On Tuesday, October 16, Westchester Children’s Association (WCA) hosted Vision 0 to 3 Conference in Tarrytown, featuring the 10th annual Kathryn Wasserman Davis Advocacy Breakfast. The event was a result of WCA’s ongoing work chairing the Home Visiting Coalition. The Coalition works to increase collaboration and coordination among early childhood programs. It also served to educate the public about the importance of supports for children 0 to 3 years of age and to build public and political will to increase investments in those supports.

The conference served as a starting point to foster and build comprehensive partnerships among families, businesses, county departments, and other partners. From here, we hope to create collaborative and supportive environments for the 0 to 3 population and their families.

The Kathryn W. Davis Advocacy Lecture was delivered by nationally renowned advocate, Matthew Melmed, Executive Director at ZERO TO THREE. He emphasized key policy issues impacting babies and toddlers today, including affordable child care, Early Head Start, Paid Family Leave, and Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program. He ended with a call to action for attendees to join ZERO TO THREE in advocacy through their “Think Babies Campaign.”

Following the keynote, WCA board member Maris Krasnow moderated a panel discussion called Investing in 0 to 3. The panel supported Melmed’s remarks, emphasizing the importance of investing in the early years of life from varied professional perspectives. The panelists included:

- Dr. Farhad Ameen, Ph.D. in Economics, Westchester Community College
- Umran Beba, Global Diversity, Engagement & Talent Officer, PepsiCo
- Dr. Lillian Berdichevsky, OB/GYN, Westmed Medical Group
- Kate Breslin, President & CEO, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy

The conference ended with the Innovative Working Session facilitated by Reeshemah Brightley. The audience broke up into groups of 10 to discuss new ways to collaborate and coordinate on behalf of the 0 to 3 population. Each group summarized their discussion, highlighted existing resources across communities, and mapped out possible ways to collaborate across systems.

Although Westchester has made strides through agency partnerships, coalition work and advocacy, more needs to be done to assist very young children. At this stage of life, children are unable to speak for themselves. Therefore, we as advocates must raise our voices to ensure decisions are being made with special attention to existing data and best practices, as well as overall efficiency and access to resources.  

(Continued on page 2)
In order for our community’s babies and toddlers to reach their full potential, tools, skills, resources, and information must be accessible and available. The Vision 0 to 3 Conference was the first of many steps in creating community investments in our youngest for the future. WCA encourages all members of Westchester County to assist in helping support the 0 to 3 population. There are many ways in which community members and providers can become involved:

■ Visit the WCA website for more resources from the event, including future events and discussions on the 0 to 3 population.
■ Write and call elected officials in support of early childhood programs.
■ Take the Think Babies Campaign Pledge.
■ Follow our speakers and their organizations.

WCA and community partners gained much needed ground in combined efforts to push forward towards their shared goal– ensuring that all babies, toddlers and families are afforded adequate and equitable resources.

The survey revealed that students have serious concerns regarding:

- Mental health
- Citizenship status
- Public works & equity
- Why certain communities get immediate attention after natural disasters and preference for modern development, etc.
- Gun laws
- Special emphasis on cross-sector communication
- Raise the Age
- Digital privacy
- Teaching teens how to safely use technology

In the group discussion, another student said that she feels the voices of youth should be heard and acted upon, especially if the same topics are mentioned repeatedly.

WCA used targeted social media and a special episode of the Ground Truthing podcast to share the concerns addressed.

Vision 0 to 3 (continued)

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Intern Spotlight

Eric Fedio joined us this past summer as WCA’s 2018 Blumenthal Intern. He is currently a senior at Cornell University majoring in Industrial and Labor Relations. He is also pursuing a minor in Business. “My summer internship working at the Westchester Children’s Association (WCA) was a more rewarding experience than I could have ever expected when I joined the organization in late-May. Undoubtedly, it has been a productive and engaging opportunity for me to hone a variety of professional skills that I can harness in the future. From public speaking and group problem solving to diagnostic research and data analysis, working at WCA has exposed me to a wide variety of disciplines and challenged me to become a more flexible worker.”

If you want to learn more about Eric’s summer experience and what he sees for WCA’s future, check out his blog post at: https://wca4kids.org/blog-highlights/my-summer-internship-at-wca/
With your help, we did it!

As of October 1, 2018, the age of criminal responsibility in New York is now 17. One year from now, on October 1, 2019, it will increase to 18. This means that youth under the age of 18 will no longer be tried in the adult criminal justice system.

