

Issue Update

Judging Children as Children: Raising New York's Age of Criminal Responsibility

On May 31st, Westchester Children's Association (WCA) held its second **Round Table on Raising the Age** (RTA) of criminal responsibility, hosted by Student Assistance Services in Tarrytown, New York. Over 50 representatives from various organizations and agencies were in attendance, including county departments of probation, social services and community mental health, state and local officials as well as Supervising Family Court Judge Davidson and *Continued on page 2*



Participants at the July 11, 2013 Raise the Age New York campaign launch in New York City.

THE YOUTH VOICE MOVEMENT: WCA Youth Reporters on the Scene

WCA has always been interested in listening to the youth voice in Westchester. In an effort to provide young people a forum to influence planning and decision-making, and to create change in their communities, we launched the WCA Youth Reporters blog in June. Visit <http://WCAYouthReporters.tumblr.com/> to hear what concerned youth in the community are saying.

Last October, 130 young people joined WCA for our Speak Out for Youth. In March we released the report *Dreams Deferred... Reconnecting Youth to School, Work and Community*, which included a recommendation to make space at the table for young adults when planning and making decisions that impact them. With our allies, WCA seeks to do just that.

In July, a group of over 50 youth leaders representing varied voices from foster care, mental health and youth leadership groups and their adult allies gathered to discuss how best to create a youth-driven movement that would make the youth voice a standard in planning, policy, program implementation and system change. Over the coming months, this youth group will continue to work to elevate their voices.

To help facilitate this youth voice movement, we have engaged three young adults to submit articles to the **WCA Youth Reporters blog** on a continuing basis to express their opinions and concerns about their community. The blog is driven by the youth involved and lead by

WCA Program and Administrative Assistant Sarah Yergeau. To stay updated on the elevation of the youth voice in Westchester, be sure to follow WCA's Youth Reporters blog: <http://WCAYouthReporters.tumblr.com/> And if you know someone who is interested in becoming a Youth Reporter, they should contact Sarah Yergeau at syergeau@wca4kids.org or 914.946.7676 x300. ■

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

SNAP Challenge.	2
New Faces at WCA.	3, 5
Help The Next Century of Westchester's Children Get the Best Start in Life	4
Advisory Council Breakfast. . .	5
WCA Mayors' and Supervisors' Challenge	6

Raising New York's Age of Criminal Responsibility *(Continued from front page)*

Judge Blackwood. The group gathered to discuss treating children as children in the justice system.

A powerful video by the Correctional Association *Behind Bars* was viewed, allowing the audience to hear first hand the different experiences young people have through involvement in the juvenile justice versus adult criminal justice system, and what a difference a birthday can make. Approximately 50,000 16 and 17-year-olds are arrested in New York each year and face the possibility of being prosecuted in adult courts. Abby Anderson, Executive Director of Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance was the keynote speaker. Ms. Anderson shared how Connecticut successfully passed legislation to raise the age allowing 16 and 17-year-olds to enter the juvenile system. Her passion, enthusiasm and willingness to impart lessons learned inspired the audience.

Those present agreed that approaching this initiative as an educational campaign would be necessary to raise awareness in the general public. Most people are unaware that New York and North Carolina are the only two states that prosecute 16 and 17-year-olds as adults. The majority, 75%, of crime committed by children and adolescents in New York are misdemeanors. Brain

science shows that adolescents act on impulse and lack the ability to fully consider the consequences of their behavior. With appropriate interventions, youth are able to learn to make more responsible choices, furthering the reasons to judge children as children.

WCA is leading Westchester on this issue. We are one of a growing number of organizations throughout the state working on the Raise the Age New York Campaign. The Campaign includes national and local advocates, youth, parents, law enforcement, legal representative groups, faith leaders, and unions. We have come together to increase public awareness of the need to implement a comprehensive approach to raise the age of criminal responsibility in New York State. The goal is to have the legal process respond to all children as children and ensure services and placement options better meet the rehabilitative needs of all children and youth. View WCA's campaign launch videos at <http://bit.ly/RTAlaunch>. Find out more by visiting www.raisetheageny.com and sign the online petition. We are grateful for funding from The Tow Foundation to conduct public education, grass roots mobilizing and direct advocacy with state politicians on RTA legislation. We invite you to join us. Contact Allison Lake, Deputy Director, alake@wca4kids.org. ■



WCA's SNAP Challenge participants (from left): Allison Lake, Sarah Yergeau, Limarie Cabrera, Karyn Lee, and Kevin Kimiadi.

Over three days in June, WCA staff members participated in the SNAP Challenge by living on the daily food stamp benefit of \$4.50 per person per day. The SNAP (Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program) Challenge aimed to raise

WCA PARTICIPATES IN THE **SNAP CHALLENGE**

awareness about the importance of SNAP, the difficulties of eating a nutritious balanced diet on a limited budget, and to oppose the proposed billion dollar cuts to SNAP in the federal Farm Bill debated in Congress.

