

# Astorino needs to walk the walk regarding our kids

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Cora Greenberg, left, and Kathleen Halas speak with The Journal News Editorial Board. / File photo/The Journal News

Written by  
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Toward the end of his State of the County address last week, County Executive Rob Astorino spoke movingly about his three children, evoking the hopes that all parents have for their own children and saying that, although "budgets and politics mean nothing to them ... the decisions made by the adults around them, and around all the other kids in Westchester, do affect them." We couldn't agree more.

That is why we are so disappointed that this administration has continued to pursue policies that unfairly and unwisely seek to balance the county's budget on the backs of vulnerable children and youth, undermining the very future that they purport to safeguard.

Elsewhere in his speech, in discussing essential qualities needed to improve the human condition, Astorino cited "drive, curiosity, perseverance, discipline (and) passion." Again, we agree, and we ask, where are these qualities nurtured so that the next generation of Westchester residents can contribute the "intellectual capital" touted by the administration as one of our county's greatest assets?

Research clearly shows that high-quality early care and education is unquestionably the most cost-effective expenditure we can make to ensure that children reach their potential and become productive, creative and contributing adults. Similarly, programs that provide structured, supervised out-of-school-time activities for older children yield savings to the public in the form of in lower drop-out rates, and lower rates of juvenile crime. Yet the county executive has refused to spend the full funding for child care and youth development programs included in the legally adopted county budget — which also includes an historic 2.2 percent decrease in the county's tax levy.

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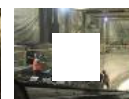
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A well turned phrase that tugs on the heartstrings can't erase the actual impact of the decisions taken by this administration when it comes to kids. Short-term savings to taxpayers can and will be quickly wiped out when schools need to provide more remediation, police need to arrest and jail more youth, and unprepared young adults wind up unemployed.

We urge our county government to take seriously the need to make decisions that protect and nurture all Westchester's children just as we do for our own children, for all these children are indeed ours.

By Cora Greenberg and Kathleen Halas

**Greenberg is executive direct of Westchester Children's Association; Halas is executive director of Child Care Council of Westchester.**

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