



Westchester Children's Association
175 Main Street, Suite 702
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WESTCHESTER
CHILDREN'S
ASSOCIATION
works to ensure
that all children are
*healthy, safe and
prepared for
life's challenges.*

Did you know about the potential tax breaks for contributions to WCA?

Did you know that the bailout recently passed by Congress (the one that infused over \$700 billion into the credit markets) also included tax breaks that take effect immediately? The tax-free direct IRA distributions to charities is back for 2008 and 2009!

The bill provides a special opportunity to support WCA for anyone at least 70½ years old. Charities like

WCA are created and sustained by people who want to give their resources to solve problems and enrich their communities. If you're 70½ or older, the Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 allows you to make a tax-free direct rollover gift from your IRA of up to \$100,000 to charitable organizations like WCA. Not only is your rollover income tax free, but it also satisfies your Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) requirement AND also qualifies as a charitable contribution income tax deduction. ■



ChildWatch

The leading voice for Westchester's children since 1914

FALL 2008

We Said "Talk Back!" And They Did!

WCA's most recent advocacy forum was a huge success. 110 guests, all interested in the well-being of children, met to decide on the most important issues that children currently face, and to set advocacy priorities. The event was named *Talk Back! Build a Unified Agenda for Children*, and participants included child advocates from all over the county, as well as teens themselves. Held at the Crowne Plaza on September 24th from 3 to 6:30 p.m., the event also marked WCA's first foray into the world of high-tech discussion. Financial support for the event was provided by the Westchester Community Foundation, Ameriprise Financial, the office of Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, and United Way of Westchester/Putnam. *Talk Back!* was cosponsored by the Campaign for Kids, Child Care Council of Westchester, New Rochelle Village Team, Student Assistance Services, United Way of Westchester/Putnam, Westchester Youth Councils, and the Yonkers Early Childhood Initiative.

BACKGROUND
Six months earlier, on April 24th, WCA presented its publication *Westchester Children By the Numbers*, the comprehensive collection of data related to children that has been in the works at WCA for the last several years. Since April, WCA staff members and volunteers have met with community groups around the County, to help citizens and advocates better understand and use the data, and to hear directly about their top concerns for children and youth. Based on discussions at the meetings, a list of priority items evolved.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?
Guests included teens and adults who represent advocacy and service programs from all over the county, including the Westchester Youth Council, Westchester County and local Youth Boards, and community planning groups



Seated, left to right: Zoe Colon, Julia Anello, Lisa Syron.
Standing: Jennifer Tobar, Jennifer Myers, Dablia Austin.



Facilitator Chris Bui talking votes.

from Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Ossining, White Plains and Yonkers.

HOW IT WORKED
Participants were assigned to work in small groups that included members from varied locations, service sectors and ages. Each of the groups worked with the help of a volunteer facilitator; facilitators included members of the WCA Board and Advisory Council, as well as volunteers from other community agencies.

Working from an initial list of issues and concerns gathered from community discussions, participants developed a comprehensive list of issues affecting children and youth. An open discussion involving everyone ensued,

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in which participants were able to review, refine, and prioritize the descriptions of the issues, as well as add any issues not already on the list. Then, using handheld polling devices, participants voted on the importance of each issue, with results tabulated instantly on the screen so all could see.

Choosing from the top six issues selected through the voting process, everyone voted again, to choose a topic for their table to discuss. At the end of this second round of small group discussions, suggested solutions were collected, and participants voted once again, to determine the best solutions for each issue. The result was, as hoped for, a unified agenda for children’s issues and solutions, as listed in the table at right.

In some cases, the suggested solutions represent new approaches; in others, they validate work already underway.

WCA will prepare and circulate a complete report of the *Talk Back!* event and will also follow up to find out how participants were able to use the results to further their own work in improving children’s lives. The issues identified at *Talk Back!* will be included in the ongoing advocacy work of WCA and its coalition partners in the Campaign for Kids and the Child Health Advocacy Network. ■

Fast Fact

Income Gap Found between Married Couples and Single Parent Families

According to the US Census-American Community Survey (ACS), in 2007 the median family income for families with children under 18 in Westchester County was \$102,492. There was strong evidence of a huge income gap between families headed by married couples and families headed by single parents.

In addition, the median income for families headed by single females experienced a statistically significant decline between 2006 and 2007. In 2006, ACS estimated the median income for such families to be \$34,291. By 2007, that figure declined to \$29,330.

2007 Median Incomes in Westchester by Family Type



WCA delivers “Fast Facts” to your inbox whenever major data sets, such as Population Estimates from the American Community Survey or High School Graduation Rates from the New York State Education Department, are released. You can subscribe to “Fast Facts” by e-mailing Limarie Cabrera at LCabrera@wca4kids.org.