SNAP, commonly known as food stamps, prevents 1,600,690 households in New York from going hungry each month, with children making up almost 50% of SNAP beneficiaries. It is an essential program that helps low-income families put food on the table.

Through the advocacy of WCA and national partners around the SNAP Challenge, cuts were initially prevented, but in July, SNAP funding was removed from the federal Farm Bill. The future of the program is now uncertain. Join our mailing list (www.wca4kids.org/contact.php) and follow us on social media for updates on SNAP and other issues affecting Westchester's children and youth. ■

SAVE THE DATE!

Nov.
22

9th Annual

"Let's Take the Kids to a Show!"

All children need the same things: love, guidance, a safe place to grow and... they need fun! Treat a youngster in foster care – or another child in need – to a good time and support the efforts of WCA simultaneously.

YAMATO:

The Drummers of Japan
Friday, November 22nd at 8 PM
Purchase College
Performing Arts Center

CONTRIBUTE AT

http://bit.ly/WCA_Yamato

For every \$100 contributed, WCA will purchase a ticket and make arrangements for a child or youth in need to attend the performance. The balance of the contribution will help the Westchester Children's Association. For more information, contact Karyn Lee at klee@wca4kids.org or 914.946.7676 x307. ■

Stocking Stuffer Alert!

Kid Pins & Kid Magnets

A great gift idea for someone who works for or cares for children! Colorful and individually hand-crafted, each is approximately ½ oz and 2-3" tall.

\$20 per pin or magnet plus \$5 shipping (\$12 is tax deductible)

Order online at <http://bit.ly/kidpin>
Please specify if you want a boy, girl, or infant.

Save \$5 by picking up in person! Contact Karyn Lee at 914.946.7676 x307 or klee@wca4kids.org beforehand. ■



New
Faces
WCA



INTERNS

RANDAL B. HAYES (*top left*) resides in Mt. Vernon, NY, and is a native of Virginia. He works in Special Education as a Teaching Assistant and is transitioning into a career advocating for children, women and minorities. He is completing his Master's degree in Public Administration (MPA) at The College of New Rochelle.

KEVIN KIMIADI (*top right*), a resident of Buchanan, is a senior at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he pursues his BA in sociology with an economics minor. As a summer data intern, he worked on a variety of projects, including the Data Dashboard, the Hagedorn Project, and the WCA data website.

RENA SEGALL (*bottom left*) is a senior at Cornell University, where she majors in government. A Westchester native, she graduated from Ardsley High School. This summer she worked on a variety of projects, including the Raise the Age campaign and the Mayors' and Supervisors' Challenge. Her internship was made possible with the support of the Cornell Blumenthal Internship Program.

CLAUDIA YANNAO (*bottom right*) is a German national who immigrated to the US in 2008 and currently resides in Eastchester. She graduated in May with her BS in Nutrition and began work this fall on her MS in Dietetics at the CUNY School of Public Health. Claudia is interested in the benefits of breastfeeding, the right to nurse, and issues of food insecurity. ■

Help the Next Century of Westchester's Children Get the Best Start in Life

WCA's continuing mission to make sure that all children in Westchester are healthy, safe and prepared for life's challenges is possible only thanks to supporters like you. When you plan a gift to WCA in your estate or financial plans, you can change the lives of future generations of Westchester's children. You don't have to be a certain age or extremely wealthy to make a big difference. By joining WCA's Legacy Society, you can let us know of your plans, allowing us more strategic freedom in planning our work for our second century, and give us the opportunity to express our sincere thanks.

A Gift in Your Will: Getting Started

We hope you'll consider including a gift to WCA in your will or trust. Called a charitable bequest, this type of gift offers these main benefits:

Simplicity. Just a few sentences in your will or trust are all that is needed. The official bequest language for Westchester Children's Association is:

"I, [name], of [city, state, ZIP], give, devise and bequeath to Westchester Children's Association [written amount or percentage of the estate or description of property] for its unrestricted use and purpose."

Flexibility. Because you are not actually making a gift until after your lifetime, you can change your mind at any time.

Versatility. You can structure the bequest to leave a specific item or amount of money, make the gift contingent on certain events, or leave a percentage of your estate to us.

Tax Relief. If your estate is subject to estate tax, your gift is entitled to an estate tax charitable deduction for the gift's full value.

We understand. Your circumstances may change and you can change your gift at any time.

For more information about the WCA Legacy Society, please contact Betsy Steward, WCA's Director of Development, at 914.946.7676, ext. 303, or bsteward@wca4kids.org. ■

Putting Your FAMILY FIRST

When planning an estate gift, it's sometimes difficult to determine what size legacy will make sense. Emergencies happen, and you need to make sure your family is financially taken care of first. Including a bequest of a *percentage* of your estate to WCA ensures that your gift will remain proportionate no matter how your estate's value fluctuates over the years.



Donate to WCA Without Even Opening Your Wallet

Our partnership with Opinions4Good (Op4G) provides you the opportunity to earn cash for yourself and WCA by participating in research activities such as surveys and focus groups. Here's how it works:

1. Enroll to share your opinions in surveys you choose.
2. Designate WCA to receive a portion of your earnings: 25 - 100%.

