

Westchester Women's Summit

Final Report



The Westchester Women's Agenda

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A Shining Example of Volunteerism and Collaboration

A Unique Collaborative Effort

The first-ever Westchester Women's Summit was truly a collaborative effort. It was made possible almost entirely through the efforts of committed volunteers. Most, but not all of these volunteers are members of the Westchester Women's Agenda, an organization which is a coalition of individuals and organizations who advocate for women's rights and influence public policy in areas including equal access to opportunity, economic equality, affordable housing and eviction prevention, championing reproductive freedom, ending violence against women, affordable and quality services for children and youth, supporting civil rights for all and opposing bigotry based on gender, race, religion, ethnicity, class, age, disability or sexual orientation.

WWA's Mission

The mission of the WWA is to create a strong voice for women in Westchester on legislative policy and program issues by bringing together a broad-based coalition of not for profits, corporations and individuals to work together and advocate on behalf of issues affecting women in Westchester County.

WWA's collaborative efforts have been successful in increasing visibility and funding for core programs that deliver health care for the uninsured and victims of rape, eviction prevention services and grants, child care services and infant/toddler services, fair housing education, microloans and financial counseling for immigrants, support for children in family court, entrepreneurial assistance for women in business, affordable housing loans, domestic and sexual violence services for women, and legal services. WWA, through its Communications and Community Engagement Committee, has been instrumental in organizing Women's Cafes in various communities throughout Westchester County, including Mount Vernon, Yonkers and White Plains. These efforts have created spirited discussions and deepened the conversation around women's issues in Westchester and have laid the foundation for the Westchester Women's Summit.

Acknowledging Our Contributors

We wish to acknowledge all of the people who played vital roles in this unique collaborative effort and helped to make this first-ever Westchester Women's Summit a great success:

Summit Planning Committee: Rosemarie Noonan and Kim Jacobs, Co-Chairs. Sheila Klatzky, Coordinator. Anne Janiak, Ann Spaeth, Antoinette Klatzky, Barbara Finkelstein, CarlLa Horton, Cheryl Brannan, Jan Fisher, Jane Aoyama-Martin, Jirandy Martinez, Judith Schwartz, Karen Cheeks-Lomax, Luz Barrera, Linda Bennett, Linda Breton, Lucy Ortiz, Lynda Hamilton, Maria Imperial, May Krukiel, Rachel Estroff, Reina Schiffrin, Tayna Martinez.

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Issue Area Committee Members: Luz Berrera, Lucy Ortiz, Lynda Hamilton, CarlLa Horton, Cheryl Brannan, Linda Breton, Rachel Estroff, Jirandy Martinez.

Volunteers & Logistics Task Force: Antoinette Klatzky, Coordinator. Judith Schwartz, Jacqueline Richard, Lucy Ortiz, Cheryl Brannan, Jirandy Martinez, Maria Imperial, Juanita O. Lewis, Tayna Martinez, Susan E. Sapiro, Shoba Bharratt, Linda Breton, Caroline Traynor, Jado Morris, Aimee Aubin, Aliyah Hakim, Roger Drew, Jennifer Yang, Claudia Benitez, Jojo Thayer, Julia Matishek, Isra Ameen, Leslie Zureiqi.

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Technology Task Force: Antoinette Klatzky, Coordinator. Cora Greenberg, Sheila Klatzky, Zoe Colon, Kim Jacobs.

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Noelle Damico.

Welcoming Remarks and Introduction: Senator Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Assemblywoman Shelley Mayer, Co-Chair WWA Rosemarie Noonan.

Financial Support for the Westchester Women's Summit

We are grateful to the following sponsors and contributors for their generous financial support for the Westchester Women's Summit:

Event Sponsor: \$2500+

Eileen Fisher Community Foundation

Brooke Astor Contributor: \$1000+

EILEEN FISHER

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Westchestergov.com

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Legislator Judy Myers

Legislator Mary Jane Shimsky

Legislator Alfreda Williams

Linda Breton

Maria Imperial

May Krukiel

Support for the Use and Purchase of Interactive Voting Technology: \$5000

Elias Foundation

Westchester Women's Agenda Members

The following are currently members of the Westchester Women's Agenda:

Jane Aoyama-Martin

Amy Kohn

Cheryl Brannan

May Krukiel

Linda Breton

Desta Lakew

Lisa Buck

Shelley Mayer

Karen Cheeks-Lomax

Joanne Mongelli

Lindsey Farrell

Camille Murphy

Barbara Finkelstein

Judy Myers

Jan Fisher

Rosemarie Noonan

Kathy Halas

Lucy Ortiz

Lottie Harris

Nereida Quiles

Carlla Horton

Joy Rosenzweig

Maria Imperial

Susan Sapiro

Kim Jacobs

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Barbara Jaffee

Reina Schiffrin

Antoinette Klatzky

Judith Schwartz

Sheila Klatzky

Christine Scott-Deutsch

Andrea Kocsis

Jon Wegienek

Highlights of the Summit

At a sold-out Westchester Women's Summit on Saturday, March 2, 2013 women from all over Westchester County gathered to confront and take action on issues of concern to women.

The goals of this first-ever Westchester Women's Summit, sponsored by the Westchester Women's Agenda and funded by grants from Eileen Fisher and others, were: "to change the cultural climate and the conversation around issues of concern to women in Westchester County, to engage women from all over the County to connect on issues that limit our opportunities and the contribution we can make to a stronger, more egalitarian Westchester; and to challenge, motivate and inspire ourselves to use the political system at the County level to create systemic social change."

By all accounts, the Summit was a rousing success. Three hundred people registered for the event, held at the Yonkers Riverfront Library. In a moving keynote speech, the Reverend Noelle Damico offered a vision of "ONE Westchester," "where we understand how our lives are intertwined and commit ourselves to realizing our common good" and invited the group to "move forward to create a Westchester County that upholds the dignity and equality of everyone."

She characterized the concept of cutting vital services in the name of "fiscal responsibility" as "profound irresponsibility," referring to policies which force a mother "to choose between keeping her job which is putting food on the table or putting her child in a precarious situation because of skyrocketing costs." Citing statistics on inequalities such as the fact that in 2011 the 4-year college readiness rate in Bronxville was 99%, while in Yonkers it was 14%, she exhorted the group to let the affirmation that we are "ONE Westchester" "give us the courage and the tenacity to sit face to face and talk not only about our dreams but about our nightmares as well."

In the breakout sessions which followed, participants took a first step towards realizing that vision of "ONE Westchester" by sitting face to face in small groups, sharing their personal stories and the concerns which brought them to this first-ever Westchester Women's Summit. Breakout sessions focused on seven major areas of concern, including: financial wellbeing, housing and homeless prevention, violence against women, women's access to health care, children's services, civil legal services and immigration.

In small groups participants took the first steps to talk about their dreams and their nightmares by identifying the challenges and obstacles that limit their opportunities and arriving at a list of priorities for action in each of the areas of concern.

In the reconvened session of the entire gathering which followed, participants made effective use of interactive voting technology, the financial support for which was generously donated by the Elias Foundation, to rank the priorities for action within each area. Top priorities for participants included: education at all ages for personal economic development, and the achievement of pay equity for women; the creation of more affordable housing and redefinition of affordable housing with revised criteria for eligibility for support services; affordable health care and the elimination of disparities in health care by race and ethnicity; transitional housing for victims of violence against women which allows them to keep non-offending family members together; access to affordable child care for all ages; affordable preventative legal clinics for education and advice; and access to health care for immigrants regardless of legal status.