Talk Back! ISSUES & SOLUTIONS DISCUSSED

ISSUE 1 Lack of Meaningful Out-of-School Activities

Solutions Suggested by Participants:

- Youth involvement
- Free bus passes to attend activities
- Additional dependable funding
- Develop programs in non-traditional locations
- Community activism

ISSUE 2 Mental Health Needs of Children and Families

Solutions Suggested by Participants

- Mental health parity-related to insurance coverage
- Early intervention
- More funding
- Engage schools/Create an on-line resource of services
- Anti-stigma/Community Education/Social Marketing

ISSUE 3 Child Poverty and Hunger

Solutions Suggested by Participants

- Identify the gaps
- Inventory resources
- Create a Task Force to own this issue

ISSUE 4 Health Access/Insurance

[No table chose this issue to focus on at the forum]

ISSUE 5 Parenting Skills, Parenting Support

Solutions Suggested by Participants

- Parent education centers
- Parental incentives to participate in education
- Parent-friendly workplace and policies
- Mass marketing: PSAs, Newspapers, Nightly News, Dr.’s offices

ISSUE 6 Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Solutions Suggested by Participants

- Education of all ages and in lots of ways
- Multi-media community-wide strategic and sustained public education campaign
- Multi-pronged approaches
- Get local businesses to be more responsible re: serving, selling, and advertising alcohol

Economy’s Woes Don’t Prevent WCA From Showing Kids We Care

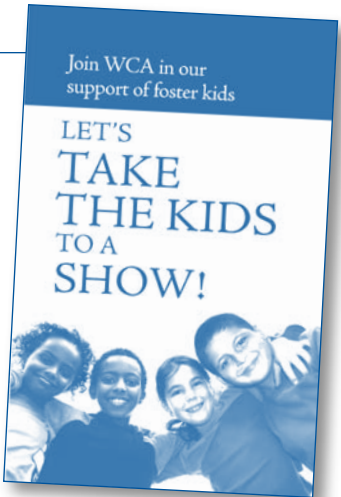
In spite of the current worrisome economic environment, the WCA family has once again rallied to send foster and low-income children to a performance that will broaden their horizons through exposure to the arts. Our fourth annual *Take the Kids to a Show* program will feature **The Soweto Gospel Choir** at the Purchase Performing Arts Center on December 14th at 3 pm. This awe-inspiring ensemble performs in eight different languages, and their earthy rhythms, rich harmonies and sheer charisma have audiences around the world on their feet and cheering!

HERE’S HOW IT WORKS

For every \$100 contributed, WCA will purchase a ticket and make arrangements for a youngster in foster care to attend the performance. The balance of the contribution will help Westchester Children’s Association advocate for the needs of foster kids and other children and youth in our County.

IT’S NOT TOO LATE

Share the Choir’s inspiration with Westchester’s foster and low-income children. Exposure to the arts can make a real difference in a child’s life, and in previous years, youngsters have been thrilled to attend world class performances. With your help, we can show them that someone cares. If you’d like to participate, send a check to the WCA office or buy tickets on-line through WCA’s web site, www.wca4kids.org. ■



New Faces @ WCA

Board Member Julia B. Anello

A resident of Sleepy Hollow, Ms. Anello is a professional figurative painter, who works in

oil and watercolor. Besides exhibiting, she has taught drawing, painting, and art history at several colleges. She also has a business background in real estate development and management. She is a recent past president of the Sleepy Hollow Middle and High School PTSA and an honoree of the Foundation for the Public Schools of Tarrytown. She and her husband have three children.

Board Member Catherine A. Draper

Ms. Draper is an attorney, active in a number of organizations in Pelham. She has been a member and vice-president of the Pelham Board of Education, and trustee and past president of the Pelham Public Library. She is currently a board member of the Pelham Education Foundation, the BEPT Teacher Center, and the Rotary Club of the Pelhams, where she has been a past president. She and her husband live in Pelham; they have three children.

Board Member Vincent P. Gianatasio

Mr. Gianatasio is the president and CEO of Investors Strategy Corporation. A graduate of Boston College’s Carrol School of Management, he has served on the Boards of the American Red Cross, Westchester Chapter, and the Jennifer Turner Cancer Foundation. He is

a member of the Boston College Wall Street Council, past president of the Executives Association, past treasurer and fleet captain of the New York Athletic Association Yacht Club, and past commodore of the Christopher Columbus Yacht Club. Vince lives in Harrison with his wife and two daughters.

Board Member Fredda Kramer

Ms. Kramer, of Dobbs Ferry, has practiced as a personal injury litigation attorney and has been a small business owner; she is now working as a mother and office administrator for her spouse’s architectural practice. She was treasurer and co-president of the PTA at Greenburgh Hebrew Center Nursery School and currently volunteers for CASA, the Girl Scouts, and at Springhurst Elementary School.

Student Intern Ashley Gilstad

Ashley Gilstad is a senior at SUNY Purchase College and is in the process of fulfilling her B.A. in Liberal Studies. She has recently completed an internship at the World Affairs Forum, a non-profit, non-partisan, agency that promotes political awareness and foreign policy. She assisted in research development as well as event coordination. At WCA she will be working with Limarie Cabrera to redesign the agency’s website and assist in online outreach around children’s advocacy issues. After graduation, Ashley hopes to pursue a M.A. in Special Education and utilize her knowledge of children’s issues to help her in her career.