Your opinion counts in a whole new way with Op4G! Market researchers buy the data – NOT members' personal contact information – which informs their decisions.

Go to www.Op4G.com to learn more and get started! ■



JOIN THE CONVERSATION AT www.twitter.com/wca4kids

Our Twitter account @wca4kids turned FOUR on September 21st! Twitter is an online social networking service that allows us to send short messages called "tweets." We use it to let people know what's happening in the world of Westchester's children... and to let people know what we're doing and what we're paying attention to.

We have over 1,500 people and organizations following us on Twitter. Our followers have "subscribed" to our tweets and automatically receive them as they happen. Followers can also "re-tweet" our messages to their own followers. Twitter is our "ear to the ground;" We listen to what other people are tweeting and find out what children's issues concern them. To join the conversation, follow us at www.twitter.com/wca4kids ■



WCA Board Chair Janet Gutterman talks with presenter and WCA Advisory Council member, Saul Yanofsky

PATHWAYS TO HIGHER EDUCATION:

The Role of Community College

On June 13th, members of WCA's Advisory Council and community partners gathered at Westchester Community College (WCC) for the annual advisory council breakfast. This year's topic was Pathways to Higher Education: The Role of Community College. The featured speakers were Professor Saul Yanofsky, who is the Assistant Dean for Academic Affairs at WCC and a member of WCA's Advisory Council and Tere Wisell, Associate Dean and Director of WCC's Gateway Center.

Both speakers emphasized WCC's role as a resource for the entire County, as it serves recent high school graduates as well as non-traditional students. In addition to its main campus in Valhalla, WCC has extension centers throughout Westchester, enabling students who cannot easily access the Valhalla campus to further their education. Tuition costs (\$4,500 a year for a full-time student) are much lower than those at private colleges and scholarships are available for those in need.

Tere Wisell explained that the recently opened Gateway Center provides classes and services for the entire WCC population, as well as those that fit the needs of the immigrant community at the college. For example, the center provides assistance with language learning and preparation for the U.S. citizenship exam. Also located at the Gateway Center is the Single Stop USA program, which helps students access benefits, legal services and health insurance free of charge.

Westchester Community College plays an important role in making higher education accessible and affordable to students throughout Westchester, fitting with WCA's work on reconnecting older youth to school, work and community. ■

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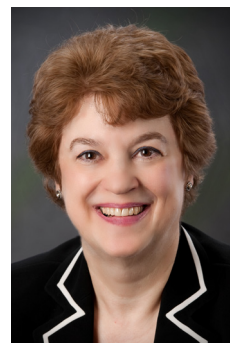
BARBARA HOLLAND (top left) is a returning Board member and former Advisory Council member of WCA. A resident of White Plains, she brings extensive Board experience and expertise in education with her, including, but not limited to the White Plains Board of Education; Westchester Community Foundation; and the Lois Bronz Children's Center where she was President/Chair for 20 years.

LISA KAHN, LMSW, MA (top center) is a Program Manager in the Child Welfare Services department at the Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD). She joins WCA's Board with experience working for several not-for-profit organizations, including the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation and the Anti-Defamation League. She lives in White Plains with her family.

LINDA LANDESMAN, DRPH, MSW (top right) is a resident of Rye Brook and a retired health administrator. She was Assistant Vice President at New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation (HHC), Office of Professional Services and Affiliations from 1996-2012. Linda is a lecturer, panelist and author with extensive experience in the fields of public health and medicine.

MARY LOEFFLER (bottom left) is a returning member of the WCA Board and an HR executive with experience leading the creation of performance-based organizations. She is a strategic executive with broad-based expertise in all areas of human resources. Mary lives in Irvington with her husband and young son.

SAL RAJPUT reached out to join the Board of WCA because of his deep commitment to community, and brings 17 years of operations and management experience to his role. Sal is the Principal of Walison Corp., a real estate development and construction company. ■



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



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SAVE A TREE

This newsletter, ChildWatch, is also available electronically. If you would like to receive future issues via e-mail, please let us know by contacting Karyn Lee at klee@wca4kids.org. Not only will you be helping the planet, you will be helping WCA.

Reduced printing and mailing costs means your donation will go further in helping WCA to do its job: identifying children's needs, making those needs known, and seeing that they are met! ■



Update: WCA's Mayors' and Supervisors' Challenge

What did you do this summer? The Towns of Pelham and Mamaroneck joined White Plains, Peekskill, New Rochelle, Harrison, Cortlandt Manor, Lewisboro, Greenburgh, Yonkers and Mt. Vernon to become the 10th and 11th communities to sign on to WCA's Mayors' and Supervisors' Challenge. The Challenge encourages communities to set specific local targets and goals for children and families. Don't see your community listed? Contact your Mayor or Supervisor. To receive an application contact Allison Lake, Deputy Director, alake@wca4kids.org. ■

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