

WCA eBulletin

WESTCHESTER
CHILDREN'S
ASSOCIATION
Children's Champions Since 1914

Updates on WCA's
advocacy for
Westchester's kids
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eBulletin # 28



Accomplishments & Agenda Items 2023

February 2023

*Look closely at the present you are constructing;
it should look like the future you are dreaming. -- Alice Walker*

The present Westchester Children's Association (WCA) is constructing for today's young people – from newborns to young adults – resembles the future we dream of. Learn more about our projects below:

- Youth Justice: Making Some Noise
- Early Childhood Supports: The Hope Quilts
- Mental Health: Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Amplifying Voices: Advocacy 101 & Project Engage
- Child Poverty Reduction: A Seat at the Table
- Data Matters

If you are so moved, we would appreciate your financial support. Please [donate now](#).

YOUTH JUSTICE: Making Some Noise

Accomplishments

WCA led the effort in Westchester to increase the lower age of criminality from seven to 12 years old, which means that individuals under 12 years old cannot face criminal prosecution.



Rally RSVP

Locally, we've partnered with the [Youth Shelter of Westchester](#) for **Reimagining Justice**, a panel discussion focused on improving outcomes for youth in the criminal justice system. We, likewise, collected and analyzed pandemic data of Westchester district suspensions by race, ethnicity, gender, and special education status.

Agenda Items

Just around the corner is the **Youth Justice Rally - February 23** at the [White Plains Adult Community Center](#). We're excited to be able to host this event free of charge. **Join us! Register online at bit.ly/justice_rally**. Thank you to our partners: [Youth Shelter of Westchester](#), [Children's Defense Fund New York](#), and [Youth Represent](#).

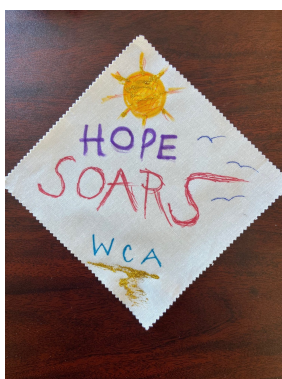
Early Childhood Supports: The Hope Quilts



Accomplishments

Starting in late 2021, WCA collected hundreds of quilt squares from Westchester County and beyond for our **Hope Quilt Project** to raise awareness on the importance of early childhood supports, like home visiting.

Early childhood home visiting services provide individualized support and guidance to families with children ages 0-5 in the home setting and provide connections to needed services. The lack of program capacity and funding in Westchester and New York State has caused eligible families to go without this critical resource.



Several quilts were completed by the [Village Squares Quilters](#) and have been hung at [Westchester Children's Museum](#) and the [Child Care Council of Westchester](#). The newest quilt was hung on January 26th at the **Westchester County Office Building**. See below for video of the press event with **County Executive George Latimer**.



LINK

Video: [Jan 26th Quilt Unveiling on News12](#)

Mental Health

Accomplishments

Diversity Equity & Inclusion



Pictured: (left to Right) Angel Gray, WCA's Program and Policy Manager; Allison Lake, WCA's Executive Director; and Marie Considine, Executive Director of NAMI.

LINKS

[WCA's 2022 Advocacy Breakfast Sheds Light on the Need for Increased Mental Health Supports](#)

Amplifying Voices: Advocacy 101 & Project Engage



[Click here to email your request for paid training\(s\) for your youth-focused organization to Angel Gray, WCA's Program and Policy Manager](#)

A return to our in-person annual **Advocacy Breakfast** was a huge hit! **Dr. Kira Banks**, the Kathryn Wasserman Davis lecturer, spoke on the ways in which racism takes a toll on youth, creating greater disparities for those who already have limited means. The audience was riveted by Dr. Banks and speaker **Eliza Rauchwerger**. We are grateful for funding from the [Westchester County Board of Legislators](#) and [Hudson Road Foundation, Inc.](#) At the same Breakfast, we released our [Mental Health Fact Sheet](#). A second version, including new data, will be released in the spring.

With funding secured in 2022 from the [Westchester County Board of Legislators](#), we brought [NAMI](#)'s (National Alliance on Mental Illness) **Ending the Silence** presentation on mental health to after-school providers, including [Lifting Up Westchester](#) and the [Carver Center](#). Participants learned about warning signs of mental health conditions while also addressing the ongoing stigma associated with mental health.