These priorities and others raised at the Summit will become the basis for further planning and action by self-identified volunteers who acknowledge the interdependence of all our lives in Westchester, who care to commit to our mutual well-being and who desire to take part in efforts to reclaim the dignity and equality of everyone in Westchester County. Individuals interested in participating in these efforts should contact the Westchester Women's Agenda at wwagenda.org.

Goals and Accomplishments

Goals for the Summit:

- To change the cultural climate and the conversation around issues of concern to women in Westchester County.
- To engage women from all over the County to connect on issues that limit our opportunities and the contributions we can make to a stronger, more just, more egalitarian Westchester.
- To challenge, motivate and inspire ourselves to use the political system at the County level to create systemic social change.

Accomplishments:

- Three hundred people registered for the first-ever Westchester Women's Summit. Approximately 200 people attended.
- The Summit received advance publicity in the *White Plains Daily Voice*, the *Examiner News* and WVOX. An interview about WWA and the Summit, sponsored by the League of Women Voters of New Rochelle, will run on Cablevision Channel 76 the weeks of March 11 & 25 on Monday 7 pm and Wed and Thurs at 9:30 pm. There are also blogs online.
- The WWA mailing list has more than doubled from 166 to 364.
- We have built a base of potentially fruitful new relationships, good will and credibility with other progressive individuals, groups and organizations—including the Zonta Clubs, the Labor Council of the AFL-CIO, faith-based organizations, Community Voices Heard, members of the Democratic Women's Caucus of the County Board of Legislators, and others.
- Thanks to the Elias Foundation, WWA now owns the voting technology software and 50 keypads which we can make available to other nonprofits in the County.
- We will be making arrangements for a 90-minute web-based training session for people who want to learn how to use the technology.
- WWA members have some shared expertise in the use of the voting technology.
- Participants at the Summit used the voting technology to arrive at a prioritized list of issues in each issue area, which we will be acting upon in the future.
- Eighty five participants have expressed an interest in being involved in action growing out of the Summit.
- The WWA has gained experience in successful collaboration in the organization and execution of a successful public event.
- Our excellent presenters have provided background information, statistics and resource lists for the issue areas included in the Summit.
- We have a videotape of all the speakers at the Summit & some additional footage of the breakout sessions.
- Last but not least, we covered our expenses. Our total project expenses were approximately \$14,504. Total funds received and/or pledged: \$14,765.

Cultural and Economic Climate of the Summit

Westchester: The Last 5 Years

The economic downturn which hit the United States in the period of 2007-2011 also hit Westchester County.

- In 2007, **5.1%** of Westchester's population age 16 and over were unemployed. By 2011 that percentage had risen to **8.4%**; an increase of **39%**.
- Median earnings for male full-time workers dropped from \$67,216 to \$64,467. Median earnings for female full-time workers dropped, but not as much—from \$54,665 to \$53,194. However, in 2011 women working full-time still made only **82.5%** of the median full-time male income.
- Over the last 5 years the percentage of people in poverty in Westchester rose by over **50%**, from **4.9% to 7.5%**.
- For families headed by women, with no husband present, the poverty rate in 2011 was **22.4%**. The comparable figure in 2007 was **15.9%**.

Poverty hits hardest on households headed by women.

- Families headed by women, with children under 18, are more than **7** times as likely to have incomes below the poverty level (32.3%) as comparable families headed by married couples (4.4%).
- And families headed by women, with children under the age of 5, are more than **9** times as likely to have incomes below the poverty level (44.8%) as comparable families headed by married couples (4.9%).

While incomes dropped over the 5-year period from 2007-2011, the relative cost of rental housing increased.

- In 2007 **43%** of households paid 35% or more of their income for housing. By 2011 that percentage had risen to **48%**.
- Owners' costs also rose relative to income, but not as much. The percentage of owners who paid 35% or more of their income for housing costs rose from 34.8% to 36.1%.
- For owners the rate of increase was 3.7%. For renters it was 11.6%.

There are also great disparities between communities within Westchester.

- For example, in 2011 In Briarcliff 99% of high school students graduate within 4 years. In Mount Vernon the rate is 53%.
- The 4-year college readiness rate in Bronxville in 2011 was **99%**. In Yonkers it was **14%**.

And comparable disparities exist between ethnic groups in Westchester County.

- For example, in 2009 (the year for which the most current data are available), 8.4% of the infants in Westchester were born with low birthweight. The comparable figures were **14%** among blacks, **7.8%** among whites, and **6.8%** among Hispanics.
- 27.1% of the infants were born to mothers who did not have prenatal care or delayed their prenatal care until the second trimester: **21.9%** among whites, **39.7%** among blacks, and **35.9%** among Hispanics.
- The average age at death was 76.5 years: **78.6** years for whites, **67.9** years for blacks, and **61.7** years for Hispanics.

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *2011 American Community Survey*; Westchester Children's Association, *Westchester Children by the Numbers*. *Vital Statistics Report 2011*. Annual Data Book. Westchester County Department of Health 2011. Compiled by Sheila Klatzky for the Westchester Women's Agenda.

Issue Area Breakout Sessions

Financial Well Being

Presenters: Maria Imperial and Anne Janiak.

Objective: To ensure that the social and economic climate in the County offers women equal access to opportunity and to promote economic equality for women.

Background and Statistics

Despite New York State's abundant resources and numerous opportunities for education, employment and earnings, the overall economic status of women in the State and County needs to be improved.

- In NYS, women earn 74% of men's median earnings and in Westchester, women earn 65%. The situation is even more dire for women of color who have fewer options and receive lower compensation for their efforts compared to their male counterparts and white women.¹
- Over 28% of female-headed households with children under the age of 18 in Westchester County live in poverty. In single-mother households with children under five years old, the poverty rate is just over 35%.²
- Completion of higher education tends to ensure higher wages, yet NY men out-earn women in every racial and ethnic group at every level of education with few exceptions.³
- In the Fortune 500, women hold only 16% of board seats and there are only 20 female CEOs (4%) running America's largest companies.⁴
- Women on average ask for 30% less money than males and ask for raises and promotions 85% less often than their male counterparts.⁵
- Lower earnings mean that women are less able than men to prepare for their old age or build up savings and consequently are less able to draw on savings during hard times. In general, women age 65 and older have lower income from earnings, assets, pensions, Social Security and other sources than do men of the same age group.⁶

¹ US Census Bureau, ACS, 2007.

² US Census Bureau, ACS, 2007.

³ The NY Women's Foundation, Statement and Recommendations on the Economic Status of Women in New York State, 2008

⁴ Credit Suisse Research Institute, August, 2012, Gender Diversity and Corporate Performance

⁵ The Washington Post, Salary Stats: Women vs. Men, November 7, 2008

⁶ The Gender Wage Gap in New York State – Institute for Women's Policy Research, Testimony presented to the NYS Assembly, December 12, 2011)

Issue Priorities Ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Economic personal development—education at all ages; including immigrants
2. Pay equity—investment for retirement
3. Barriers: child care, high gas prices, food ,disabilities
4. Respect/empowerment for females
5. Workforce re-entering—STEM

Presenters' Additional Recommendations:

Education:

- Increase higher education opportunities for women with a focus on higher paying jobs.
- Encourage girls and young women to study subjects which lead to better paying jobs, especially the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects.
- Provide access to financial education and counseling so women understand their own finances.

