



WCA Organizes
Take Action for Kids
Voter Registration Campaign

In response to an inspiring address at WCA's Annual Meeting by Michael Petit, founder and president of Every Child Matters, WCA has launched a local non-partisan **voter registration campaign**. In order to build a strong and vocal electoral constituency whose primary issue is children, the campaign will target low-income parents and workers in the agencies that serve them.

WCA will provide **training and a voter registration "tool kit"** to support local agency efforts to register staff members and clients. The toolkit includes the do's and don'ts of registration, a pamphlet explaining the importance of voting, and stickers saying, "**Got Kids? Vote!**"

During July, WCA presented workshops to childcare agencies,

September 27th:
Your Opportunity to Take Action for Kids!

More than 300 people from all walks of life are expected to attend WCA's *Take Action for Kids!*, a conference to encourage and empower people to become advocates for children. The conference, sponsored by WCA in celebration of its 90th anniversary, will take place on Monday, September 27th at the Crowne Plaza in White Plains.

Hugh B. Price, Past President and CEO of The Urban League, will deliver the keynote address, recommending ways for communities to support quality education for all children. Next on the morning program is a panel, "*Taking Action for Children's Well-Being*," moderated by Kate Stone Lombardi of the New York Times, featuring presentations on Preventing Injury by Danielle Laraque, MD of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Investing in Child Care by Ted Childs of IBM, and Promoting Fitness by Stephen Virgilio, PhD of Adelphi University.

The morning program will conclude with a choice of more than a dozen action-oriented workshops on topics including violence prevention, teen drinking, promoting good nutrition and fitness.

Dr. Barry Zuckerman of Boston University Hospital will be the luncheon speaker. He has been responsible for many innovative approaches to child and family wellness, including *Reach Out and Read*. WCA will issue a report on the conference and its recommendations.

Registration for the full conference including breakfast and lunch is \$50. A special rate of \$25 is available for community volunteers, grassroots agencies and students. To request a registration brochure, contact WCA at 946-7676.

Conference co-sponsors include the American Academy of Pediatrics, District II, Chapter 3, Campaign for Kids, the Louis R. Cappelli Foundation, Child Care Council of Westchester, Hudson Health Plan, March of Dimes, United Way of Westchester/Putnam, Urban League of Westchester, Westchester Community Foundation, Westchester County Dept. of Social Services, Westchester County District Attorney, Westchester County Executive's Office, Westchester County Youth Bureau... (list in formation)



Meet the WCA Summer Interns

“ I never knew the importance of child advocacy and I’m glad that our work at the WCA will really help Westchester’s kids,” says Andy Trainor, one of two summer interns from Cornell University working at WCA this summer.

“Working at the WCA has been a meaningful summer experience for me.”

Andy, who lives in Briarcliff, is a senior in the College of Arts and Sciences, majoring in Government. He plans to attend law school after he graduates next year. Zachary Tanenbaum of Larchmont, a junior majoring in Policy Analysis and Management, plans to spend the spring semester studying public policy in Washington, D.C. through the Cornell Washington Program.

The interns have been working on a number of projects including a questionnaire for state legislative candidates, WCA’s voter registration project, and the “Making Ends Meet” brochure, an information tool about services and programs available to help working families stretch their incomes.

In the office, the interns created the first edition of the “WCA Board Yearbook,” and scanned and catalogued historical WCA brochures and pictures dating back to the early 1900’s, creating a valuable resource as WCA marks our 90th anniversary.

WCA’s summer interns are funded by the Blumenthal Cornell Summer Internship Program, generously provided by Dr. David and Karen Blumenthal.

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Campaign for Kids, members of the and the Child Health Task Force, and members of the Mt. Vernon "Communities That Care" Coalition. In conjunction with the Westchester Youth Council, WCA organized direct voter registration drives at both the Cross County and Jefferson Valley malls.

For more information about getting your organization involved, call WCA at (914) 946-7676.

Conversations About Children: Communities Speak Out

This summer, WCA held a series of **Conversations About Children** with community representatives around the county in an effort to identify and strengthen efforts on behalf of children. Through these discussions, WCA hoped to learn more about which groups are helping children, what issues they’re working on, and what strategies have been successful. Findings from these discussions will be presented at the Take Action for Kids! conference in September.

