

Ensuring every child is healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges regardless of race or zip code.

2022 Advocacy Breakfast – Back Together Again



Dr. Kira Hudson Banks keynote speaker at 2022 Advocacy Breakfast answering questions



From left to right: Maris Krasnow, WCA; Legislator Jewel Williams Johnson, Board of Legislators; Allison Lake, WCA; Symra Brandon and Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, NY State Senate



Eliza Rauchwerger sharing her story at 2022 Advocacy Breakfast

After over two years of virtual advocacy events, WCA was excited to meet with our partners in person for our 2022 Fall Advocacy Breakfast!

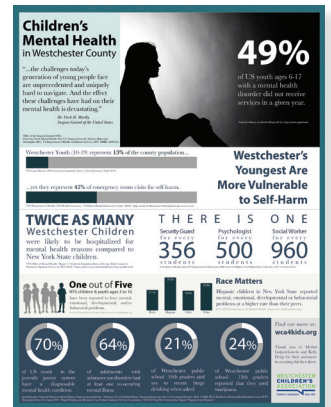
On October 18, 2022, Dr. Kira Hudson Banks spoke directly to children's wellness as she delivered the Kathryn Wasserman Davis lecture to over 100 attendees entitled *Raising Equity NERDS: Supporting the Socio-Emotional Well-Being of Youth*. WCA also released our Mental Health Fact Sheet. It sheds light on mental health related issues children and youth in Westchester County experience and the lack of available resources and providers.

Today's youth and children are facing an increasing number of challenges that are impacting their social emotional well-being and WCA hears their voices. With efforts to strengthen the conversation and supports around youth, WCA's 2022 Advocacy Breakfast *A Better Normal: Raising Equity in Support of Youth Social-Emotional Growth* highlighted that to effectively meet the range of children and youth mental health needs, we must prioritize and advance mental and behavioral health services centered on race equity.

Dr. Banks brought forth a powerful presentation as she took a deep dive addressing the various factors that are impacting our most vulnerable youth and children especially as they relate to race equity. Our attendees were eager to further discuss the impact of systemic racism and the stressors it transmits directly, indirectly,

and intergenerationally. We then heard remarks from Eliza Rauchwerger who spoke on her journey towards mental wellness and the struggles she faced along the way. Sharing the obstacles faced and support needed to overcome mental health related challenges sparked a deeper conversation around the many children and youth who do not have the privilege of receiving timely, needed support and how it has led many voices and stories to go unheard.

WCA knows there is still more work to be done and will continue the conversation with our partners to help our most vulnerable youth and children cope and connect in order to lead them along a path of life that is more fulfilling and productive. Plans are underway for our second mental health roundtable early in 2023 in partnership with Morgan Stanley.



WCA's Mental Health Fact Sheet is available at wca4kids.org/AdvocacyBreakfast2022

If you would like to participate or learn more, contact Angel Gray at agray@wca4kids.org

Early Childhood and Home Visiting Go Together like a Baby and Blanket



On September 28, a beautiful, warm early fall morning WCA unveiled five quilts from our **Hope Quilt Project** at the Westchester Children’s Museum (WCM) at Playland Park in Rye. The year-long project was developed to raise awareness of the importance of early childhood supports. As Westchester’s most vulnerable continue to lack access to early childhood and home visiting supports, WCA embarked on a journey to amplify the need for increased funding and access to home visiting programs for infant and child well-being.

Home visiting programs have demonstrated effectiveness in improving birth outcomes and maternal health, developing school readiness, and advancing parenting behaviors and attitudes. Presenters Jewel Williams Johnson of the Westchester County Board of Legislators, John Befus of the Westchester County Department of Social Services, Cara Stanley of Andrus/Healthy Families, and Shannon Van Loon of Westchester Jewish Community Services/ParentChild+ addressed the benefits and need for early childhood and home visiting services to support the development of our youngest children.