Employment and Earnings:

- Consider adopting a living wage bill so that women who work FT can meet their basic needs.
- Pass & enforce pay equity legislation that evaluates worth through racial/gender neutral criteria.
- Offer incentives to employers who set aside a certain number of nontraditional jobs for women.

Encourage the growth of women's business ownership:

- Increase women's access to capital and business development assistance so they can grow their own enterprises.
- Increase government contracting opportunities and better track and enforce existing set asides.

Leadership

- Encourage businesses and elected officials to include and involve women when economic decisions are made.
- Women should seek out sponsors at corporations and negotiate for higher pay and promotions.⁷

⁷ The New York's Women's Foundation's *Statement and Recommendations on the Economic Status of Women in New York State*, published in 2008 was the source of many of the suggested recommendations used in this statement.

Summary

We recognize that the above agenda items need to be worked on in combination with other issues such as ending violence against women, a lack of affordable housing, healthcare, quality child care and access to public transportation, since these issues frequently present barriers to women achieving their goals. It is important that, as a society, we take a holistic approach to addressing the issue of women's financial and economic well-being. We need to create the necessary opportunities for women, and especially women of color, to pursue their goals and achieve their full potential. It is incumbent upon all of us to work together not only to create a more fair and just society, but also a more vibrant and productive one.

Westchester County Resources for Financial Well Being:

- YWCA- Career Conversations, Money Conferences www.ywcawpcw.org
- The Women's Enterprise Development Center (WEDC) www.wedcbiz.org
- Community Capital NY www.communitycapitalny.org
- Girls Inc. www.girlsincwestchester.org

Housing & Homelessness Prevention

Presenter: Rosemarie Noonan

Objective: To provide decent, safe, fair and affordable housing for individuals and families—for those who cannot afford to rent or buy; who live in substandard and overcrowded conditions; who pay more than 30% of their gross income on rent; and who live in shelters and on the street.

Background and Statistics:

Objective: To provide decent, safe, fair and affordable housing for individuals and families – for those who cannot afford to rent or buy; who live in substandard and overcrowded conditions; who pay more than 30% of their gross income on rent; and who live in shelters and on the street.

Westchester County, NY. Housing Needs and Problems:

Homelessness:

The most recent 'Point-in-Time' homeless count, required by HUD, was January 31, 2012. On that day, 359 families in the County were homeless, with 1,015 persons. (These figures only include the number of homeless persons who have an active DSS case open and are being served by the Department.)

Housing Cost-Burden

Based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2011 'American Community Survey' there were 926,826 residents in Westchester County who lived in households (of any size). The average household (HH) size was 2.7 persons. There were 343,481 total HH's in Westchester. Nearly half (44.7%) of Westchester HH's pay more than 30% of their gross HH income on housing costs; more than 20% pay more than 50% of gross HH income on housing costs.

Household Overcrowding

The Westchester Urban County Consortium 2009-2013 Consolidated Plan reports that in 2005 8,600 HH's in the Consortium communities were considered "overcrowded" (i.e. 1 – 1.5 persons per room); and of those, 3,182 HH's were considered "severely overcrowded" (i.e. more than 1.5 persons per room). This does not account for the overcrowding in Yonkers, Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, and White Plains.

High Housing Costs & Taxes

Westchester County consistently ranks among the most expensive counties in which to live in the country according to the annual Forbes list. According to the Hudson Gateway Association of Realtors, as of the 2nd Quarter 2012, the median sale price of a single family home in Westchester was \$619,000; a condominium, \$338,000; a coop, \$156,250; and a two- to four-family home, \$321,750. Assuming a 10% down payment, a 30 year mortgage at a 4% interest rate, minimum household incomes of \$136,000, \$93,420, \$65,268 and \$90,900 are necessary to afford the respective median sales prices.

Rental housing in Westchester is expensive as well. At the 4th Quarter 2011, average rents in the County were \$949 for a Studio, \$1,250 for a 1-bedroom, \$1,630 for a 2-bedroom, and \$1,928 for a 3-bedroom unit, requiring respective incomes of \$37,960, \$50,000, \$65,200, and \$77,120 for each unit size.

Residential real property tax rates vary throughout the cities, towns, and villages in Westchester because each jurisdiction, school district and special district has the authority to levy its own taxes. However, as of 2010, Westchester residents paid the highest dollar amount in property taxes in the nation, a median of \$9,945 according to the Tax Foundation. This is roughly 2½ times higher than other New York counties, and nearly five times the national average (out of 806 counties). Approximately 61.2% of a Westchester resident's tax payment is school tax, 14.7% for city or town tax; 17.5% for county tax; and 6.6% for other miscellaneous taxes.

Wages

Wages increases in Westchester County have not kept pace with rising housing costs. In New York State, based on data from the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the minimum hourly wage that a renter household in Westchester needs to earn to afford a 2-bedroom unit at the 2012 fair market rent is \$24.68 per hour or an annualized salary of \$51,335. The median income for those in the County who are employed is just \$19.61 or an annualized salary of \$40,780 which supports a rent of \$1020 -- \$610 short of the average rent for a two bedroom apartment.

Fair Housing

Forty-five years after the passage of the federal Fair Housing Act, insidious prejudice continues to impede housing choices and opportunities. Westchester Residential Opportunities, a countywide fair housing agency, recently completed 18 months of fair housing testing. WRO conducted paired tests in targeted areas throughout Westchester (including Northwest Westchester, Northeast Westchester, the River Towns, Mt. Pleasant, Bronxville and Scarsdale). They found that in 40% of the tests, Black or Hispanic testers were treated differently than their White counterparts. This report, entitled "WRO 2012 Fair Housing Testing Report: Fair Housing in Westchester County?" can be found at www.wroinc.org

A National Problem

According to the National Housing Trust, affordable housing is provided for about a quarter of low income households in need.

Issue Priorities Ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Ensure creation of more affordable housing
2. Redefine definition of affordable housing & revise criteria for eligibility for support services.
3. Legislative agenda: starting with source of income
4. Focus on implementation of federal housing settlement
5. Legal housing services and eviction prevention funds

Other Issues Raised at the Summit: Immediate: maintain WEST help as affordable; Settlement case and source of income legislation - pressure county executive; Legislative agenda - way to enforce rights if in sub-standard housing; More section 8 certificates; Importance of storytelling and story hearing; We need elected officials who understand people's issues; Education rather than court solutions; Affordable/preventive legal clinics and workshops; Adjusting poverty level to reality.

Westchester County Housing Resources:

- Housing Voucher Programs administered by CVR New York and local agencies
- Public Housing owned and operated by local housing authorities
- Dedicated affordable rental housing developments owned and managed by for-profit and non-profit developers
- Dedicated affordable ownership housing developments developed and sold by for-profit and non-profit developers
- Inclusionary housing – affordable housing within market rate developments
- Homeless shelters and emergency housing apartments operated by not-for-profit organizations
- Eviction Prevention Programs – administered by not-for-profit organizations; legal assistance through Legal Services of Hudson Valley
- Fair Housing Services – administered by not-for-profit organizations
- Tenant Services (housing search assistance, access to financial assistance, landlord/tenant mediation, etc.) – offered through not-for-profit organizations.
- Capital Funding for Affordable Housing Development and Preservation – available through County of Westchester and major cities; pre-development loans through Community Capital Resources and Leviticus Alternative Fund

For agency contacts and additional information, see “A Roof Over Your Head” published by Westchester County. English and Spanish versions can be found at <http://planning.westchestergov.com/publications> and review and sign up on “Homeseeker Housing Opportunities” which lists current opportunities funded by the County of Westchester <http://homes.westchestergov.com/homeseeker>

Women's Access to Health Care

Presenters: Jan Fisher and Reina Schiffrin

Objective: To champion reproductive freedom and other women's health issues.

