On July 18, WCA held its fourth Annual Summer Celebration marking New York State’s recent passage of legislation raising the age of criminal responsibility to 18. As in previous years, this celebration not only highlighted a major victory for kids, but also served as a thank you to our partners who helped make that victory happen. Elected officials, clergy members, youth serving organizations, teen advocates, members of the WCA Board and others who had helped advocate for the law’s passage, joined in the fun.

Passage of the new Raise the Age law was certainly a victory, but there is still a long road ahead to make sure the law is implemented correctly. To that end, just prior to the celebration, a number of county stakeholders – including leaders of community-based organizations, elected officials, judges, clergy, and police officers – joined WCA Deputy Director Allison Lake for an initial round-table discussion regarding the challenges, concerns and opportunities of implementing the law in Westchester.

The highlight of the afternoon was a reading from author Jim St. Germain from his newly released memoir, “A Stone of Hope.” Jim was a young man of 15 when he found himself in trouble with the law, just months away from his 16th birthday, which was lucky for him. Had he been a few months older, he would not have received the rehabilitative services that he did. He is now a college-graduate, father, author and chairperson of a nonprofit organization called Preparing Leaders of Tomorrow. Jim is a testament to what our youth can become when they receive age-appropriate consequences and services after making a mistake in their early years of life.

WCA Executive Director, Cora Greenberg, and Jim St. Germain raffled off four signed copies of “A Stone of Hope” to some lucky guests and the special evening had refreshments donated by Westchester Companies for Kids (WC4K) member, Anthony’s Coal-Fired Pizza of White Plains.

A Very Successful 4th Annual Summer Celebration

Westchester County Candidate Survey Results!

Election Day is fast approaching as the Fall season continues to kick into gear. Are you ready to vote for the youth of Westchester? Each election, WCA’s Vote for Kids initiative surveys candidates on where they stand regarding issues affecting Westchester’s children and youth. It allows voters to make an informed choice on Election Day. Instead of asking candidates multiple questions like we have done in the past, WCA has decided to present candidates with one open-answer 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?

Once we receive the answers from our candidates, we will compile and reveal the results on our blog at least two weeks before Election Day. Sign up for the blog at http://bit.ly/WCAblog and be the first to see the results!

Please do not forget to vote on Tuesday, November 7th!
A Case for Early Childhood Investments

In June, WCA released its latest publication: *On the Home Front: A report on home visiting in Westchester County in support of the critical 0 to 5 years*. The report shares the results of a 2016 home visiting survey on existing services and capacity in Westchester County. Since 2009, WCA has convened and chaired a Home Visiting (HV) workgroup. The objective of the workgroup is to expand and improve home visiting services by advocating for increased funding and improved communication and collaboration among programs. Despite proven results and high cost-benefit ratio of home visiting services, only a small portion of the families who could benefit from such programs actually receive these services—in Westchester that’s about 5% of low-income families, as determined by Medicaid births.

*On the Home Front* offers recommendations to improve HV services including:

- Explore/identify ways to effectively engage and serve eligible African-American families and gather data on other client groups similarly underserved.
- Advocate for increased political support and public funding for evidenced-based/informed home visiting.
- Build public support for home visiting.
- Promote collaboration and coordination between home visiting and other programs serving children 0 to 5 years of age.

WCA has received support to begin initial work on the recommendations and is seeking additional funding to host a 2018 conference, Vision Early Childhood, in conjunction with our annual Kathryn W. Davis Advocacy breakfast and lecture. The full day conference will feature a keynote speaker and focus on improving and coordinating services for very young children and their families. There will be workshops on best practices and an opportunity for community teams to convene and plan. The conference will be a crucial element of WCA’s ongoing efforts to lead our partners in building public and political support for early childhood investments and common sense collaborative efforts.

For more information, please contact Allison Lake at alake@wca4kids.org

Sometimes It Takes a Village

On Friday, June 30, Westchester County released the request for proposal for youth programs in Westchester to apply for Invest in Kids funding for 2018-2020. After questions and concerns arose about the selection process during the last round of funding (2015-2017), WCA brought their Campaign for Kids (CFK) coalition together to generate a list of recommendations to the county for the next round of funding. CFK was the driving force behind the establishment of the Invest in Kids funding in 1993. The county accepted the recommendations from CFK and requested assistance from WCA in executing them.

Over the summer in 2016, WCA invited representatives of youth service programs, county departments and interested community members to develop a concrete set of criteria for selecting youth programs and to create a scoring rubric to accurately assess RFPs. This is an important step to ensure that all applications are weighted appropriately and that the reasons a program might be picked to receive funding are transparent to the public.

The county will announce recipients in November 2017.

Let’s Take the Kids to a Show!

Give ONE kid a fun and memorable experience, while helping us make sure that ALL kids have what they need to thrive!

