

## A VICTORY FOR CHILD ADVOCATES County Legislators Restore Child & Youth Funding

There was *mostly* great news for Westchester's children and youth on December 23, 2010, when the Board of Legislators (BOL) voted to override County Executive Rob Astorino's earlier vetoes of funding for child care, youth development and early childhood mental health programs. More than \$7 million in services were restored by the BOL, marking the culmination of nearly 9 months of advocacy by WCA and our partners aimed at keeping investments in children and youth at the top of the public agenda.

Last March, Astorino took the first steps to reduce County spending by cutting \$16 million from the approved 2010 budget. This included significant cuts to child care, as well as to services that help young people overcome emotional and behavioral problems. Throughout the year, WCA held rallies, conducted electronic advocacy campaigns, published opinion pieces and generated press coverage in local newspapers in an effort to protest these cuts; we were successful in partially restoring funding to social and behavioral health services. As the Board of Legislators and County Executive challenged each others' authority to control spending, WCA remained steadfastly non-partisan; our advocacy focused solely on demonstrating how spending decisions affect our County's children and youth, and how investing in services to young people benefits the entire community.

In the final approved budget for 2011, the Board of Legislators restored \$4,425,000 for the Child Care Subsidy program. They also restored more than \$600,000 to *Invest in Kids Fund*, which supports dozens of community based youth programs, and \$490,000 to continue *Early*



*A demonstrator says it all at the Westchester Board of Legislators Hearing in Pleasantville, November 2010.*

*Step Forward*, a model program championed by WCA, which provides mental health consultation to child care programs in low-income communities. The 12-to-5 vote was split strictly along party lines, with the Democratic majority continuing its traditional support of child care financial assistance and community-based services. As a result, the parent co-pay for child care subsidies will stay at 20%, instead of rising to 33% as proposed by the Astorino administration, and the process will begin to lower the co-pay to 15%.

It remains unclear whether the Astorino administration will implement the funding allocated by the Board of Legislators. "Over the coming year, advocates in Westchester must focus on building support for public funding of crucial children and youth services, such as quality child care, youth development and mental health," said Cora Greenberg, Executive Director of WCA. She added, "With our partners, we will increase voter registration and participation in communities most affected by these services. Programs that help youngsters to achieve their potential are truly some of the best investments any government can make." ■

**Do you tweet?** WCA is now on Twitter! You can find and follow us at [Twitter.com/wca4kids](https://twitter.com/wca4kids).

## Meet the Leaders | A Conversation Between Two of WCA's Board Members



**Katherine S. Lobach, MD (“Katie”),** is WCA’s immediate past Chair, and served as WCA’s President from 2004-2006. She is a Professor Emerita of Pediatrics of the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and a former Assistant Commissioner for Child and Adolescent Health in the New York City Department of Health. She is a member of the Boards of the Bronx Community Health Network, and of Citizen’s Committee for Children of NYC, Inc. She serves as a member of WCA’s Communication Committee, and joined WCA 10 years ago.



**Joanne Amorosi, MA, MS, CFP** joined the Westchester Children’s Association in 2006. She is a financial planner and investment advisor with MassMutual Financial Group in White Plains. Her practice focuses on retirement, long term care and legacy planning. She is a member of The Greater Hudson Valley Financial Planning Association. Joanne is a retired teacher from the Pelham Public Schools, and she serves as a member of WCA’s Finance and Development Committees.

### **Joanne: Katie, you’ve been involved with WCA longer than I have, and I wonder what drew you to WCA?**

**Katie:** I came to WCA sort of through a side door. Shortly after my retirement, I found myself attending a conference by the Westchester Department of Health (WDOH) where my break-out group included WCA Executive Director, Cora Greenberg. I learned that WCA was collaborating with WDOH to lead a Child Health Coalition for the County whose focus was facilitating enrollment of children in the new federal State Children’s Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). As a pediatrician and Westchester resident, it seemed natural for me to become involved in that group, and one thing led to another. The more I learned about WCA’s activities on behalf of children in the County, the more impressed I became, and when I was later asked to join its Board of Directors, I was pleased and honored to accept. Since that time, I have come to realize that this organization constantly takes the lead in identifying children’s issues, some ongoing, some new, and developing policy and advocacy positions to call for change and improvement. Along with that comes an openness to new ideas and directions.

### **How did your involvement with WCA begin?**

**Joanne:** After my retirement from teaching and the launch of my second career in financial services, I was ready to expand my volunteer focus. Having lived and taught in Pelham, my volunteerism was child centered there as parent, teacher and community member. Former WCA Board member Louise “Lou” Muller would update me over time as to WCA’s accomplishments. Lou suggested that I consider WCA as an opportunity to put my skills and interests to work in service beyond my own backyard. It was and is a perfect match. I can hardly believe it’s been five years since I joined the Board! It’s wonderful to be part of the synergy when educators, pediatricians, social workers, lawyers, and business executives address the issues from the vantage points of their respective disciplines.

