploring the beauty of the great outdoors.



Robin H. Williams is an award-winning educator, curriculum writer, educational consultant, and mentor teacher. She has over 35 years of teaching experience at both the elementary and college levels. Robin is very active in her community and currently serves as President of the Greater Hudson Valley (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated. She also serves as the National and Regional Chair of Protocol for Jack and Jill of America, Inc., and Curator of the Literary Salon of the Eastern Area of The Links Arts Committee.

Robin is a polyglot, fluent in five languages, who grew up in Brazil and studied at L' Université D'Avignon in France. She is often called upon to serve as a translator. She is a graduate of Stony Brook University and holds a Master of Science degree in Teaching from Pace University. Robin believes in giving back to the community and providing a chance for our youth to shine and grow. She is the proud mother of two sons and one daughter and resides in Westchester County with her husband.

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