

The Guidance Center of Westchester

TIMES

Spring
2021

From the CEO



I often think back to March of 2020 when we first encountered COVID-19. Who knew how much our lives would change? As the CEO, I was so worried then about how The Guidance Center of Westchester (TGCW) would be able to keep going when so many

of our programs—early childhood, college and career prep, mental health, and substance use treatment—depended on participants going to an office and in-person interaction. Where did this leave us and those who rely on us?

The answer was in our mission: “to provide innovative and effective programs to enable everyone to learn, work and thrive.” The entire TGCW staff rallied, pulled together, and produced an innovative plan that enabled us to provide help to our participants, who truly needed us more than ever. The creativity, grit, and determination of the TGCW staff was—and continues to be—amazing. We have the results to show for it. Some of those are highlighted in the sidebar.

We have learned new skills: how to provide therapy via FaceTime and the phone; how to teach preschool using Zoom; how to engage those in substance use treatment with peers for continued interaction. The list goes on and on.

In the middle of all this, we received federal funds to help us create our Access Center, making us an official Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC). This ties together all the work we do in substance use and mental health, streamlining treatment and services for those most in need. Our hotline 888-TGCW-CAN means that whenever someone calls for help—whatever

time of day and regardless of their ability to pay—we not only have someone to answer the call, but also can begin treatment right away. It also allows us to offer walk-in hours daily from 9 AM – 5 PM.

The timing could not be better. As so many in our communities feel the emotional impact of COVID-19—from the isolation, the stress, the financial despair—we now have even more ways available to help. And that is what we do.

Of course, you helped us through it all. You continued to donate, to believe in us, and to ask what more you could do. Thank you.

Together, we thrive.

Amy Gelles
Chief Executive Officer

- ☆ PROS increased enrollment to 106 total participants
- ☆ 225 children from our early childhood programs participated in daily virtual learning
- ☆ 24 children of essential workers received FREE childcare at our Creative Learning Center (CLC)
- ☆ 16 young adults completed FutureWorks, earning certifications needed to begin working in construction and related fields
- ☆ 10 young adults completed Urban Handyperson, earning certifications and hands-on work experience...and so much more!

The Guidance Center of Westchester

256 Washington Street • Mount Vernon, NY 10553 • 914-613-0700 • TheGuidanceCenter.org



Stephanie Ortiz

Dawn Barrett

The Career Exploration Workshop via Zoom was a fantastic way for the young adults from Mount Vernon and New Rochelle to engage with esteemed professionals from various fields, all of whom shared valuable information and insight.

The panelists consisted of the members from the Center for College

ADVISORY BOARD PARTICIPANTS INCLUDED:

- Carolyn Champ, Associate Executive Director, Support Center
- Matt Feinberg, Associate at law firm of Milber Makris Plousadis & Seiden, LLP
- Heather McGowan, MD, Pediatrician
- Aparna Prabhakar, Vice President, IBM Corporate Strategy
- Jeff Wordham, Partner, Deloitte Consulting

& Careers (CCC) advisory board who have careers in business/consulting, technology, medicine, law, and nonprofit leadership. There were 39 student participants on the Zoom, and the students were attentive and inquisitive. So much so that we ran out of time before the students ran out of questions.

Students posed various questions to the to the panelists, such as: "What advice would you give to your younger self? What advice would you give to a college freshman? Does your company offer internships for high school and college students?"

As a college and career counselor, I always emphasize to the high school students that academics are the most critical factor on a college application, followed by extra-curricular activities, community service, and volunteering.

Kaishaun N. is a senior at Mount Vernon High school, and he shares his thoughts about the workshop:

"The career panel was great; I had an excellent opportunity to ask people who work in the same field that I am interested which is technology. Even though many students were there, I felt that the panelist did not ignore me; all my questions were brought up, and all the panelists answered. I hope that soon I will be able to attend another panel and hopefully get in contact with the panelist."

The Career Exploration Workshop is a useful resource and opportunity for students to think about their careers and map out their future. On behalf of the students and the Center for College & Careers staff, I'd like to thank our advisory board members for their commitment to supporting our students as they pursue their passions.

FREE remote learning for children of essential workers

Westchester County designated our Creative Learning Center (CLC) in New Rochelle to be one of 20 Remote Learning Centers, where children of essential workers can safely and effectively attend a remote learning school day for FREE.

While the program was introduced in 2020 as the pandemic began, County Executive George Latimer announced in January that it would remain available through the end of the 2020–21 school year (June). The CLC is able to accommodate children in K-2nd grades.