The **Hope Quilt Project** was conceived to enlist the community in creating quilt patches with messages and pictures of hope and to engage volunteers and sponsors to support the funding and WCA’s advocacy work. The event was attended by quilters, board members from WCM and WCA,



Representative members of the Village Squares Quilters, who made nine quilts from the many squares of fabric submitted. This project reflects the coming together of our communities to help our youngest and most vulnerable members: babies and infants.

county representatives and community advocates. Attendees had the opportunity to view the quilts masterfully designed by Village Squares Quilters and filled with heart felt messages and drawings from WCA’s supporters and donors, students at School 30 in Yonkers, Lakeland School district Lincoln Tutus Elementary School, Westchester Reform Temple Early Childhood Center in Scarsdale, and others.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
Home visiting programs have demonstrated effectiveness in improving birth outcomes and maternal health, developing school readiness, and advancing parenting behaviors and attitudes.
Yet 95.2% of Medicaid eligible families in Westchester continue to go without home visiting services.

The mission of Westchester Children’s Museum includes “broadening knowledge of the arts and sciences, the environment, multiculturalism, and the local and global communities in an educational and recreational atmosphere.” Kids from pre-k through middle school will enjoy it. “This was a win-win partnership with WCA,” said Nicole Lotto, supervisor of the Westchester Children’s Museum. “We are delighted to have five of the quilts on display as a testament to the communal effort made to provide extra support to help infants and young parents in the County.”

This day was what child advocates work for, a coming together of different people from different walks of life to let our leaders know we want investments in children. WCA is reenergized in its commitment to making sure our babies and children have a safe, and strong start to life.

To learn more about our efforts around early childhood supports and home visiting, contact Angel Gray, agray@wca4kids.org



From L to R: John Befus, Deputy Commissioner of Westchester County’s Department of Social Services; Jewel Williams-Johnson, Westchester County Board of Legislators (BOL), District 8 and Chair of the BOL Health Committee; Allison Lake, Executive Director of WCA

WCA and Pace University Present Digital Access Survey Results

On October 4, 2022, during National Digital Inclusion Week, WCA and Pace University held a joint press conference to discuss the results of our Digital Access survey, conducted in Winter 2022. The final report *Digital Access Survey: Perceptions of Parents in K-12 Schools in Westchester County, New York* by Sydney Moraitis, MPA Candidate, and Gina Scutelnicu-Todoran, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Pace University was the result of more than 500 responses from Westchester parents and guardians. In addition to the authors, County Legislators MaryJane Shimsky and Colin D. Smith, and Raphael Ceara of The STEM Alliance, also spoke of the challenges present in this current online world. Prominent local news outlets such as the Examiner, the Journal News, and News 12 were present at the event.

The survey itself was a product developed by WCA's Digital Access Workgroup, who crafted the survey questions designed to get a pulse on how Westchester families were dealing with an ever-changing digital world. We made a concerted effort to ensure that all Westchester families, especially those without computer or internet access, could participate. Organizations, such as Open Door, dedicated their own resources to make sure their clients could participate. The Westchester Library System made hard copies available at circulation desks. This survey was truly a reflection of the strength of our formal and informal partnerships that makes WCA the advocacy presence that it is.

From the onset of the pandemic, WCA has been very aware that digital equity, access and inclusion is an issue for many Westchester families. The data show a formidable Digital




Top Row: Colin Smith, County Legislator; Walter Rendon, STEM Alliance; MaryJane Shimsky, County Legislator; Allison Lake, WCA; Sydney Moraitis, Pace University MPA Candidate and one of the primary authors of the final report; Raphael Ceara, STEM Alliance Bottom Row: Patricia Brigham, Westchester Library System; Limarie Cabrera, WCA; Margaret Käufer, STEM Alliance

Divide. Almost **25,000 households in Westchester County have no internet service** according to the latest data from the US Census Bureau. **Nearly 14 percent of people making \$75,000 or less do not have an internet subscription. Those of Hispanic origin are almost twice as likely NOT to have an internet subscription than the rest of the population** (2021 American Community Survey, Tables S2801 & S2802). For these economically fragile individuals, an online connection is a point of access to improved education, healthcare services, financial planning, and workforce development. The Digital Divide is not just an “issue.” It is a lens which magnifies many of the inequities that plague society today.

