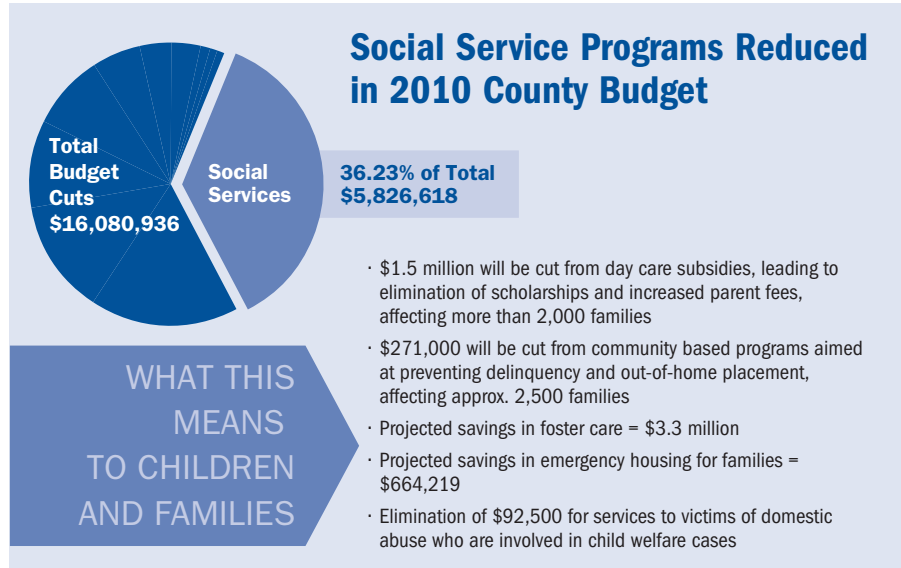


WCA Advocacy Protects Children in Challenging Times

Each year, with our partners in the Campaign for Kids (CFK) and the Child Health Advocacy Network (CHAN), WCA identifies priority concerns to be addressed through Westchester County's annual Budget. In 2009, in addition to our traditional coalition meetings and discussions, we conducted an online survey to help us develop a short list of priorities for the 2010 budget. We mobilized advocates, through emails and electronic advocacy alerts, to attend Budget hearings, meet with legislators and sign our first ever online petition. The petition generated over 600 signatures, which were presented to County Legislators. Despite the dire economic conditions and extreme pressure on the legislators to curtail spending, we achieved remarkable success on our agenda. (See box on page 2.)

Early in 2010, WCA organized a meeting between child advocates and top staff of new County Executive Rob Astorino, to brief him on the state of the County's children, and solicit his support for the continuation of these crucial County initiatives.

Then, on March 9th, the County Executive unveiled a plan to reduce spending in the current budget year by \$16 million, including \$5.8 million from the budget of the Department



All information in this article is as current as possible at press time of April 6, 2010.

of Social Services. This reduction includes about \$4 million in savings due to reduced demand for services, but also includes a \$1.5 million cut in child care subsidies, as well as funding cuts for programs serving vulnerable children and families.

In response to these proposed reductions, WCA has been leading a campaign to educate the public and policy makers about the importance of public investments in children and youth. Through meetings with elected officials, media outreach (see WCA's opinion piece on page 2) and community mobilization, WCA will work throughout the coming months to ensure that children's needs are treated appropriately

within the County budget process.

In a recent appearance before the Board of Legislators' Committee on Community Services, WCA's Executive Director, Cora Greenberg, summarized WCA's position in these words: "Children can't wait for the economy to rebound. The opportunity to nurture a young mind or shape a young life will not return. Our children deserve to be first on the list of our investments and last on the list of cuts." ■

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Do you tweet? WCA is now on Twitter! You can find and follow us at Twitter.com/wca4kids.

Government Should Put Children First

WCA's Community View published in *Journal News* 3/30/10

On March 9th, County Executive Astorino sounded the alarm about looming deficits in the County's current and future budgets. To get a start on righting this picture, he announced a series of savings and cuts, totaling about \$16 million, to be enacted this year. We were dismayed that more than one third of this amount, \$5.8 million, was to be realized through savings and reductions in the Department of Social Services, the part of County government that is charged with safeguarding the wellbeing of vulnerable children and families.

We believe that cutting services to children is the last place any government should start when trimming expenses. Why?

Investments in children have a high rate of return.

Programs such as child care or community based mental health and youth services help prevent the need for higher cost interventions later on.

- Affordable child care allows families to stay gainfully employed and contributing to the economy.
- Community youth services keep youngsters engaged in safe, productive activities and away from gang involvement, drug abuse and other anti-social and self destructive behaviors.
- Community based mental health services strengthen families, and avoid costly out-of-home placements.

Moreover, many County expenditures for children's services are eligible for matching State or Federal dollars, and also allow non-profit contractors to leverage private philanthropic donations.

Children can't wait.

Unlike maintenance on computers or parks, children's development cannot be put on hold. If we miss the opportunity to help a 15 year old juvenile delinquent change his life, we are likely to be dealing very soon with a 16 year old inmate. If we miss the chance to nurture a three-year-old with quality care and early education, that chance is gone forever, along with the opportunity to build the social and pre-literacy skills that are so important for academic success.

Children rely on government help.

More than other age groups, children rely on government services. For example, about a quarter of Westchester's children rely on public insurance for their health care. Nearly 6,000 Westchester children who are reported abused and neglected each year rely on government workers and publicly-funded

services to keep them safe. Thousands more rely on publicly-supported community programs to keep them safe and busy after school, help them with severe emotional problems, or provide tutoring to help them succeed in school.