Surely the variety of different perspectives and opinions is part of what makes WCA unique, but it is what happens after someone brings an issue to the table that makes it so strong. When its thorough research defines the need, the gaps, that confront our County’s youth, WCA increases awareness of the issue at hand and advocates to create or improve policies or programs that meet the need. Soon to celebrate its 100th

birthday, WCA has sustained its advocacy on behalf of Westchester’s future, its children.

### **What do you see as WCA’s greatest strength?**

**Katie:** Our mission is our strength. By that, I mean that advocating for children will generally start a positive dialogue and elicit a favorable response. Of course, building to a successful conclusion requires other strengths. Supplementing our essential strength is a long history of accomplishment. Ultimately, an organization stands or falls on the quality and commitment of its staff and board, and WCA has been extraordinarily fortunate in that respect. Also I must mention the deep and extensive network of relationships that have been established with leaders and decision-makers in the County, without regard to political affiliation.

As an organization, we’ve been able to accomplish so much. County funding of mental health consultation and services for very young children in child care settings (the “Early Step Forward” program) was break-through recognition that early attention and intervention for such problems will prevent more serious issues later in childhood and adolescence. This legislation came about as the culmination of a series of efforts by WCA to educate decision makers and the public, including a seminal lecture (by Jack Shonkoff) on the effects of adverse experiences and stress on early brain development; work by the WCA Research and Advocacy Committee, led by Millie Kibrick, to create a pamphlet on mental health in young children that was widely distributed; outreach to media, etc.

Less to be categorized as a direct “victory for children,” but still extremely important in an indirect way for the well-being of children is the development and production of “Westchester Children by the Numbers”. Its continuing availability, updating and distribution means that awareness of the status of the County’s children will be kept at a high level.

### **What has WCA accomplished during your tenure that you feel is the most important victory for children?**

**Joanne:** I consider WCA’s research and advocacy for early therapeutic intervention of mental health services for young children to be one of its greatest accomplishments—one that will continue to impact so many children otherwise at risk. WCA’s publication of *No Time to Lose, Rethinking Mental*

*The Conversation is continued on page 4*

**WCA welcomed three new members to the Advisory Council in January, 2011. We look forward to their input and support in fulfilling our mission.**



**Tamar Bauer, JD**

Tamar Bauer, a Tarrytown resident, is the Chief Policy and Government Affairs Officer for the Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) National Service Office, where she is developing and implementing a strategy to secure government support for NFP's home visitation services. Ms. Bauer is an attorney whose background includes five years of health care law and sixteen years of

maternal and child health policy, research and advocacy. Her focus is on the interaction between evidence and policy, and how to most effectively use evidence to influence policy and achieve social change. Ms. Bauer holds a BA in History and Music from Wesleyan University, and a JD from Rutgers University School of Law.



**Melvin Burruss, Esq.**

Mr. Burruss, a Peekskill resident, is the President of African American Men of Westchester (AAMW), a civic organization working to address issues of concern to the African American population of the County. AAMW sponsors a number of programs and events throughout the year, many directly concerned with young people, and WCA has co-sponsored several of these

events in the past few years. Mr. Burruss is the Corporate Attorney with the New York State Department of Insurance. In addition to his service with AAMW, Mr. Burruss is a Member of the Board of Peekskill Industrial Development Agency, the President of Omega Psi Phi, and Producer of the Neighborhood Law Center, a weekly cable access television program on legal issues.



**Kathleen Halas**

Kathleen Halas, a White Plains resident, has served as Executive Director of the Child Care Council of Westchester, Inc. (CCCW) since February of 2003. CCCW is part of a national network of child care resource and referral agencies that promotes high-quality and affordable early care and education. She holds an undergraduate degree in political science, a

master's degree in counseling psychology and an MBA with a concentration in organizational behavior and development. Ms. Halas co-chairs the Westchester Task Force on Child Abuse and Neglect and the Early Childhood Planning Group. She also serves on the board of the Westchester Women's Agenda and recently joined the board of the New York State Early Care and Learning Council, serving as Vice President/President-Elect. ■



**Pamela Willrodt**

*Graduate Intern*

We welcome Pamela Willrodt, graduate intern through the Health Advocacy program at Sarah Lawrence College.

Before coming to Westchester, Pam earned her BA from California Lutheran University, worked as a Project Manager at a fortune 100 biotechnology company; as a massage therapist; as an anatomy and physiology teacher; as a SCUBA instructor, and joined the Peace Corps to serve as a Health Education Volunteer in Guyana.

Last year, Pam made the journey from Arizona to Westchester with her two cats in her Chevy pick-up and attached trailer. She wanted to work with children's advocacy issues and found WCA through an internet search. She currently works with us on a variety of policy issues, including health care for foster children and disconnected youth, and assists with data analysis and communications, thereby fulfilling her graduate fieldwork requirements.