WHAT THE SURVEY REVEALED: Lack of Digital Literacy and Access Impacts Many Westchester Families

Less than 1%
of respondents took advantage
of government-sponsored
internet affordability programs



7 out of 10
participants were not aware
that the programs existed



1 out of 5
were not comfortable making
an online health appointment

Unfortunately, the survey findings are not a surprise. One finding suggests 31 percent of the respondents reported that technology made their child's learning more difficult. What is even more telling is that Westchester families are unaware of already available resources to bridge the digital divide. In a county where the poverty rate is 9.2% (2021 American Community Survey, Table S1701), **less than one percent of respondents took advantage of internet affordability measures**, such as the national Affordable Connectivity Program. **Seven out of ten respondents did not know that such initiatives even existed.**

The survey also showed that just having a computer and internet access is not enough. Families also need digital literacy to thrive, perhaps even survive, in current times. **One out of five respondents reported difficulty in making an online health appointment.** Digital inclusion empowers those who have been deprived the access they need for learning, wellness, and economic opportunities.

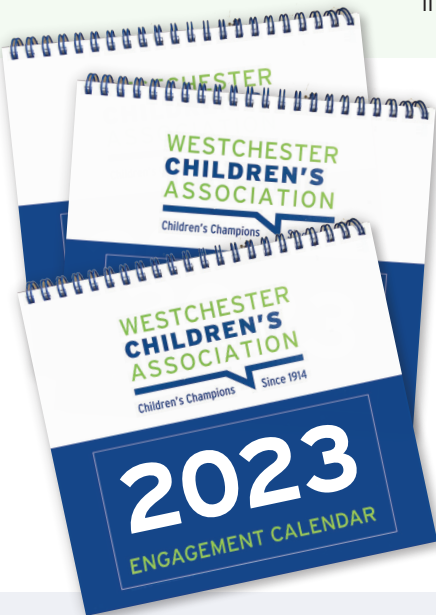
WCA and our Digital Access Workgroup are ready to work with the Westchester Library System, the STEM Alliance and others to foster the growth of the County's digital inclusion ecosystem and develop a forward-looking digital equity policy. The Digital Divide is a loss for everyone. The lived experiences, the knowledge, and the talent of those who cannot yet participate in an online world are being lost. We at WCA are ensuring that that wisdom is not being lost.

The 2022 Digital Access Fact Sheet and Report are available for download at wca4kids.org/issues/digitalaccess. For more information contact Limarie Cabrera at lcabrera@wca4kids.org

new faces @ WCA



Gabby Nanna is a current senior at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. She is studying English literature, with an expressed interest in education policy and equity. While participating in Sarah Lawrence's 2020 Justice Series: Diversity and Equity in Education, Gabby was introduced to Westchester Children's Association. During her time in the Justice Fellowship, she worked alongside college peers, as well as participating high schoolers from the Bronxville, Mount Vernon, and Yonkers public schools. She participated in guest speaker talks and co-produced a podcast episode investigating the school to prison pipeline's relation to school disciplinary measures in Westchester County. This episode featured commentary from WCA's executive director Allison Lake and was re-broadcasted by WCA's podcast Ground Truthing. As a WCA intern, Gabby appreciates the organization's multi-platformed approach to children's advocacy. Of WCA's current projects, she is interested in research of Digital Access and the Solutions not Suspensions initiative. After graduation, Gabby hopes to continue her studies at the graduate level, later leading to her involvement in nonprofit work or education.



Days, weeks, months, years. Appointments, celebrations, birthdays, anniversaries. WCA Engagement Calendars have been organizing schedules and recording lifetimes of memories of donors for over 90 years!

Thanks to a very special and generous anonymous donor who has sponsored the production of our calendars in recent years, most of the proceeds from donations for the calendars go to supporting work of ensuring that Westchester's children are healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges regardless of race or zip code. Like so many of our calendar patrons, our donor is a long-time WCA Calendar user whose use of this calendar began with their mother.