As revenues shrink and the tax burden on county residents grows, our government must be prudent in asking taxpayers to support only the most essential services with the highest return on investment. Research shows that services to children are among the best investment any government can make, and that they benefit not only the children and their families, but taxpayers and the larger community as well...

WCA secured these Priority Children's Programs in the Adopted 2010 Budget:

Invest in Kids: This County Budget fund, created in response to advocacy by the Campaign for Kids in 1994, supports dozens of community based youth programs serving thousands of children and teens each year.

- Our goal: Maintain funding at the 2009 level of \$2,034,399.
- Result: Invest in Kids was funding at \$100,000 above the 2009 level.

Early Step Forward: This innovative program for children was created in 2006 in response to research and advocacy by WCA. The program brings mental health professionals to work in early childhood centers (currently in Mount Vernon, Yonkers and Port Chester) where they help children, parents and staff understand and deal with emotional and social difficulties.

- Our goal: Expand funding from \$637,000 to \$768,470.
- Result: Program continued at 2009 level.

Independent Living Fund: This fund, established in 2007 in response to advocacy by WCA and the Campaign for Kids, makes grants of up to \$3,000 to each young adult who is leaving foster care and is establishing an independent household, separate from his or her family.

- Our goal: Maintain funding at \$100,000.
- Result: The full amount of \$100,000 was included in the Department of Social Services' budget.

WCA Is Going Green

Would you prefer to receive this newsletter electronically? Not only will it help our planet, but you'll enable us to use more of your donation on child advocacy by reducing mailing and printing costs at WCA, and....you'll get it faster! If you're interested, please use this link to sign up: www.wca4kids.org/contact.php

Putting Children First, continued

As our elected officials look for ways to reduce County expenses, we believe that there are items in our County budget which should be scrutinized for possible savings before making reductions in children's services, such as the \$22 million in overtime throughout the budget. We urge the County Executive to cut services only as a last resort, and, when pursuing reductions in County contracts, to target all contracts – such as with law firms and construction companies—that do business with the County, not just service contracts with non-profit agencies.

When families trim their own budgets, children's needs come first. We urge County leaders to keep the needs of children at the top of their agenda, just as we all do with the needs of our own children.
- Cora Greenberg

You believe in WCA's mission... Have you thought about WCA's future?

Introducing the
**WCA
LEGACY
SOCIETY**

One of WCA's major strengths is its independence. WCA is non-partisan and is not limited by ties to any political groups, organizations or funding sources. Why? Because WCA is supported by generous, caring and concerned citizens like you.

As we prepare to enter our second century of advocacy for Westchester's children, WCA plans to establish the WCA Legacy Society, to recognize supporters who include WCA in their estate planning. Remembering WCA in your will, or establishing a permanent endowment fund, will qualify you for membership.

We need your help to accomplish our vision and maintain the work already begun. Westchester's children have already benefited greatly from the efforts of WCA. Your continued support will help ensure that future generations benefit as well.

Thank you so much for your support. Because of you, WCA can continue to be the leading voice for Westchester's children. For more information about the WCA Legacy Society, please contact Betsy Steward, WCA Director of Development, at 914-946-7676, ext. 303, or bsteward@wca4kids.org. ■

Westchester Children's Association Advocacy Breakfast

Addressing Disparities in Child Health

Reducing disparities in children's health was the topic of WCA's 2010 Advocacy Breakfast and Kathryn W. Davis Child Advocacy Lecture. Dr. Anne Beal, President of the Aetna Foundation, presented data showing that across the country, as well as here in Westchester, African American and Latino children have worse health outcomes than white children. The audience of more than 80 comprised professionals in the fields of health, social services, mental health, law and education, and child advocates.

"Research shows that disparities in health outcomes are due in equal part to factors within the health care system on one hand, and to more general social, economic and behavioral factors on the other," explained Dr. Beal. She emphasized that there is no single "magic bullet" that will erase these disparities, but that a number of approaches have been shown to reduce them. These factors include:



Anne Beal, President of the Aetna Foundation (Left) with WCA's Cora Greenberg and Maris Krasnow.

- **Expanding access to Health Care Coverage**
- **Quality Improvement in health care**
- **Recruiting a more diverse health care workforce**
- **Improving Cultural Competency of health care providers**
- **Creating mechanisms for measuring Disparities and monitoring Quality.**

Dr. Beal's presentation and a video of the event are available on the WCA website: www.wca4kids.org ■

We've Moved!

Westchester Children's Association moved to a new office on March 2nd. Please update your information about us so we can continue to receive your correspondence. Our phone number, fax number and email address are not changing. **Phone:** 914-946-7676, **Fax:** 914-946-7677, **Email:** wca@wca4kids.org.

Our new address:

470 Mamaroneck Avenue
Suite 304
White Plains, NY 10605

SAVE THE DATE

You are cordially invited to attend

Westchester Children's Association 2010 Advocacy Dinner

Honoring **Dr. Eileen Santiago** with the
Edith C. Macy Award for Distinguished Service

Guest MC, **Richard Kind**, star of stage,
screen and television

WHEN: Wednesday, May 12, 2010

WHERE: **Tappan Hill**
Highland Avenue, Tarrytown, NY

FESTIVITIES: 6:00 pm, Cocktail Reception & Silent Auction
7:30 pm, Program & Dinner



WESTCHESTER
CHILDREN'S
ASSOCIATION
works to ensure
that all children are
*healthy, safe and
prepared for
life's challenges.*

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