**Save the Date!**



**May 18, 2011  
Celebrate the  
Power of Advocacy!**

**WCA's Annual  
Advocacy Dinner**

**6:00 pm - 9:00 pm, Tappan Hill Mansion**  
with Catering by Abigail Kirsch

**Speaker:**

**Bill Bentley**

**President & CEO,**

**Voices for America's Children**

Join us for cocktails, a silent auction, a delicious dinner by Abigail Kirsch, and the company of others who care deeply about children!



**Westchester  
Children's  
Association**

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



Westchester Children's Association  
470 Mamaroneck Avenue, Suite 304  
White Plains, NY 10605

**Non-Profit Org.  
US Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 249  
White Plains, NY**



Join the  
**WCA Legacy Society**  
and make a difference  
in the lives that follow!

*You've taken care of your retirement and your children.  
Now, what about Westchester's children?*

Even a small percentage of your estate can make a difference to Westchester's children. Become a member of WCA's Legacy Society by letting us know your plans. For more information about the WCA Legacy Society, please contact Betsy Steward, WCA's Director of Development, at (914) 946-7676, ext. 303, or [bsteward@wca4kids.org](mailto:bsteward@wca4kids.org)

Thank you so much for your support. Because of you, WCA can continue to be the leading voice for Westchester's children! ■

*Meet the Leaders, continued from page 2.*

Health Services for Westchester's Children led to legislative support for evidence-based programs which address the mental health needs of very young children.

**As we go forward, what do you hope WCA can accomplish in the next 10 years?**

**Katie:** First, ensure that the County takes full advantage of all federal and state initiatives that will benefit children and improve their well-being. Second, provide steady advocacy to maintain and improve current child-serving programs – health, education and welfare. Finally, target elimination of childhood poverty in the county as a long term goal, identifying a series of steps and a time-line to help it happen.

**How about you, what do you hope WCA can accomplish in the next 10 years?**

**Joanne:** I hope that one of our more recent initiatives, the Nurse-Family Partnership, will be deeply entrenched here in Westchester and become an example for geographic regions beyond our County. ■

*Note: This article was edited for print. To read the full text, please refer to [www.wca4kids.org/downloads/Conversation.pdf](http://www.wca4kids.org/downloads/Conversation.pdf)*

**WCA LEADERSHIP**

**BOARD OFFICERS**

Maris H. Krasnow, EdD, *Chair*  
Janet Gutterman, Esq., *President*  
Adrienne Weiss-Harrison, MD,  
*First Vice President*  
Carey E. Gross, MD, *Vice President*  
Ann Umemoto, *Vice President*  
Catherine A. Draper, *Secretary*  
Thomas Kyle, *Treasurer*

**BOARD MEMBERS**

Joanne Amorosi, CFP  
Julia B. Anello  
Ellie B. Becker, LMSW, MA  
Sheryl Dicker, JD  
Myrna Forney  
Vincent P. Gianatasio  
Douglas Gould  
Jody Greenbaum  
Lisa Katz, LMSW  
Fredda Kramer  
Christopher A. Lee  
Jay Lerner, CPA  
Katherine S. Lobach, MD  
Patrick Maloney, MD

Elizabeth Mark  
Dorne E. Massiah  
Kenneth A. Schiffer, MD  
Deborah E. Seidenberg  
Linda F. Seligson

**HONORARY BOARD**

Louis W. Bookheim, Jr.  
Mrs. Shelby Cullom Davis  
Hon. Doris Friedman  
Louise De Vel Muller  
Hon. Ogden R. Reid, Esq.

Cora Greenberg, *Executive Director*

**WCA ADVISORY  
COUNCIL**

Elizabeth Alderman, MD  
Amy Ansehl, RN, MSW, FNPC  
Margery Arsham  
Tamar Bauer, JD  
Karen Blumenthal

Lyndall Boal  
Delores Brathwaite, JD  
Melvin Burruss  
Deborah Campbell, MD  
Georganne Chapin, JD  
Rebecca Lowell Edwards  
Rachel Grob, PhD  
Kathleen Halas

Lottie Harris  
Jackie Hilly  
Richard Hobish, Esq.  
Barbara J. Holland  
Cheryl Hunter-Grant, LMSW  
Regina M. Kelly  
Ursula G. LaMotte  
Danielle Laraque, MD

Penny Liberatos, PhD  
Andy Pelosi  
Libbie Naman Poppick  
Marisol Rivera Thurman  
Eileen Santiago, EdD  
S. Kenneth Schonberg, MD  
Sandra Singh  
Lynn Sobel

Evelyn M. Stock  
Zoila Tazi  
Frederick L. Wang, MD  
Kate Weingarten  
Sheree Wen, PhD  
Saul Yanofsky, EdD  
Marlene A. Zarfes, Esq.