THE WCA 2023 ENGAGEMENT CALENDAR IS AVAILABLE NOW

\$40 suggested tax-deductible donation per calendar

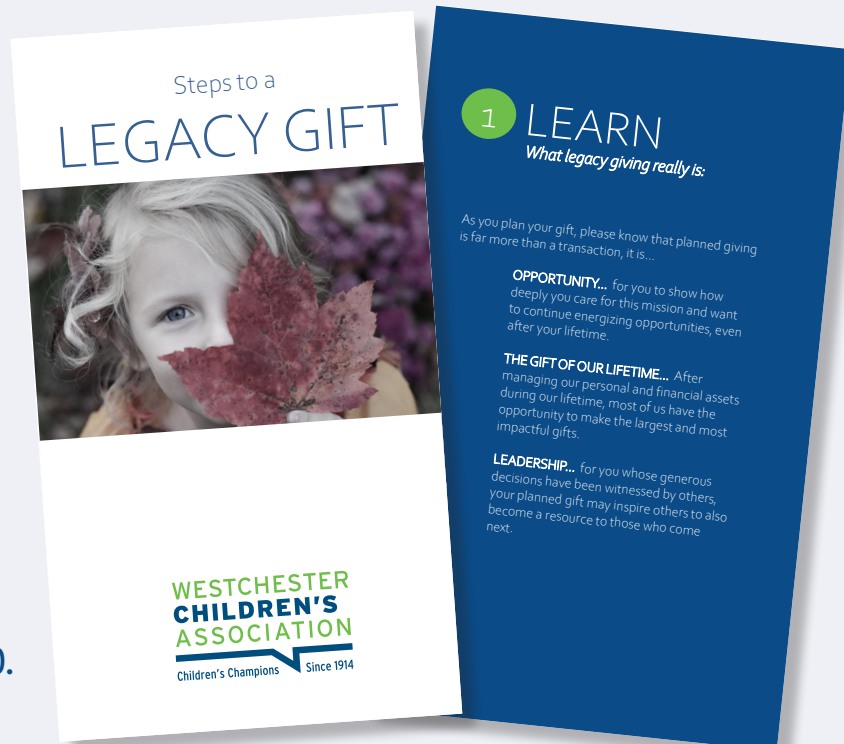
wca4kids.org/EngagementCalendar | 914.946.7676 x300 | wca@wca4kids.org

Be an Advocate for Future Generations of Westchester's Children

We are reaching out to the most passionate and invested in our mission to consider even greater gifts from their assets after their lifetimes.

A successful Planned Giving effort can be a gamechanger for WCA's future.

If you would like to learn more, visit our website wca4kids.org/supportus/legacy-giving, email wca@wca4kids.org, or call 914 946 7676 ext. 300.



Imagine a child...

Annual Spring Benefit
 Wednesday, June 1, 2022 at 6:00 PM at The Surf Club on the Sound

EDITH C. MACY AWARD FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Judge Judy Sheindlin and Nicole Sheindlin,
 Her Honor Mentoring

CORPORATE CHILDREN'S CHAMPION AWARD

Building & Realty
 Institute of Westchester

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Katherine Lobach,
 Past WCA President and Chair



Left: At the podium, Nicole Sheindlin (Background: Judge Judy Sheindlin and Nicole Sheindlin)
 Center: Robin Williams, Tim Foley; Right: Ann Umemoto and Katherine Lobach



Left: Deputy County Executive Ken Jenkins, Allison Lake, Legislator Damon Maher, Richard Nightingale
 Right: Kaycee and Michael Von Essen, Harry Waizer, Matthew Brady, Siobhan O'Shaughnessy



Left: Harry Waizer, Lutonya Russell-Humes, Joanne Amorosi, Adrienne Weiss-Harrison, MD, Katherine Lobach, Tim Foley, Nicole Sheindlin, Allison Lake, Margie Orell, Ann Umemoto, Ellen Adnopoz, Alice Tenney, Stephen Godin, Dominick Petramale; Right: Karen and Jeff Walsh

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**WESTCHESTER
CHILDREN'S
ASSOCIATION**

Children's Champions Since 1914

470 Mamaroneck Avenue, Suite 304
White Plains, NY 10605

Inside this edition of **ChildWATCH**

- The Advocacy Breakfast is Back
- Digital Access Survey Results
- Hope Quilt Project
- Spring Benefit Highlights

Read about our ongoing work on Digital Access Equity, Child & Youth Homelessness, Child Poverty, Youth Justice and more in our online-only 2021 Annual Report!

See highlights of our current advocacy for local families and vulnerable children. Find out how your support helps make Westchester a better place to be a child.

**Click here to view the
2021 ANNUAL REPORT**

Or go to wca4kids.org/publications/annual-reports



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