Conversations have taken place with members of the Mount Kisco Chamber of Commerce, Pelham's Parents and Community Together (PACT), New Rochelle's Village Team, and the Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) of Yonkers. In addition, WCA interviewed leaders of African-American Men of Westchester, an organization whose members come from several communities, and Westchester Community Opportunity Program's Head Start Policy Council, a countywide group of parents and community members that sets direction for Head Start programs.

These organizations represent a wide range of perspectives and approaches to addressing the needs of children and youth. The final report on **Conversations about Children** will be issued at WCA's September Conference and posted on our website. Through the Conference and other efforts, WCA plans to create a network through which community groups will keep in touch with each other to share their concerns and experiences.

Celebrate the “Year of the Child!” Support WCA!

My contribution of \$ _____ is enclosed.

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All contributions to WCA are tax deductible. Mail to WCA, 175 Main Street, White Plains, NY 10601



County Legislator George Latimer (left) and WCA Board Member Lou Muller (right) share their views with Michael Petit at WCA's Annual Meeting

Michael Petit Urges Advocates to Mobilize, Register and Vote

Michael Petit, founder and Executive Director of Every Child Matters, a national advocacy organization, delivered an inspiring challenge to Westchester child advocates at WCA's 90th Annual Meeting on May 20, 2004.

"In order for children's needs to get the attention they deserve, we need many more parents, human service workers and others who care about children to be engaged in the electoral process," he said. According to Mr. Petit, there are at least 5 million human service workers and an equal number of single, low-income parents nationwide who are not registered to vote. Following his formal presentation, Mr. Petit met with service providers and activists to discuss how to engage and energize a local "constituency for children."



Barbara Holland (left) of White Plains and WCA's Exec. Director Cora Greenberg enjoy the WCA Annual Meeting

Making Ends Meet:

Helping Working Families Stretch Their Dollars

With housing costs in Westchester being among the highest in the nation, many families, even those with two working parents, struggle to pay their bills, unaware that there may be financial assistance available to help them.

WCA has recently published *Making Ends Meet*, a guide with information on how families can save money and stretch their limited incomes. The guide, available in English and Spanish, contains a chart to help families identify types of assistance for which they may be eligible, as well as information about how families can get help with meeting the costs of housing, childcare, food and taxes.

Making Ends Meet was funded by a special grant from the Louis R. Cappelli Foundation.



WCA Poses Questions to State Candidates

This November, Westchester residents will elect legislators to represent them in seven Assembly and four State Senate districts.

In collaboration with Campaign for Kids, WCA has developed a questionnaire that enables candidates to show the public where they stand on issues such as youth programs, education, gun violence prevention, childcare, health and mental health, that can dramatically affect the children and families of Westchester.

Candidates also have an opportunity to explain how they have served the interests of Westchester's children in the recent past.

Before Election Day, the text of the questionnaire and the candidates' responses will be posted on the WCA website. Copies will also be sent to local libraries, member organizations of the Campaign for Kids, and the media.

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Child Health Update
**WCA Mobilizes Against
Closing of County Dental Clinics.**

On May 17th, the Westchester County Department of Health announced the closing of its pediatric dental clinics in White Plains and Yonkers, prompting a swift and strong response by WCA and the Oral Health Committee of the Child Health Task Force, which is led by WCA.

In explaining the decision to close the clinics, Health Commissioner Dr. Joshua Lipsman cited declining usage (about 600 children last year, down from 5,000 in 1995). The Department of Health planned to refer its pediatric dental patients to neighborhood health centers in Mt. Vernon, Yonkers and Greenburgh.

Based on its work over the past two years, the Oral Health Committee was already concerned about inadequate dental care capacity throughout the county. Adding 600 children would severely burden an over-stressed system. Similarly, while most children cared for in County clinics are eligible for publicly-subsidized dental insurance through Child Health Plus

A or B, many currently insured children are not getting adequate care. Parents' lack of understanding of the importance of preventive care, inconvenient appointment times and lack of transportation are some of the barriers to good dental care for poor children.

In response to the Committee's concerns, Dr. Lipsman indicated that the County would monitor the status of referrals and would continue to provide school-based dental services such as sealant programs, screenings and oral health education

On June 8th, the Oral Health Committee shared its concerns with the Health Committee of the County Board of Legislators, chaired by Legislator Andrea Stewart-Cousins.. Committee members explained potential problems associated with moving patients to the neighborhood health centers, such as higher costs and lack of dental hygienists on staff.

WCA will continue to monitor the closings' effect on children and families, and to advocate for a comprehensive approach to oral health that includes education, policy and program improvements.