Donna Morrison, deputy executive director for early childhood programs says, “We are proud to be able to offer this for free to families of essential workers. We know that keeping children focused on learning is a full-time job by itself.”

- Available 8 AM–3:30 PM
- Tech support
- Participation monitoring to ensure the child attends all scheduled lessons
- Guidance for off-line learning
- 2 meals and snack provided daily
- Time for fun and friends!



To participate, call 914-613-0700 x7301 or email EarlyChildhood@TheGuidanceCenter.org. Remember: this program is FREE for all essential workers. Others can utilize the program for a modest tuition. The CLC follows all CDC recommended safety and health protocols.

Heather A. McGowan

Donna Morrison

Wordham, Jeffrey

into a career

“It was fun and inspiring to speak with a group of students with so much excitement and curiosity for the future. The level of participation and the questions they asked—from what computer science majors might be most marketable to how they should network outside the application process—demonstrates how well the CCC is preparing students for the next phase of their lives.”

Advisory Board Member
Jeff Wordham,
Partner, Deloitte Consulting.

Article contributed by
Dawn Barrett, college
& career counselor



The Guidance Center
of Westchester

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Mount Vernon, NY 10553

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SAVE *the* DATE
ANNUAL GALA

THURSDAY • JUNE 10, 2021
6:30 PM

The Guidance Center of Westchester's
Virtual Gala

Amid a Pandemic, Kindness Rises

2020 showed us many things. Among them, the strength and compassion of community.

"From the onset of the pandemic, we had people and companies contacting us asking what they could do to help our program participants," says Ann R. Hyatt, chief development & external relations officer. "The ongoing generosity and kindness did more than provide needed items. It let our participants know that they were remembered during these very lonely times."

Many thanks to all who made in-kind donations. While we truly hope we captured all the gifts (given in 2020), please let us know if we inadvertently missed anyone:

- Colgate-Palmolive Company: toiletry and personal care kits
- EarthBreeze: eco-friendly laundry detergent
- Family Community Church: holiday turkeys
- GEM Management Partners: hosted food drive
- Good360 (a program of United Way of Westchester and Putnam): bedding (Brooklinen); socks (Bombas); school supplies (WalMart); blankets (Delta Airlines)
- Kathy & Sonny Hagendorf: diapers, wipes, COVID-19 supplies
- Brenna Judge & Hunter Seegers: laundry detergent drive
- Junior League of Bronxville: meals
- Holy Family Church of New Rochelle: gift cards and personal care kits
- McFarland Family, Clarke Family, and Saints John & Paul Confirmation Candidates: hosted winter supplies drive for housing and homeless outreach
- Kevin & Gwen Reardon: iPad tablets for remote learning; diapers and wipes; canned food; COVID-19 supplies
- Refugio de Esperanza: holiday turkeys
- Temple Shaaray Tefila: holiday meals
- Toys for Tots Westchester: toys
- Westchester Reform Temple: books, games

Want to help? Get in touch with us. We have a list of items that are most needed and requested by our program participants. Together, we thrive!
Events@TheGuidanceCenter.org.



TWO NIGHTS IN JANUARY

On January 27 and 28, as temperatures in Westchester dipped into the low 20s, members from our housing and care management teams didn't head home to curl up with a warm cup of tea. Instead, they bundled up and hit the streets as part of the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) count, a nationwide effort to count the number of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness. The count helps provide insight to the needs of individuals and looks at trends in homelessness.

"I recognize the importance of housing to our street homeless population and will always be an advocate to obtain additional housing funds," says Brittany Fox, assistant director, health home care management.



Over the two nights, the TGCW team members were assigned to counting street homeless in New Rochelle, Mount Vernon, and Yonkers. When they encounter a street homeless person, staff make sure the individual is aware of available resources. They hope to have the person complete the PIT survey questions, which help give a picture of how long the person has been homeless and other demographic information. The homeless receive a small care kit, containing a \$5 Dunkin gift card, sandwich, toothbrush, toothpaste, peanut butter, and deodorant, which is provided by the county. TGCW staff also handed out blankets.

While not official numbers, TGCW staff reported 54 individuals who are considered street or unsheltered homeless. Official numbers will be released by the county.

Thank you to the following staff members who participated in the PIT count: Lawrence Anokye, Michael Dones, Brittany Fox, Husani Holder, and Samuel Laurency.



Did you see
our billboard
campaign in
Mount Vernon?