Background and Statistics

Birth Control & Contraception: In 2006, the last year for which data are available, 56% of pregnancies in NYS were unintended, compared with 49% nationally. Publicly funded programs (Medicaid and Title X) helped NYS avert 98,000 unintended pregnancies in 2008.⁸

Pregnancy: In NYS, 468,900 women of reproductive age (15-44) became pregnant in 2008. Fifty-three percent of these pregnancies resulted in live births and 33% in induced abortions. The remaining 14% ended in miscarriage.⁹

Abortion: 1 in 3 American women will have had an abortion by the time she reaches age 45. In 2008, 153,100 women obtained abortions in NYS (rate = 37.6 per 1,000 women of reproductive age).*

Prenatal Care: Babies of mothers who do not get prenatal care are 3 times more likely to have a low birth weight and 5 times more likely to die than those born to mothers who do get care.¹⁰

Maternal Mortality: In NYS the average maternal death** rate (2003-2007) was 20.6 for every 100,000 live births. The average U.S. rate for the same time period was 13.3.¹¹

Sexually Transmitted Diseases: Young women aged 15-24 are hardest hit by Chlamydia, with rates five times as high as women overall. If untreated, Chlamydia can lead to infertility.¹² Westchester County's rates of Chlamydia and gonorrhea meet or fall slightly below the average for NYS, excluding NYC.¹³ Westchester County's rate of AIDS and Syphilis exceed the NYS rate, excluding NYC.¹⁴

HIV/AIDS: Of the total number of new HIV infections in women in the U.S. in 2010, 64% occurred in blacks, 18% whites, and 16% were Hispanics.¹⁵ Black and Hispanic women ages 13-24 accounted for

⁸ <http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/unintended-pregnancy/NY.html>

⁹ http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/sfaa/new_york.html

¹⁰ www.marchofdimes.com

¹¹ www.marchofdimes.com

¹² http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/FIB_STI_US.html

¹³ <http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/diseases/communicable/2011>

¹⁴ <http://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/diseases/communicable/2011>

¹⁵ <http://aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/statistics/>

82% of young women living with HIV in the U.S. in 2010, even though together they represent only 30% of women in these ages.¹⁶

Gynecologic Cancer: (cervical, ovarian, uterine, vaginal and vulvar) In the U.S. in 2009,*** 84,155 women were diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer, and 27,813 died from a gynecologic cancer.¹⁷

Cervical Cancer: Half of cervical cancers occur among women rarely or never screened for cancer, and another 10%-20% of cancers occur among women who were screened but did not receive adequate follow-up care.¹⁸ The cervical cancer death rates, per 100,000 NYS women were 1.8 for white women, 3.0 for Hispanic women and 4.8 for black women.

Breast Cancer: Female breast cancer is the 2nd most-diagnosed cancer in New York, with 15,710 new cases in 2011.¹⁹ African American women are less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer but are more likely to have a fatal form of the disease.²⁰ In Westchester, the female breast cancer rate is 137.4 for every 1,000 women, just slightly higher than the rate for the state (excluding NYC).²¹

Mental Health: Women's mental health is important not only to their own overall health, but also the health and well-being of those around them. Women make three-fourths of the health care decisions in American households, whether for a family member or themselves. Untreated mental health disorders cost American businesses \$79 billion in lost productivity per year.²²

*Some women were from other states and some NY women obtained abortions in other states, so this rate may not reflect the rate of state residents.

**A maternal death is one that occurs during pregnancy or within 42 days of the end of a pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by a women's pregnancy (but not from accidental or incidental causes).

***The most recent year for which numbers are available.

Insurance and Access Statistics: According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, nearly 18% of women ages 18 to 64—or more than 127 million women—lack health insurance. Without insurance, women with mental health needs are less likely to be able to access services.

In 2008, 1.1 million NYS women of reproductive age were in need of publicly funded contraception.²³

¹⁶ <http://aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/hiv-aids-101/statistics/>

¹⁷ <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/gynecologic/>

¹⁸ <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6151a5.htm>

¹⁹ http://www.acscan.org/ovc_images/file/action/states/ny/NY_Cancer_Burden_Report_2012.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.healthyblackwomen.org/issues-and-resources/black-women-and-breast-cancer/>

²¹ http://www.acscan.org/ovc_images/file/action/states/ny/NY_Cancer_Burden_Report_2012.pdf

²² The source of statistics on mental health in this section is Women's Mental Health Issue Paper 2009, American Psychiatric Association. For more information, contact Jan Fisher at jfisher@wjcs.com

²³ <http://www.gutmacher.org/statecenter/unintended-pregnancy/NY.html>

In 2008, there were 249 abortion providers in NYS, a 5% decline from 2005. In that same year, 39% of NYS counties did not have an abortion provider; 7% of NYS women live in these counties.

In New York, almost one-third of cancer patients have out-of-pocket health care costs totaling 10% or more of their family income.²⁴

Nearly three million New Yorkers lack health insurance. Among the non-elderly uninsured, 46% are women, 18% black, and 29% Hispanic.²⁵

The top four barriers to women's access to mental health have been identified as:

- Stigma/lack of awareness and knowledge
- Lack of access to mental health care
- Parity/lack of insurance
- Cultural competence/physician training

Impact of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) on Women's Access to Care: According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, 40% of the 1 million uninsured adult women in New York will qualify for federal subsidies to help them buy private coverage through the New York Health Benefit Exchange. Another 47 of New York's 1 million uninsured women will qualify for public assistance under the expanded Medicaid program authorized by the ACA.

Once they purchase insurance, subsidized or not, whether through the newly established state exchange or through an employer, women have **access to preventive care without cost sharing:** Annual well-women exams, contraception, breast health exams, cervical cancer screenings, screenings for STDs , and screening for intimate partner violence. *For pregnant and postpartum women:* Screening for gestational diabetes, and breastfeeding counseling and equipment.

Issue Priorities ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Affordable Health Care
2. Disparities in health care: institutionalized racism
3. Education and Accessibility: Service, Nutrition, Transportation
4. Screening and treatment for Mental Health Services
5. Cultural Competency by providers

²⁴ http://www.acscan.org/ovc_images/file/action/states/ny/NY_Cancer_Burden_Report_2012.pdf

²⁵ <http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparebar.jsp?ind=137&cat=3>
<http://www.statehealthfacts.org/comparebar.jsp?ind=138&cat=3>

Other Issues Raised at the Summit: Information -dissemination about services; De-stigmatized mental health; Labor mobility, excessive healthcare costs/under and uninsured; Inclusion of 50-60 year age group; Medicalization of old age, reproductive rights, preventive care/education

Westchester County Health Care Resources

Reproductive Health Care

- **Planned Parenthood Hudson Peconic.**
Mt. Vernon, New Rochelle, White Plains, Yonkers (800) 230-PLAN
- **Open Door Family Medical Center.**
165 Main Street, Ossining, (914) 941-1263.
5 Grace Church Street, Port Chester (914) 937-8899
30 West Main Street, Mount Kisco, (914) 666-3272
80 Beekman Avenue, Sleepy Hollow, (914) 631-4191
- **Greenburgh Health Center** 330 Tarrytown Rd., White Plains, (914) 989-7622
- **Hudson River Health Care Peekskill Health Center**
1037 Main Street, Peekskill, (914) 734-8800
- **Mt. Vernon Neighborhood Health Center**
107 W 4th St, Mt Vernon, (914) 662-2520