We have finally raised the age in New York. This means:

■ Parents will be notified of their adolescent’s arrest.
■ Youth will be processed in courts intended to meet their developmental needs.
■ Those incarcerated (only when they must be) will be in service-rich facilities that keep them safe.
■ A young person will get a second chance, without the burden of an adult record.

We are far from done. The coalition group, Raise the Age-New York, will continue to advocate for comprehensive juvenile justice reform. One important change that needs continued investments is increasing diversion services. These are programs such as youth courts, mental health services, mediation and mentoring. These services keep youth in their communities, rather than incarcerated.

Reforms like these are necessary to give young people a second chance and make our communities safer. We are hopeful all New York counties are ready to use this opportunity to create better outcomes for our youth.

To learn more please visit: wca4kids.org/issues/raise-the-age

The Cora Greenberg Advocacy Fund

The Board of Directors of Westchester Children’s Association has created the Cora Greenberg Advocacy Fund in honor of the organization’s longest-serving Executive Director. The Fund was created to provide discretionary monies to future Executive Directors of WCA.

Over Cora’s tenure at WCA, she found that on many occasions, WCA could have been more effective in responding to unexpected issues and emergencies had there been a discretionary fund set up. The Fund will be used to allow the Executive Director to respond to and engage WCA in work on children’s issues that support WCA’s mission but are outside the organization’s regular work plan and budget, both of which are adopted annually by the Board of Directors. Advocacy opportunities to be supported by the Fund include but are not limited to, the following: an unexpected development needing an urgent response, an unexpected opportunity for WCA to have a significant impact on one of our priority issues with additional resources, and an opportunity to enhance or accelerate the exploration of a new issue or do in-depth study on an issue that wasn't anticipated in WCA’s annual budget. The fund has already raised over $18,000 and WCA hopes it continues to increase over the course of the year.

Please visit our website at http://bit.ly/corafund to make a donation to this important appeal. And thank you for your support.

The power of monthly giving!

When you become a WCA Defender for Children, you are giving us strong and steady funding to pursue the important issues affecting the most vulnerable young people in Westchester.

By giving a little bit each month, you’ll support our daily work to improve policies, change laws, and fight for resources that help families, schools, youth programs, and government agencies do a better job helping young people thrive.

And when our children do well, our entire community benefits!

YOUR MONTHLY DONATION OF...

JUST $10 PER MONTH Helps buy transportation for a young person to advocate with us in Albany

ONLY $25 PER MONTH Supports community education and training in our Advocacy 101 program

A MERE $50 PER MONTH Preserves high quality after-school and youth programs that our children deserve

YOUR $100 PER MONTH Helps us advocate for services to help more than 2,500 homeless children in Westchester

It only takes a minute

GO TO www.wca4kids.org/monthly-donor TO ENROLL TODAY
On June 13th, The Westchester Resilience Coalition of which WCA is a member, hosted a screening and an interactive discussion of the film, Resilience, at the headquarters of the Westchester Library System. Expanding upon the original CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) study, the film analyzes the correlation between traumatic experiences during an individual's youth and the increased likelihood he or she will engage in negative mental, emotional, and physical behaviors throughout adulthood. The film's main point is that, although developing brains can be adversely affected by ACES, youth are capable of learning a coping and rehabilitative mechanism known as “resilience.” By building resilience, youth can effectively undo many of the negative changes caused by toxic stress.

Following the screening, attendees were invited to break out into small groups to share what they are currently doing to foster resilience in youth and how to best combat the roots of toxic stress. The groups identified key takeaways for community partners to consider as they continue the conversation on ACES and resilience. One key takeaway that was mentioned throughout the groups was to include youth in the dialogue surrounding resilience. WCA looks forward to continuing to be a part of these discussions around ACES and resilience.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; KPJR Films; Westchester Library System - Community Conversations at the Library

Karen Herrero, along with her husband Peter, are owners of N.Y. Hospitality Group, a White Plains based firm which consists of 5 subsidiaries; Sam's of Gedney Way, The Great American BBQ Co., Caperberry Events, The C.V. Rich Mansion and the Everyday Healthy Café.

As the restaurant manager, Karen coordinates the daily operations, helping to deliver excellent food and beverage service while ensuring a memorable experience for the customer. Her philanthropic involvement consists of a Board Member of Visiting Nurse Services of Westchester and past Board Member of Latino U. Karen has sponsored fundraisers in the restaurant for several nonprofits including Hospice of Westchester, White Plains YMCA, SHORE (Sheltering the Homeless is our Responsibility) ARC of Westchester and Westchester Children’s Association.