Agenda Items

While there is no one size fits all solution to the mental health challenges Westchester's youth and children are facing, WCA will continue to advocate for the prioritization and advancement of children's mental health services at our invitation-only **Mental Health Roundtable on March 7th**. This roundtable, funded by [Morgan Stanley](#), will bring together key stakeholders to further explore the status of youth mental health and develop plans to ensure Westchester's most vulnerable youth and children are prepared for life's mental health challenges.

Accomplishments

WCA provides training to youth and their caregivers around the County, showing this generation and the next how to be engaged and active citizens. We are currently partnering with [Volunteer NY](#) and [Family Ties of Westchester](#) to share **Advocacy 101**. It's a series of collaborative presentations that bring participants along a journey of building skills to help amplifying their voices throughout their local communities and beyond.

Agenda Items

In addition to continuing the work of **Advocacy 101**, WCA is updating our **Project Engage Toolkit**, which empowers Westchester residents to be informed and heard in their communities at any time, and especially before elections. **Project Engage** consists of in six handouts, which are regularly reviewed and updated.

It takes a community of advocates and stakeholders to fuel change throughout our county. We thank [Hudson Valley Credit Union](#), and others for supporting our efforts to make more voices heard through advocacy.

Child Poverty Reduction: A Seat at the Table



LINKS

[Allison Lake Appointed as Member of NYS's Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council](#)

[Limarie lays out the facts at the Westchester Child Poverty Symposium](#)

Accomplishments

Last spring, **Limarie Cabrera**, WCA's Director of Data, Operations & Finance spoke at **914Cares'** 3rd Annual Westchester County Poverty Symposium. WCA was gratified when the **New York State Child Poverty Reduction Act** became effective in February 2022 and proud that our own Executive Director, **Allison Lake** was appointed to the **Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council** by **Gov. Kathy Hochul**.

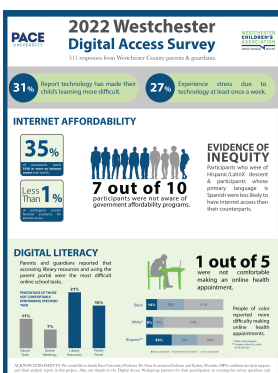
Agenda Items

With input from stakeholders, researchers, and those with lived experience, the **Child Poverty Reduction Advisory Council** will consider poverty reducing policy proposals. These include, but are not limited to

- expanding and strengthening the **Empire State Child Tax Credit** to include young children and eliminate the minimum income threshold;
- continuous Medicaid funding for children ages 0-6;
- providing universal school lunch;
- establishing the **Housing Access Voucher Program**; and
- expanding access to subsidized child care.

In addition, the **Advisory Council** is tasked with examining the disproportionate impact poverty may have on various racial and ethnic communities and what policies may assist in alleviating such disparities.

Data Matters



Accomplishments

WCA collaborated with [Pace University](#) to conduct a county-wide survey in 2022 that captured the digital needs of Westchester families, with an eye on addressing inequities. The results of the [Digital Access Survey](#) were released in October to an audience including local government officials and local media. [CLICK HERE](#) for the Digital Access Fact Sheet and Full Report.

We at WCA like to say that we turn data into action! In addition to the Survey, we launched the latest edition of our popular [Community Snapshots](#) as downloadable PDFs for free from our website on all 45 school districts. [CLICK HERE](#) to view them.

Agenda Item

WCA will integrate our **Digital Access Workgroup** into the newly formed **Digital Inclusion Coalition** with our partners the [STEM Alliance](#), the [Westchester Library Association](#). That's how we work: We use the data we've collected and interpreted to inform a conversation that evolves into a consensus that will inspire leaders to effect change, making Westchester the best place to be a child.

To request paid assistance from WCA on collecting and analyzing data, please contact **Limarie Cabrera, WCA's Director of Data, Operations & Finance** by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Donate to WCA!

WESTCHESTER
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Children's Champions Since 1914



If you are new to Westchester Children's Association (WCA) and our work, welcome.
If you are a longstanding friend, thank you for your continued support.

With your help, {{FirstName or 'friend'}}, we can ensure all children are healthy, safe, and prepared for life's challenges regardless of race or zip code.

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