

County Elections Spur WCA to Educate, Engage Voters

The upcoming County elections provide a unique opportunity for the Westchester Children's Association to elevate the status of children's issues on the County's agenda. To take advantage of this opportunity, the WCA is offering local human service agencies a variety of tools to help engage staff members and program clients in the electoral process. These include an on-site PowerPoint presentation highlighting how and why to engage voters, brochures outlining how County policy-makers impact local residents and non-profit agencies, and paper "campaign buttons" urging parents and child advocates to participate in this November's election. The brochure and other materials will be available on our website in August.

The objective of these efforts is to encourage voters to participate in the elections, particularly those most directly affected by government policies who are chronically under-represented in the electorate. Past elections have shown that only a small percentage of eligible citizens vote at the county level, so even a modest increase in voter turnout from this community could make a significant difference.

WCA will raise public awareness of children's issues, and publicize candidates' positions on these issues. Questionnaires have been sent to all candidates for County office, asking their positions on the priority children's issues identified by WCA and its coalition partners in the Campaign for Kids and the Child Health Task Force (see sidebar). The candidates' responses will be posted on the WCA Web site (www.wca4kids.org) before the election, so that voters interested in children's issues will be able to make informed and confident decisions this Election Day.

Early in the fall, WCA will host its annual Child Watch, an event that brings political candidates, policy makers and community leaders face to face with human service programs that rely on County funding and with the children, youth and families they serve. We will also use the occasion to discuss the results of our candidate survey on children's issues. ■



2005

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION ON PRIORITY CHILDREN'S ISSUES

- Add \$ 250,000 to the County's Invest-in-Kids Fund to support new community programs aimed at young children and families.
- Decrease family co-pay for child care subsidies from 25% to 20% of family income above the poverty level (estimated cost of \$2 million).
- Allocate \$250,000 to increase non-traditional mental health supports for young children (0-6) with emotional, social and behavioral problems.

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Summer Interns Expand WCA Staff

Arielle Bensimon and Riti Singh, juniors at Cornell University, have joined WCA as summer interns. Both are participating in the Blumenthal Internship Program, created by Karen and David Blumenthal, which places Cornell undergraduates at local human service organizations. Arielle, from Stamford, Connecticut, is majoring in economics, English, and government in the College of Arts and Sciences. Riti lives in Pleasantville and majors in Industrial and Labor Relations. The interns will be working on a variety of projects, including WCA's voter engagement project, the children's issue survey of County candidates, and research for the Westchester Children's Data Book. ■



WCA interns Riti Singh (l) and Arielle Bensimon create voter education materials for the upcoming County elections

WCA Founder's Bequest Provides a Living Legacy: Edith Carpenter Macy (1870-1925)

In 1913, Edith Carpenter Macy was an active member of the Westchester County Children's Committee, part of a statewide charity dedicated to helping the poor. That year, when her husband, V. Everit Macy, became the County's first Commissioner of the Poor, he asked the Children's Committee to collect information about the children who were in the care of the County and to recommend improvements in their treatment. After some study, the Committee recommended that special workers be hired and trained to meet the children's needs and, since the County had no budget to cover new staff, the Committee raised the money to pay them. The next year, the Children's Committee broke off from the statewide group and became the Westchester County Children's Association, shortened to the Westchester Children's Association in 1923.

Helping Westchester's children was only one aspect of Mrs. Macy's

philanthropic work. In 1900, as a young mother just shy of her 30th birthday, she heard about a group of women in New York City who were providing food and care for the children of poor parents on the Lower East Side. The program, a precursor of the Henry Street Settlement, was based on the philosophy that a community should help provide for children what their parents could not. Mrs. Macy responded by diverting fresh milk from the 40-odd cows lodged at her family's estate, Chilmark, situated near Ossining, to the children on Henry Street. Eventually, milk from Chilmark would help to feed up to 200 children.

During the next two decades, Mrs. Macy became known for her philanthropic and organizational leadership. In addition to founding WCA, she supported voting rights for women because she was convinced that women had more to offer the world than society would allow. Her belief in the untapped potential of

girls drew her to the nascent Girl Scout movement in which she provided leadership for many years.

Shortly after Mrs. Macy's untimely death from a heart attack at the age of 54, her husband created the Edith Macy Memorial Fund to honor her remarkable philanthropic and activist career. Ever since, an annual gift from this Fund – this year about \$6,500 – arrives at our White Plains office to help us fulfill the mission of helping children that she championed throughout her life.