Every year, we ask our donors to help us give foster and low-income youth a special experience. For every $100 that we receive, we send one young person to an event. While a percentage of the donation pays for the child’s experience, the remainder of the funds directly support WCA’s programs and advocacy work on behalf of all the young people in Westchester.

This year, the kids will see RUBBERBANDance Group at Purchase Performing Arts Center on March 31, 2018. In this performance of powerful and innovative dance works, the spontaneity, fearlessness and risk-taking of hip-hop culture are combined with the refinement and choreographic maturity of the ballet. Learn more about the performance at www.artscenter.org/events/rubberbandance-group.

For more information about WCA or our appeal, contact WCA’s Director of Development, Betsy Steward, bsteward@wca4kids.org or 914.946.7676 x 303.
In partnership with the Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board, WCA launched the READI initiative in Peekskill on July 12, 2017. WCA's Connecting Youth workgroup played a large part in the launch and has supported and endorsed the READI initiative since the formation of the program.

READI is a curriculum that focuses on preparing youth for the workplace with the skills they require as an employee. The name of the curriculum, “READI,” is an acronym, and each letter represents the desirable traits that employers look for in their employees: Respect, Enthusiasm, Articulate, Dependable, and Initiative.

In attendance were Peekskill students who participated in the program, as well as individuals affiliated with county government, the Guidance Center of Westchester, Westhab, The Westchester Bank, and many others. The launch included speeches from some of the key players and community leaders who helped get READI off the ground, as well as many photo-ops for the students who took part in the program.

WCA believes that launching READI in Peekskill will generate enormous benefits for the community’s young people. The unemployment rate for youth ages 16 to 19 in Peekskill was around 43% in 2015.* Peekskill is considered to be an at-risk community in Westchester County and many of their youth-serving programs qualify for funding through the Invest in Kids program.

The Peekskill launch was just the first step in the implementation of READI throughout Westchester County. Next steps include training more community members to teach the curriculum, as well as continuing to get more businesses to hire youth looking for a job or an internship.

The entire community feels the benefits of a program like READI, not just with the young people who participate, but with the employers that hire them.


Left: Peekskill’s READI program alumni and partner organizations pose in front of the Peekskill Youth Bureau. Right: READI program partners stand together in front of Peekskill City Hall.

Jordana Lorenzo

Jordana joined WCA in June 2017 as the Program and Policy Associate. She is a Licensed Master Social Worker registered in New York State and has been involved in the nonprofit sector for over 6 years. Jordana graduated from Florida State University with a BSW in 2013 and received her MSW from Fordham University in 2015. After receiving her MSW, she served as Program Manager at Sponsors for Educational Opportunity, an organization providing educational and career programs to youth in New York and San Francisco. A South Florida native, Jordana currently resides in Mamaroneck, NY.

Caroline Sullivan

Caroline was our all-star communications intern over the summer this year. Caroline came to WCA from Bucknell University where she is pursuing her undergraduate degree in both psychology and political science with a minor in women’s and gender studies. At Bucknell, Caroline is the Corresponding Secretary and Activities Chair of Alpha Xi Delta, as well as the Photo Editor of the campus newspaper, The Bucknellian. Caroline hopes to use her education to benefit others after graduation.
Over the summer, volunteers reached out to eight Westchester school districts to learn more about alternatives to suspension, codes of conduct and attendance. And this fall, GPS will coordinate small group meetings with the school districts from which GPS will create a “listening report.” GPS will also be establishing baseline measures and will discuss this at our next large gathering in the first quarter of 2018.

In addition to small group sessions, WCA will launch a new podcast – *Ground Truthing* – to uplift community perspectives on policy issues. The initial episodes will feature GPS stakeholders working to ensure that all children and youth thrive regardless of race or zip code. WCA has partnered with BOCES for the post-production of all episodes.

**HELP US GO GREEN!**

Contact Denise Kileen 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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title/Role</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>Email</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cora Greenberg</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:cgreenberg@wca4kids.org">cgreenberg@wca4kids.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison Lake</td>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:alake@wca4kids.org">alake@wca4kids.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisabeth (Betsy) V. Steward</td>
<td>Director, Development</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:bsteward@wca4kids.org">bsteward@wca4kids.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limarie V. Cabrera</td>
<td>Director, Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:lcabrera@wca4kids.org">lcabrera@wca4kids.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denise Kileen</td>
<td>Communications and Data Associate</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:dkileen@wca4kids.org">dkileen@wca4kids.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erica Ayala</td>
<td>Project Manager</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:eayala@wca4kids.org">eayala@wca4kids.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordana Lorenzo</td>
<td>Program &amp; Policy Associate</td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:jlorenzo@wca4kids.org">jlorenzo@wca4kids.org</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Help Us Go Green!**

Contact Denise Kileen to receive this newsletter by email only.