Mental Health

- **MHA Westchester**
580 White Plains Road, Tarrytown, (914) 345-5900
Clinics: Mt Kisco, White Plains, Yonkers, and Valhalla
- **Westchester Jewish Community Services**
845 N Broadway #2, White Plains, (924) 761-0600
- **Family Services Westchester**
One Gateway Plaza, Port Chester, (914) 937-2320
Locations: Hastings-on-Hudson, Mt Vernon, Pelham, Sleepy Hollow, White Plains, Yonkers

Health Information

- **American Cancer Society** (cancer.org)
2 Lyon Pl, White Plains, (914) 949-4800
- **American Heart Association** (heart.org)
2030 Westchester Ave, Purchase, (914) 694-6464
- **Lower Hudson Valley Perinatal Network** (lhvpn.net)
100 Woods Road, Valhalla, (914) 493-6435
- **March of Dimes** (marchofdimes.org)
1275 Mamaroneck Ave, White Plains, (914) 428-7100
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness** (nami.org)
100 Clearbrook Road, Elmsford (914) 592-5458

Violence against Women

Presenter: May Krukiel

Objective: To end violence against women and girls, and to ensure that services for survivors are in place, securely funded, and accessible to *all* women and girls.

Background and Statistics:

Scope of the problem: While violence against women on an international level receives increasing attention, we must continue to highlight and address the epidemic rates of sexual and domestic violence here at home.

In Westchester, sexual and domestic violence occur at levels consistent with national statistics: **1 in 6 women** will be a victim of **rape or attempted rape** in her lifetime, and **1 in 3 girls** will be sexually abused before the age of 18. Only 60% of sexual assaults are reported, most perpetrators are known to the victim, and fewer than 6% of rapists will ever spend a day in jail. One in 6 women will be a victim of **domestic violence** during her lifetime, 85% of domestic violence victims are female, and most domestic violence incidents are not reported to police. Domestic violence accounts for 25% of all sexual assaults.²⁶

These crimes occur throughout Westchester, in both affluent and financially challenged communities, and across all boundaries of ethnicity, educational level, race/skin color, sexual orientation, or immigration status. However, victim/survivor access to safety, support and justice are significantly more complicated for members of communities that are marginalized by reason of any of those above designations. In addition, persons with disabilities (whether developmental, psychiatric, physical or other) are at significantly higher risk for all forms of abuse and experience more obstacles to services.

Issue Priorities Ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Transitional housing (keeping non-offending family members together)
2. Engaging men and boys to end violence against women and girls
3. Eliminating barriers to services for immigrants, elders, LBGTIQ and other “marginalized” people
4. Job skills and self-sufficiency trainings

²⁶ For original sources for all statistics in this section, see www.faitrustinstute.org and www.ncady.org or contact mkrukiel@westcop.org.

5. Increasing county aid to ensure services for SA/DD victims
6. Create culture change through education and countywide, multi-media, multi-lingual public health campaign.

Other Issues Raised at the Summit: Education about VAW and Services; Educate responders; Cross-generational education intervention schools; Bring young people into conversation; Connect to global communities; Build community here; County multi-media, bilingual public health campaign - culture change through education/PR/prevention/clergy; Transitional housing - shelter beds; Trauma informed treatment; Maintaining families together - non-offending; Reach out to county legislators; Shelter for LGBTIQ and men; Co-funding to ensure services for SA/DV victims; Interfaith community involvement; Engaging men and boys to end VAW and girls; Job skills and empowerment - source of income; Address barriers to services for immigrants, elders, LGBTIQ, and other marginalized; Create culture change through education and multi-media county-wide public health campaign; Transitional housing.

Presenter's Additional Recommendations and/or Areas of Concern:

- Sustaining current services through stable & secure county and state funding with increases to account for cost-of-doing-business increases over time.
- There is a clear need for additional shelter beds and for affordable and/or transitional housing post-shelter; also beds dedicated to people with disabilities, transgender and LGBQ victims.
- Work with men and boys to end sexual and domestic violence—perpetrators in most cases are male. Let's start asking why men and boys offend—and engage men in that process.
- Coordination of education in the schools, so that ALL STUDENTS receive the same education through compatible curriculum, throughout their school experience. Educate and engage teachers, administrators and parent associations in this same process.
- Design, fund and implement a comprehensive, county-wide, & coordinated multimedia public relations campaign to change our social culture to end VAW. Use CDC approaches that have been successfully used to change cultural acceptance of smoking.
- Formation of a “Coordinated Community Response” Task Force to address Sexual Assault.
- Addressing the needs of marginalized communities.

Current Services for Sexual Assault/Rape Victims:

- 24-hour Rape Crisis Hotlines (2) with services that include crisis intervention, phone counseling, accompaniment to hospital ERs, police and courts, safety planning & referrals, advocacy with criminal justice, family court and other systems, access to NYS Office for Victims of Crime (OVS) assistance, emergency awards for HIV prophylaxis meds, follow-up services.

- SAFE: Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner Program, providing specially trained nurses to meet survivors in hospital ERs to provide care and collect forensic evidence.
- Community based counseling and advocacy services, including services dedicated to Spanish speaking and newly-immigrant women.
- Trauma therapies, including specialized therapies for adults sexually abused in childhood.
- All services are free and confidential and are not dependent upon a police report.

Current Domestic Violence Services:

- Residential: 54 DV shelter beds are available within the county.
- Non-Residential Services: crisis intervention, counseling, safety planning, danger assessments, information and referrals, referral to shelter, court accompaniment for Orders Of Protection, custody hearings, etc., advocacy with systems including police, prosecutor & DSS; support groups, NYS OVS applications.
- Trauma Therapies.
- Civil legal services (see CLS Issue Area hand-out).
- Assistance with U-Visas and T-Visas (may require police report).
- All services are free and confidential, no police report required (see exception above).
- “Sister” agencies work closely together to provide seamless services, and all work to and above capacity, so that there is no duplication of services.

FUNDING NOTE: Services are supported primarily through federal, state and county funding. State funding is shrinking and there have been no cost-of-living county increases in several years. County funding is probably Stable through 2014 and then is vulnerable to further cuts.

Westchester County Resources for Violence against Women

- **Westchester County Office for Women.** 914-995-5977. Focus: domestic violence.. Services: non-residential DV services, referrals, education & training, support groups, chairs the county’s DV Council.
- **VAS: Victims Assistance Services.** 914-345-3113. 24/7 Hotlines: 914-345-9111, 855-827-2255, 855-VAS-CALL. Focus: sexual assault and domestic violence (also child & elder abuse, hate crimes & other crimes). Services: Rape Crisis Hotline Services, SAFE, nonresidential DV services, trauma therapies, groups, education & training, SAFE Training Center, chairs the LGBTQ DV Task Force & Gateway (developing service access for people with disabilities).