Edith Macy's legacy of compassion and advocacy on behalf of Westchester's children has flourished for nearly a century through the impact of planned giving. By making a bequest in one's will or other planned gift, a donor can ensure that his or her commitment to the well-being of children will continue beyond his or her own lifetime. ■

To learn more about making a bequest or other planned gift to WCA, please contact our office at 914-946-7676.

Children's Mental Health Focus of WCA Annual Meeting

On May 13, 2005, the nearly-100 people attending WCA's Annual Meeting had the pleasure of hearing Dr. Peter S. Jensen, Director National Center for the Advancement of Children's Mental Health, Columbia University. Citing several recent studies, Dr. Jensen dispelled the myth that bad parenting is the cause of children's problems by emphasizing that a child's healthy development depends both on resources in the environment and supports in the family. Programs that target children early in childhood by providing a system of care, effective therapeutic interventions, and specific activities for the parents provide the best approach.

Interestingly, Dr. Jensen referenced several studies, particularly those of Leonard Bickman, that compared the impact of services which were delivered to children as part of a "system of care"— including case management, in-home treatment and other nontraditional services – versus similar services delivered in a more traditional, less systematized manner. The studies found that, while there were no discernably different clinical outcomes between the two groups of children – e.g., symptoms, life satisfaction, or positive functioning – the systems of care improved communication and coordination between service providers, thereby increasing the likelihood that children received the services they need.

Following Dr. Jensen's insightful presentation, Myra Alfreds, Director of Children's Services, Westchester County Department of Community Mental Health and Dr. Eileen Santiago, Principal of the Thomas Edison



▲ *Dr. Peter Jensen discusses latest research on children's mental health at WCA Annual Meeting.*



Dr. Eileen Santiago describes innovative programs at the Thomas Edison School in Port Chester. ▶

School, Port Chester, described the programs that have been put in place in the County and in an elementary school to support children and families with emotional, social and behavioral problems. Ms. Alfreds described the many successful efforts to coordinate services to high-needs children and families across and between systems. These include Community Networks that ensure communication and coordination between service systems, and Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), a school-based program that helps create a positive behavioral climate for all students. Eileen Santiago explained how her school has redefined competency by addressing the health, social, ethical, emotional and cognitive development of all students. Programs are provided after school and in the evenings for children and parents including ESL classes, parenting support groups, therapeutic counseling, and an on-site health center. ■

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



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New Members Bring Varied Experience to WCA Board of Directors

On May 13, 2005, the Westchester Children's Association elected five new members to its Board of Directors: These members bring to the board varied professional and personal experiences, but have one important similarity – a desire to improve the lives of Westchester County's children.

Brent Benkovic, a resident of Manhattan, is currently VP of Marketing and Investor Relations at Sandler Capital Management in New York City. **Thomas Kyle**, of Nanuet, is a consultant in Technology and Knowledge Management, and is the Director of Administration and

Compliance Officer of Ardsley Partners. **Mary Loeffler** lives in Tarrytown, serves as the Manager of Human Resources at NYU, Division of the Libraries, and has previous volunteer experience with WCA. **Kevin Muller** is the Manager of Internet Sites/Business Development, TIAA-CREF in New York City and lives in Yorktown Heights. **Kenneth Schonberg, M.D.**, a resident of Millwood, is a Professor of Pediatrics at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine. WCA is delighted to welcome these new Board members and is strengthened by their commitment, experience and expertise. ■

Cora Greenberg Commended for a Decade of Leadership

To celebrate her 10th anniversary as Executive Director of WCA, Cora Greenberg was feted by the Board of Directors at its regular meeting on June 21. The celebration was planned as a surprise for Ms. Greenberg and began when, at the conclusion of regular business, Board President Katherine Lobach asked long-time member Louise Muller to introduce a final resolution. This resolution, which passed unanimously, states in part, "For her first decade of service, WCA Executive Director Cora Greenberg shall be commended for her exemplary performance as CEO, thanked for her tireless commitment to the well being of children, and celebrated for her outstanding leadership in Westchester County." To recognize her leadership and service to WCA, Ms. Greenberg was presented with gifts and a special dessert. Ms. Greenberg was left speechless by this unexpected ceremony, but later said, "I am incredibly lucky to have been able to work with such a dedicated group of staff and Board members all these years." ■



Cora Greenberg, Executive Director of WCA