WCA is the lead organization of Campaign for Kids (CFK), a coalition of more than 50 community-based youth-serving organizations that share ideas and leverage their collective power to support positive youth development in Westchester County. CFK advocates for funding and policies to support youth programming through the County budget, such as the Invest in Kids funding stream. Youth programs are imperative for children under the age of 21 in Westchester, especially for at-risk youth in urban communities. Youth programs provide support, guidance, education, and activities in a safe and positive environment. These programs successfully help a child’s development and transition into adulthood.*

In 1994, Westchester County created Invest In Kids to provide funding for youth programs. Programs receive funding over a three-year cycle. This means that programs requesting funding must reapply every three years. After many problems arose during the last funding cycle, the County Executive’s office asked WCA to help improve the RFP process, and in the summer of 2016, a working group with input from CFK members began examining the funding priorities, application design, scoring mechanism and review process. On June 30 2017, Westchester County released the new, Invest in Kids (IIK) application for youth programs.

The County is almost three weeks late in announcing the grantees of the Invest in Kids funding. We are disappointed that, in terms of the timeliness of decisions, the many months of work by County staff, non-profits and advocates have produced a result that falls far short of our expectations. There is now less than one month remaining before new programs must gear up for a January 1 start, or existing programs must wind down, which may mean dismissing staff and alerting families.

WCA plans to further analyze and review the application pool vs. funded programs to discover programmatic trends and other patterns, such as geographic coverage, to create a more complete portrait of County-funded youth development in Westchester.

* http://afterschoolalliance.org//documents/What_Does_the_Research_Say_About_Afterschool.pdf
What Did Your Newly Elected Official Promise to do for Kids?

Just before the election in November, we released the results of our 2017 Candidate Survey. The survey consisted of one very important question:

What are your priorities regarding children and teens in Westchester, and what specific county policies, programs or investments will you support, if elected, to address these priorities?

Since the Election results, we took what the winners said in response to this question and performed an analysis to find out what the most common words mentioned were, and here they are (the larger the word size, the more times it was said).

The GPS4Kids initiative is preparing to launch a report on progress to date, including baseline data for our phase one focus: keeping children in positive learning environments. In the fall, the Data & Measurement workgroup met periodically to iron out our phase one indicators, including accepted definitions, data sources and more. The report, set to be released in March 2018, will include the baseline numbers and definitions for the following:

- Chronic absence
- Suspensions
- Pre-K enrollment
- Disconnected youth
- Graduation rates
- Number of school counselors

We are also working with stakeholders to host listening sessions to offer community commentary on existing bright spots throughout Westchester County, and potential areas requiring further attention. Initial data findings, interviews and focus group feedback will be presented in March at the launch of the GPS4Kids baseline report.

In holding true to our collective impact model, we are always seeking ways to improve “Continuous Communication”. We will be shifting to an electronic version of our newsletter On the Road with GPS. To receive this newsletter signup at: http://bit.ly/WCAfriend. Additionally, this month you’ll hear WCA’s first ever podcast series Ground Truthing. Subscribers to On the Road with GPS will receive all podcast episodes and other updates before the content goes out to the public.
The Hard Work Begins... Raising the Age Successfully!

Last Spring, we celebrated passage of legislation to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 in New York. Now the hard work begins. Done correctly, this law will improve the lives of thousands of youth, increase public safety, and create a more fair and just judicial system that offers a second chance to our youth.

WCA convened a second round-table discussion in November with Westchester stakeholders to discuss preparation, best practice strategies and required resources. Successful implementation requires the state and all of the counties have sufficient resources, including funding for community-based services and alternatives to incarceration, training of judges, lawyers and all stakeholders, data-tracking systems to measure progress and success, and service-rich facilities and re-entry services.

We must remain diligent to ensure the necessary funding is allocated in the 2018 state budget and the mechanisms are in place for counties to access these funds. The work is far from over, your continued support of our RTA advocacy is essential.

Ilana Fleischner

Ilana Fleischner joined WCA in September 2017 as the Development and Administrative Assistant. In 2005, Ilana graduated from the State University of New York at Oneonta with her Bachelor of Science in Child and Family Studies. After graduating college, Ilana worked for the Family Program in Valhalla, NY providing support to social workers and psychologists. Ilana also worked as the General Assistant for USTA Eastern where she was heavily involved in their marketing, event planning and fundraising. In addition, Ilana was a competitive gymnast growing up and was the head coach of a gymnastics team in Scarsdale where she was able to work with children of all ages, while passing along her knowledge and love for the sport. Ilana currently resides in White Plains.

Rebekah Raz

Rebekah Raz joined WCA in December 2017 as the Director of Development. Rebekah brings with her over 17 years of experience in the nonprofit sector, working in fundraising, community building, and relations and leadership development. Most recently, Rebekah was the Vice President at the United Jewish Federation of Stamford, New Canaan and Darien. While there, she created two of its most successful programs, “Chapter Two”, a program designed to engage retired women by connecting them to the mission of the organization and “3Square”, a program that feeds hungry children at local schools on a weekly basis. Rebekah received her BA from Ithaca College and her Master’s Degree from the University of Connecticut. She is thrilled to be bringing her knowledge of fundraising and her passion for connecting philanthropists to causes that make an impact on the world around us to this new position. Rebekah lives in Stamford, CT with her husband, Liran, and her three boisterous children, Annabelle, Liam and Shailee.

Children by the Numbers Blog

Now with Interactive Data!

How many children of color does your school district suspend? Where does your county legislator stand when it comes to kids? Our TWO new interactive dashboards will tell you that and more. Take data into your own hands: http://bit.ly/InteractiveData.
HELP US GO GREEN!

Contact Denise Killeen to receive this newsletter by email only.

Stay up to date on critical issues affecting Westchester’s children and youth!

Sign Up for WCA Email Updates

Get the latest news, action alerts, blog posts, and even this newsletter by email. Subscribe at http://bit.ly/WCAfriend or email wca@wca4kids.org.

Follow Us on Social Media

Like and follow WCA on your favorite social media sites. Keyword: wca4kids

WCA Staff Contact List

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