- **Voz Y Vida: Hispanic Resource Center of Larchmont-Mamaroneck.** 914-835-1512. Focus: Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence. Services: Culturally competent, Spanish language SA/DV non-res. Services for the newly immigrant, education & training, groups.
- **ALAS: Westchester Hispanic Coalition.** 24/7 Hotline: 1-855-252-7942. Focus: Sexual Assault. Services: Culturally competent, Spanish language Rape Crisis Services. Also immigration legal services.
- **Hope's Door.** 914-747-0828. 24/7 Hotline: 888-438-8700. Focus: Domestic Violence. Services: DV Shelter & all DV non-residential services, education & training, support groups.
- **My Sister's Place.** Focus: Domestic Violence. Services: DV Shelter & all non-residential DV services, education & training, chairs anti-Trafficking Task Force.
- **WC Family Justice Center.** Focus: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault. Services: Non-residential DV & SA Services.
- **Pace Women's Justice Center.** Focus: Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault. Services: Civil legal services.

Westchester Children and Youth

Presenter: Kathy Halas

Objective: To support and empower women in their child-rearing roles by providing accessible, affordable and quality services for children and youth including child care, after school, health and mental health.

Background and Statistics

Child Care and After School

Safe, quality and affordable child care/early learning and after school programs are beyond the reach of many Westchester families.

- Westchester child care is about as expensive as anywhere in the U.S., with preschool averaging over \$14,000 a year.²⁷
- Westchester County's child care, financial assistance has been reduced since 2010; fewer families qualify for the child care subsidy program and those that do, have to pay more.
- NYS parents do not have quality rating information on child care and after school programs that would help them make the best care decisions for their families.

Youth Education and Employment

- On average, 80% of Westchester's high school students graduate in 4 years. But of these, fewer than 50% are adequately prepared for college or career.
- The unemployment rate is 29.6% for youth 16-19 years of age, and 20% for young adults 20-24 years of age. This is 3 to 4+ times the unemployment rate for adults 25 to 44 years of age (7%).

Health and Mental Health

- About 1 out of every 4 children in Westchester County relies on public health insurance to pay for his/her health care.
- The number one reason for hospitalization of children ages 13-17 is mental health problems.

²⁷ For original sources for all statistics in this section, contact Kathy Halas at kathyh@cccwny.org

- For families with private insurance, care for mental health or substance abuse problems is often quite limited.
- Even for people with insurance, there are long waits for pediatric dental care, even though dental problems are one of the most common of childhood diseases.
- About 1/3 of Westchester's children and teens are either overweight or obese.

Issue Priorities Ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Access to affordable/quality child care for all ages and denominations
2. Address educational disparities to ensure all students prepared for global economy
3. Graduated system of subsidies for health insurance, child care and other services
4. Connect community and formal systems to provide social/emotional supports for children and families
5. Promote community benefit agreements with businesses & corporations

Other Issues Raised at the Summit: Integrating mental health into all services - social emotional bridge for families/children; Open communication - formal and informal - connection/support in both ways; All children - non-disproportional.

Westchester County Resources for Children

- Westchester Children's Association, www.wca4kids.org (914) 946-7676.
- Child Care Council of Westchester, www.childcarewestchester.org, (914) 761-3456.

Civil Legal Services for low-income families and individuals

Presenters: Jane Aoyama-Martin and Barbara Finkelstein

Objective: To support the creation of a just, safe and supportive environment for victims and survivors of domestic violence and abuse and to advocate on behalf of civil legal services for low-income families and individuals.

Background and Statistics:

The provision of civil legal services can have a life-changing impact for vulnerable low-income families and individuals who are able to remain in their homes, escape from domestic violence, stabilize their families, maintain or obtain subsistence income, or gain access to health care or an education – all of which are truly the essentials of life. Due to lack of available resources, there are gaps in service in every one of these substantive area of poverty law.

- The need for free civil legal services far outstrips all available services. In Westchester County, only 1 in 5 persons who need assistance can be served. Those turned away for services cannot afford pay for private attorneys and go unrepresented and are denied equal access to justice because they are poor.²⁸
- Low-income New Yorkers have three or more legal problems over the course of a year - legal problems that are defined as issues that could have been resolved with legal intervention.
- Westchester County (pop. 955,899) is the 8th most expensive metropolitan area in the U.S., but has almost 10% (93,107) people living in poverty, and almost 24% (266,456) people living below 200% of the poverty level (\$46,000 for a family of four). The areas of greatest need are Yonkers and Mt. Vernon, followed by New Rochelle, Peekskill, Port Chester, and White Plains. The areas of greatest need are Yonkers and Mt. Vernon, followed by New Rochelle, Peekskill, Port Chester, and White Plains. Westchester also has many smaller communities and suburban areas with

²⁸ Legal Services Corporation, Documenting the Justice Gap, updated 2009, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley was an original participant in documenting this gap in 2005 study; The Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York, Report to the Chief Judge, November 2010 Report <http://www.courts.state.ny.us/ip/access-civil-legal-services/PDF/CLS-TaskForceREPORT.pdf>

significant numbers of low-income people, including Elmsford, the Tarrytowns, Mamaroneck, Mt. Kisco, Ossining, Yorktown and Greenburgh.²⁹

- For low-income Westchester communities, the especially vulnerable residents who need legal services include immigrants, seniors, victims of abuse, veterans, single heads of households, the disabled, the homeless, and children.
- Investing in civil legal services provides substantial economic benefits to New York State and a return of approximately six dollars for every one dollar of funding.³⁰

Issue Priorities Ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Affordable preventative legal clinics for education and advice
2. Adjusting poverty level to meet realistic standards
3. More women to have safe housing (Anti-homeless, Anti-eviction)
4. Prevent children from foster care- redirect \$ to caregivers/grandparents
5. Promote alternative dispute resolution

Other Issues Raised at the Summit: Untangle shared assets; Macro: leverage more federal and state funding to combine with local funding to enhance services; Someone available to assist people in need of services on path to justice (needs assessment); Access to services; Education about services and court processes; Housing and eviction prevention; Homelessness; Financial issues for

²⁹ “The National Low Income Housing Coalition 2012 Report “Out of Reach 2012”. Census data- 2011 Poverty and Median Income Estimates; U.S. Census Bureau, Small Area Income and Poverty Estimates (SAIPE) Program, December 2012

³⁰ The Task Force to Expand Access to Civil Legal Services in New York, Report to the Chief Judge, November 2012 Report http://www.nycourts.gov/ip/access-civil-legal-services/PDF/CLS-TaskForceREPORT_Nov-2012.pdf

women; Legal literacy clinics and workshops; Providing information to avoid court (prevention); Raising financial eligibility for free legal services.

Westchester County Free Legal Resources

Each has its own eligibility requirements:

- Legal Services of the Hudson Valley www.lshv.org
- Pace Women's Justice Center www.law.pace.edu/wjc
- My Sister's Place www.mysistersplaceny.org
- Empire Justice Center www.empirejustice.org
- Westchester Hispanic Coalition www.hispaniccoalition.org

Immigration

Presenters: Zoe Colon and Daniel Villena

Objective: To advocate on behalf of legal, housing, job assistance and other support services for immigrants.

