

Investing **in** Change



Teens enjoy the chance to be themselves at Center Lane's Gay Prom. Photos by WJCS.

Community Foundation grants help teens feel safe and accepted

Being a teenager is difficult and confusing enough. Add issues of sexual identity or gender confusion and the difficulties multiply. LGBTQ teens often feel isolated at home and in school, leading to high rates of depression, suicide, and homelessness. They need a safe place and a willing ear.

That place is Westchester Jewish Community Service's Center Lane, a program for LGBTQ teens. Since 1995, Center Lane has provided counseling as well as preventive health services to teens in

Yonkers. It focuses on typical teen-related programs, too, such as college counseling and social events.

In 2013 the Westchester Community Foundation contacted Center Lane to ask where LGBTQ teens outside of Yonkers were getting services. "We knew there was need in other parts of the county, particularly in Northern Westchester. We also knew Center Lane was the only program of its kind," says Executive Director Laura Rossi. When Center Lane



In 2015, the Foundation distributed **\$1.7 million** to more than **77 organizations** from its endowed funds. These funds were established by generous donors who love Westchester.

What do **you** love? Consider including us in your estate planning so you can help us help others. Call Jane Wilton, General Counsel at the New York Community Trust, at 212-686-0010, ext. 379.



3 Questions for Executive Director Laura Rossi

Laura Rossi, Esq. became executive director of the Westchester Community Foundation in July 2015. A lifelong resident of Westchester, Ms. Rossi previously was responsible for grantmaking in the environment, community development, safety net, and health program areas. Ms. Rossi is the third executive director of the Foundation, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary. A Katonah resident, she previously practiced appellate law in New York City. She has taught constitutional and civil rights law to undergraduates at Pace and Fordham universities. She is a graduate of St. John's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and New York Law School. She is a board member of Sustainable Westchester and the Support Center/Partnership in Philanthropy.

What are your top priorities in the coming year?

We want the Westchester Community Foundation to become known as a resource for smart philanthropy. We do a terrific job vetting agencies, staying on top of the best approaches to address the needs in our community, and investing our permanent funds in bold ideas.

Can you describe the biggest challenges facing Westchester right now?

The high cost of living makes it extremely difficult to attract young people to put down roots here. At the same time many of our seniors – who helped make Westchester a great place to live – are struggling. And, as poverty rises in America's suburbs, we see increased strain on the resources of our local nonprofits to meet basic needs.

Any message to donors who want to become more involved in the work of the Foundation?

We are eager to work with you to fulfill your philanthropic goals. We also want to share the stories of our work to improve the quality of life in Westchester. Check our website (www.wcf-ny.org) for updates on donor briefings and events, and be sure you are on our email list by contacting me at lrossi@wcf-ny.org, or Jennifer Hu Corriggio, Director of Philanthropy and Donor Relations, at JCorriggio@wcf-ny.org.

(cover story)

explained they wanted to reach teens throughout Westchester, the Foundation provided funding for expansion. The program now provides services at Peekskill High School and expanded drop-in hours in White Plains, reaching 500 teens a year. It also supports a thriving network of Gay/Straight Alliances at high schools throughout the county.

"We are so grateful to the Westchester Community Foundation and its donors for their generous support of this important program," says Santo Barbagiovanni, Center Lane's program director. He adds that the funding "shows how deeply they care about all of Westchester's young people."



Center Lane's annual Gay Prom helps teens and young adults across the county connect with one another and have fun.



Jackie Dunbar and her sister, Dorothy.

Honoring a sister to help girls of color

Jacqueline Dunbar, M.D., wanted to honor her sister and parents and ensure that

young women and girls of color are supported as they become scientists or teachers or doctors or concert pianists. In 2014, she opened the Dunbar Family Fund at the Westchester Community Foundation.

Dr. Dunbar had been a member of the Foundation's board of advisors for nearly a decade, and understood the important work the Foundation did for women and girls. "I knew that the Foundation would ensure that my funds went to reputable nonprofits who help young girls of color achieve their dreams," she says. "Because the staff does the investigating for me, I know I'm making good grants."

She was inspired by her sister Dorothy, who had dreamed of being a professional pianist. When that dream was spoiled by illness, she became a music

and vocal teacher, and later earned her doctorate in education, rising to become chair of the Mercy College Education Department.

Dr. Dunbar said of her sister, "She never asked why things couldn't have been different. She had such an upbeat attitude and positive approach that she never revealed her physical pain. She had a kind, encouraging word for every one around her. She had the temperament to teach."

As for Dr. Dunbar, she started as a teacher, but decided to become a physician. She had a private OB-GYN practice in White Plains for 28 years. Westchester is filled with people she delivered as babies.

"I want to honor Dorothy's memory and thank my parents for their love and guidance," she said. The fund is specifically for minority girls and women seeking careers in math, science, education, or the arts. "My sister and I were once those girls, with our own individual interests and barriers to education. I want to make sure others have a helping hand."

ON THE HIGH SEAS

The Hudson River Museum's Junior Docents spent an afternoon on the Sloop Clearwater learning about the river.

The Docents program, with a grant from Westchester Community Foundation, offers Yonkers teens college preparation activities and tours, communications workshops, career training, and an appreciation of art and culture.



Why work with us? It's smart and easy.

Lawyers and financial advisors find many reasons to work with us. For example, when the costs of establishing and maintaining a private foundation outweigh the tax benefits, a donor advised fund is a good alternative.

You can set up a fund with a simple agreement letter. The savings to donors are considerable, both in set-up and ongoing administrative fees.

The benefits of charitable giving through a fund with us accrue, no matter the size of the initial gift. Our

donors gain immediate and favorable tax advantages; investment and management of funds by The New York Community Trust; freedom from the burden of filing annual reports with the IRS and New York State Office of Charities; relief from excise taxes, and a mandatory annual payout.

Contact Laura Rossi or Jennifer Hu Corriggio for information at 914-948-5166.



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NEW FUND LAUNCHES SOCIAL JUSTICE GRANTS PROGRAM

In October, we were pleased to launch a first round of grants from the Dominican Sisters of Hope Empowerment Fund. The grants are a suite of focused investments that are geared toward social justice. "These grants are intended to help poor individuals and families improve their social and economic conditions," notes

Program Officer Robin Melén. The Sisters use the nautilus as their symbol (left) because it represents growth and evolution. For us, that means working to end poverty.

Join us!

In commemoration of the Foundation's 40th anniversary, the Board of Advisors established the **Fund for Westchester's Future** to meet emerging needs in the county, such as disaster response, access to the arts for all ages, and animal welfare. Our goal is to raise \$200,000 this year. Join us in our mission to improve the quality of life for everyone in Westchester by making your tax-deductible contribution to the Fund for Westchester's Future today. Contact Laura Rossi or Jennifer Hu Corriggio for information.