Alice Tenney, a longtime resident of Mamaroneck who grew up in Westchester, has been interested and involved in children’s welfare for many years. After 20 years in advertising and sales, she served in executive positions in various PTAs and other education-related community organizations, and she has headed The Main Idea - a nonprofit summer camp for disadvantaged girls - for the past 12 years. She earned a BA from Tufts University and has a certificate in nonprofit management from Manhattanville College.

To learn more about the Westchester Resilience Coalition and find a screening near you, visit https://conversations.westchesterlibraries.org

New Board Members

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

Karen Herrero

Karen coordinates the daily operations, helping to deliver excellent food and beverage service while ensuring a memorable experience for the customer. Her philanthropic involvement consists of a Board Member of Visiting Nurse Services of Westchester and past Board Member of Latino U. Karen has sponsored fundraisers in the restaurant for several nonprofits including Hospice of Westchester, White Plains YMCA, SHORE (Sheltering the Homeless is our Responsibility) ARC of Westchester and Westchester Children's Association.

Alice Tenney

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On July 1, Allison Lake became WCA's new Executive Director. She replaced long-time executive Cora Greenberg, who retired after 23 years of service. Allison joined our organization in 1998 as program director and was promoted to deputy director in 2008.

Among her notable accomplishments during her 20 years at WCA is an outreach effort she directed to promote New York State-sponsored children's health insurance programs (CHIP), which successfully enrolled 10,000 children over five years. Most recently, Allison played a pivotal leadership role in the successful effort to raise the age of criminal responsibility in New York, known as the RTA campaign. Now that the law has passed, its provisions must be implemented, and Allison is among the key people who will be influencing that process.

Prior to joining WCA, Allison held positions with YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester, Associated Black Charities, and National Civic League. Her volunteer work speaks volumes of her commitment to giving back, starting with her Peace Corps service in West Africa and extending to a wide range of groups, including REACH Prep in Stamford, Greenburgh Public Library, Lois Bronz Children's Center in White Plains, and Greenwich Academy.

Allison holds a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Amherst College and an MBA with focus on finance and international business from New York University. She says that she also learned a great deal from her predecessor as they worked together over the years. “I am grateful to Cora Greenberg for her leadership,” said Allison. “I am excited to build on WCA's success by working together with my colleagues both in and outside of WCA, along with the highly effective WCA Board of Directors.”

Allison is already busy giving media interviews and speaking to community groups about the needs of children in Westchester County. She recently gave the keynote address at a luncheon of the Port Chester/Rye NAACP and appeared on Your Community in Action, a radio program on WVOX. In August, the Journal News published a great Q & A with Allison, which you can read here, Allison also writes a monthly blog on Medium. We hope you will keep an eye out for Allison in Westchester media and online outlets as WCA moves ahead with RTA and other initiatives, including an exciting second season of our podcast, Ground Truthing.

READI Launches in New Rochelle!

On June 27th, WCA, alongside the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board, My Brother’s Keeper, and the Guidance Center of Westchester, co-hosted a press conference on the steps of New Rochelle City Hall to commemorate the launch of READI in New Rochelle. Notable event speakers included County Executive George Latimer and WCA’s Executive Director, Allison Lake. The partners involved with bringing READI to New Rochelle included Councilman Jared Rice’s Office, Westhab, New Rochelle High School, New Rochelle Youth Bureau, Boys and Girls Clubs of New Rochelle, and the New Rochelle Chamber of Commerce.

The READI acronym represents the attributes employers look for when hiring young adults: Respect, Enthusiasm, Articulate, Dependable and Initiative. The program itself is a comprehensive soft skills workplace curriculum taught over several weeks to prepare youth to enter a professional environment. Participants work to foster a strong work ethic, high level of interpersonal skills and ultimately embody the READI attributes. Completing the program ensures young people are ready to excel in the workforce and beyond, regardless of their professional aspirations. The culmination of the training is for the youth to be employed over the summer where they can put those new skills into action.

To date, 10 organizations have participated in READI training that teaches them how to deliver the curriculum to youth, yielding over 40 trained facilitators throughout Westchester and Putnam Counties and over 500 READI-certified youth. READI-trained youth have expressed desires to not only serve as READI ambassadors but also become program trainers themselves, broadening the program’s influence and empowering local youth to emerge as future leaders.
HELP US GO GREEN!
Contact Ilana Fleischner to receive this newsletter by email only.

Follow Us on Social Media
Like and follow WCA on your favorite social media sites. Keyword: wca4kids

WCA Staff Contact List

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