Background and Statistics

Immigrants are an important part of our nation, state and local communities. Consistent with New York's long history of immigration, a 2005 study estimates that Westchester County's immigrant population is almost 24% of the total population, accounting for 228,608 local residents. The Hispanic population is the fastest growing in the nation and is now the largest minority group comprising of 16% of the entire U.S. population. These numbers do not include the estimated 11 to over 20 million undocumented immigrants that are living in the shadows. Our immigrant community brings cultural and ethnic diversity making our County more vibrant. Irrespective of status, immigrants are vital—they contribute to our economic and political infrastructure in significant ways that are being increasingly recognized. As noted in *Immigrants and the Hudson Valley Economy*, our immigrant neighbors “are more likely than U.S.-born workers to be in prime working age” and “work in a much wider range of occupations than is commonly understood.”³¹

Immigrants are vulnerable to all forms of exploitation due to language barriers, unfamiliarity of their rights and the system in this country, and their status, among others. Immigrant workers are routinely subject to daily workplace violations. Immigrant workers and Hispanics in particular are at highest risk for workplace injury and death in the country. By helping immigrants adjust their status and move into the economic mainstream, the county is guarding against underpaid taxes, workplace injustices and ultimately protecting human lives. As we have seen all too recently and all too vividly, immigrants are often the target of violent crimes and at the same time are fearful of reaching out to law enforcement, especially if their immigration status is in question. Without intervention, the violence will continue unabated and the community as a whole will suffer. Underreporting of crimes including sexual abuse and interpersonal violence is already rampant in the nation. This fear is exacerbated in the immigrant community. **By helping immigrants adjust their status, by helping to diminish the fear of deportation, the County is keeping our communities safer.**

Federal immigration laws provide various pathways to regularizing status. They allow people to adjust their immigration status, sponsor family members, and, apply for citizenship. There are also special immigration processes for victims of domestic violence, for crime victims and for minors living in foster care. Despite these opportunities we are faced with the urgent need to change our immigration system

³¹ *Immigrants and the Hudson Valley Economy*, A Fiscal Policy Institute Report, December 2009. www.fiscalpolicy.org. The report defines immigrants as is standard in economic literature to include people residing in the United States who were born in another country whether or not they have become citizens and regardless of their current legal status.

to allow for millions of hard working families that have sacrificed everything to achieve the American Dream to adjust their status and come out of the shadows. Obtaining status leads to better employment options, helps keep families together, and brings stability to the community. These are all building blocks for a stronger community. **For many it means regaining a sense of worth, their voice, a right to a safe and just workplace, adequate housing conditions, among other basic human rights.**

Most of the current immigration reform proposals being considered have a pathway for regularizing status as a key aspect of the reform. Given the number of our immigrant neighbors, we must proactively address immigration reform—it's not just politics—it's a human rights issue. The pathways to regularizing status, however, are lined with several barriers: they are extremely complex and require specialized legal assistance; they are often unknown to those who are eligible; and because the population is at risk and vulnerable, they are often targeted by those who would scam and defraud them. Obtaining legal representation in immigration matters is often not affordable for most families. We must work together to ensure that our immigrant community that so vibrantly contributes to our diversity and competencies are protected and supported. Providing services and programs to help them integrate into and contribute to our social and economic fabric is critical. When our immigrant families thrive, so does the County as a whole.

Priorities Ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Access to HealthCare regardless of status
2. DREAM Act: Education on and opening up paths to citizenship
3. Making immigration a priority for county legislators, closing the gap between the immigrant community and legislative agendas
4. Human Trafficking: Education about and services for
5. ESL: Restructuring program, incorporation of adult ed., integration of ESL students in schools
6. Redefine our language surrounding immigration

Other Issues Raised at the Summit: Closing gap between immigrant community agenda and political/legislative agendas; County Office for immigrant affairs.

Summary

Most of the current immigration reform proposals being considered have a pathway for regularizing status as a key aspect of the reform. Given the number of our immigrant neighbors, we must proactively address immigration reform—it's not just politics—it's a human rights issue. The pathways to regularizing status, however, are lined with several barriers: they are extremely complex and require specialized legal assistance; they are often unknown to those who are eligible; and because the population is at risk and vulnerable, they are often targeted by those who would scam and defraud them. Obtaining legal representation in immigration matters is often not affordable for most families. We must work together to ensure that our immigrant community that so vibrantly contributes to our diversity and competencies are protected and supported. Providing services and programs to help them integrate into and contribute to our social and economic fabric is critical. When our immigrant families thrive, so does the County as a whole.

Open Session

Presenter: Kim Jacobs

Priorities Ranked by Participants at the Summit:

1. Uniting Across Diversity
2. Aging
3. Media Representation
4. Job Training
5. Flight Out of Westchester

Summary Report

Recognizing that the Agenda certainly had not addressed all of the issues of concern to women in the seven topics that had been identified for breakout sessions, it was agreed that an “Open Session” should also be made available so that women could bring to the table issues that they felt were having a significant impact on their lives that were not being addresses elsewhere. The discussion ended up falling into two categories: what and how. The “what” topics included Aging, the Portrayal of Women in the Media, and Flight out of Westchester. The “how” discussion engaged several participants in a discussion of the strategy and tactics that should be used to move the agenda forward.

The over-arching theme of this diverse range of topics was Uniting Across Diversity. The Summit had excellent representation of women in Westchester across a host of demographic, geographic, and financial measures, but the group that gathered to discuss Open issues was quick to note that we were all present because the issues women are facing in Westchester cross all of these lines. They felt the power of the day was that old and young, rich and poor, black, white and Hispanic – the experiences and concerns that were being shared were shared by all those present and that the very purpose of the Agenda should be to *Unite Westchester Women Across Diversity*.

What:

Aging: A number of issues were raised about aging for Women in Westchester. There was great concern about the **financial challenges** faced by older women including the loss of a second income in the household, facing retirement on a lifetime of earnings (and other benefits) that were/are lower than men’s earnings, predatory scams aimed at seniors and a need for access to unbiased financial

management advice. The important impact of the STAR exemption for those on the fixed budgets that was noted and it was agreed that the exemption should be proactively supported.

The group also spoke strongly about the **isolation** that many seniors face as their spouses, significant others, siblings and peers die. They are further isolated when adult children are living in other parts of the country due to personal and financial reasons. The discussion talked about the challenges of aging in place and the wide range of support services needed, housing options, transportation, nutrition, health care, household assistance, etc. at an affordable price, to make that a viable option.

Finally, the group addressed the **mental health** issues that can be a part of the aging process. Physical health problems can lead to or exacerbate mental health issues; the isolation noted above along with a culture that places little value on older Americans can lead to feelings of depression. Access to mental health care is a necessary part of any community that seeks to offer a welcoming, sustainable environment for those whose work and dedication built the communities we all now enjoy.

Media Presentations of Women: The group noted the continued representation of women in the media in **dismissive and disrespectful** ways as being an issue that undermines the progress that is made in other areas. The lack of positive role models, the portrayals of women in advertising, the marginalization of issues that are important to women are all subtle (and sometimes not too subtle) forms of repression and abuse. Note was made of the movie event the Agenda sponsored earlier this year that spoke directly about the portrayal of women in advertising and the Agenda's first "Misogynista" Awards presented to the most egregiously insulting ads.

Flight out of Westchester: Many members of this session expressed concern about the flight out of Westchester. The discussion included **young people**, who may have grown up in Westchester and received the benefit of huge investments of tax dollars into the areas well regarded schools, who never come back to the community so that it can bear the fruit of our investments. They follow careers to other parts of the country to be sure, but many of them also opt for a different type of lifestyle, choosing Brooklyn or the City where housing options include a more dynamic, interesting, diverse menu. While cost may be a factor in some cases, appeal seems to be the driving factor.

There is also concern about the cost of housing and taxes on our ability to retain **retirees** and attract **businesses**. Many retired workers leave the communities they helped create for other locations to help their fixed incomes go further (there are also weather incentives to be sure, but some retirees head for New Hampshire and Vermont, so weather likely is not the only factor).

How:

The Open Session also had a robust discussion on how to accomplish the goals that were being set by all groups at the Summit. A group that named themselves the Strategies and Tactics for Political Engagement group raised a number of issues:

Leadership: Particularly as it relates to **women in government positions**, but also including corporate and community leadership. There were discussions about the need to develop women candidates for political office, to ensure that women get appointed to boards and commissions in representative numbers and that everyone's right to vote without intimidation or harassment be protected. There was also concern about the lack of **family friendly policies** in the US workplace for women, whether it relates to child birth, child care, elder care, family leave, live/work balance or other issues that fall disproportionately on the shoulders of women.

Women's Financial Status: Noting the lifelong disadvantage that women face with regard to their earnings there was strong support for:

- Providing **training** for women to take positions in non-traditional jobs including early STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) training
- **Re-training** opportunities for those who are under-employed and whose skills do not meet the demands of the marketplace
- The development of effective **pathways out of poverty**/public assistance
- **Access to birth control and reproductive education**
- Access to **affordable childcare**

Financing Change: Finally, but potentially, most importantly, the Open Session addressed the need to find **traditional and non-traditional ways to finance our goals** including the opportunity and limitation of public finance, a need to look at public/private partnerships to create the community we all want to live in and a search for opportunities to collaborate and synergize were just a few of the thoughts that were put forward during this discussion, with an eager commitment of those involved to continue this exploration.

Aging

Presenter: Laura Traynor

Background and Statistics:

While not a formal issue at the Summit, aging is a women's issue. Close to 15% of Westchester County's population is 65+ and this number will rise dramatically in the next 20 years with the aging of the baby boom generation (those born between 1946 and 1964). According to the US Census, by 2030, the senior citizen population will be nearly 20% of the American population -an almost even ratio of children to seniors for the first time in history. America is growing older, and most older Americans are women. Aging, therefore, is largely a women's issue. Consider the following:

- Women live longer than men and are more likely to live alone. On average, women outlive men by five years. According to the Administration on Aging, seven out of 10 baby boom women are expected to outlive their husbands for up to 20 years. Currently, 80% of the more than 9 million older persons living alone are women.
- Many women face "old age" at an economic disadvantage due to time out of the workforce for parenting, caregiving and lingering salary inequalities. More than 70% of all elderly persons with incomes below the poverty level are women. Poverty increases with age, especially among older women of color and older women who live alone. Among older women living alone, one out of every two African Americans and two out of five Hispanic Americans live in poverty.³²
- Women shoulder the lion's share of family caregiving. Of the estimated 7 million Americans who are informal caregivers, almost three-fourths are women—many of them sandwiched between caring for an older relative and raising children or grandchildren. Moreover, for almost 1.3 million children, a grandparent—most often a grandmother—is their primary caregiver.³³
- Women represent 76 percent of the residents in assisted living facilities and two-thirds of the recipients of home care. Virtually none of this is paid for by Medicare. In nursing homes, Medicaid pays in for residents who exhaust their assets. Adding insult to injury, long term care insurance companies recently instituted gender-distinct pricing, a new strategy that will raise rates for single women by as much as 40 percent beginning this April.³⁴

³² Administration on Aging: Older Women. <http://www.aoa.gov/naic/may2000/factsheets/olderwomen.html>

³³ Administration on Aging: Older Women. <http://www.aoa.gov/naic/may2000/factsheets/olderwomen.html>

³⁴ The New Old Age: For Women, Reduced Access to Long Term Care Insurance. Accessed 2/20/13 at: <http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/02/06/for-women-reduced-access-to-long-term-care-insurance/>

Women & Aging - Advocacy Organizations

OWL – The Voice of Midlife and Older Women is a national grassroots membership organization that focuses solely on issues unique to women as they age. OWL strives to improve the status and quality of life for midlife and older women. Visit <http://www.owl-national.org>.

New York Statewide Senior Action Council is a grassroots membership organization made up of individual seniors and senior citizen clubs from all parts of New York State. Its goal is to achieve through united action the dignity, well-being and security of all senior citizens. Visit www.nysenior.org or call **800-333-4374**.

The Institute for Senior Action (IFSA) trains seniors 55+ to be advocates for senior issues and benefits. Nearly 1,000 people have taken the 10-week course to become leaders within their senior organizations and communities. For more information contact **Jewish Association Serving the Aging at 212-273-5262**.

National Council on Aging (NCOA) is a nonprofit service and advocacy organization headquartered in Washington, DC that provides a national voice for older Americans and the community organizations that serve them. Visit www.ncoa.org.

Regional Resources

The Center for Aging in Place works with citizen volunteers throughout Westchester County to develop grassroots membership programs that enable older adults to remain at home and in community through coordinated services and life enriching activities. Close to 1000 residents now belong to one of the county's nine Aging in Place programs. For information call the Center at **914-357-8511** or visit www.centerforaginginplace.org.

Westchester Residential Opportunities offers free counseling and support to older women in tax foreclosure and who face other housing-related challenges. **Call 914-428-4507, ext. 313**.

The Transition Network an inclusive community of professional women, 50 and forward, whose changing life situations lead them to seek new connections, resources, and opportunities. Visit www.thetransitionnetwork.org.

The Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services

Contact: (914) 813-6441 or send an e-mail to cap2@westchestergov.com

- **Caregiver Coaching Program** helps family caregivers make informed decisions to better care for their older or disabled loved ones
- **Care Circles** of Westchester provides family caregivers with information to coordinate help for their loved ones from volunteers, who share in caregiving tasks.

- **RideConnect** provides volunteers to drive seniors in northern Westchester to places such as the local mall, the doctor's office and other destinations.
- **Living Well** is a new initiative that will teach seniors how to self-manage their chronic health conditions. Westchester County's Department of Senior Programs and Services is the lead agency for seven counties in the Mid-Hudson Valley for this federal program.
- **Livable Communities Initiative**
- NY Connects to learn about long-term care options in Westchester.
- Senior Clubs and Centers; Nutrition Program; Benefits Information

The Public Private Partnership on Aging

Contact: Martha Marzano: (914) 813-6435; marthamarzano@westchesterpartnership.org

- **VOCAL - VOICES OF COMMUNITY ACTION AND LEADERSHIP** Partners In Education and Advocacy an educational program for intergenerational advocacy for aging-related issues
- **The Westchester Alliance of Academic Institutions for Aging Related Studies and Workforce Development** was established to research the opportunities that exist within our institutions to meet the needs of a changing demographic.
- **SMART (Students and Mature Adults Read Together)**
Partners In Education and Advocacy. SMART is a model intergenerational literacy program that utilizes the largely untapped resources of older adults to benefit the youth of Westchester.

Blogs

The New York Times: The New Old Age at <http://newoldage.blogs.nytimes.com>

Summit Evaluation

Strongly or Somewhat Agree

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| 1. I liked the format of the Summit. | 91.1% |
| 2. I felt my concerns and ideas were heard and valued. | 83.9% |
| 3. The keynote address was Inspiring and Motivational. | 89.7% |
| 4. The breakout sessions helped me focus on our issues. | 85.3% |
| 5. I will take action on these issue areas following this Summit. | 90.9% |
| 6. The interactive voting technology was used effectively and benefited our Summit. | 97.8% |
| 7. Today's Summit was successful. | 95.1% |

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