FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We believe a community is only as strong as the compassion of its people and the inspiration of its leaders. Westchester is home to many inspiring individuals who dedicate their professional careers to the public good. These nonprofit leaders work tirelessly to provide vital services, overcome longstanding problems and push for lasting change. They are supported by board members and volunteers whose commitment to their mission can make a good organization become great.

This newsletter profiles some of the great nonprofits the Foundation partners with to create a better Westchester. Nonprofit Westchester and Rockwood Leadership Institute are strengthening the nonprofit sector through advocacy and leadership development. Volunteers at Hearts and Homes for Refugees and African American Men of Westchester are welcoming new neighbors and transforming lives.

We hope you will be inspired by their stories.

At the Westchester Community Foundation, we have been fortunate to have the dedication and support of many Advisory Board members who elevate our work. We take a moment to honor the legacies of two exceptional individuals: Ralph Penny, whose service contributed to our growth and presence in the community; and Katherine Moore, whose generosity and deep commitment to the arts as well as social, racial and economic justice has created a lasting legacy for our community.

We will miss them greatly.

Laura Rossi, Esq., Executive Director

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A career in the nonprofit sector is often called a labor of love. In part, that’s because working to improve the lives of others can be so fulfilling.

But the “labor of love” label can also be a palatable way to acknowledge an uncomfortable truth: Nonprofit salaries lag behind compensation in other sectors.

Nonprofit Westchester (NPW), an association of the county’s nonprofits, wants to change that. Founded in 2012 with support from WCF, the organization provides professional development and advocacy for its more than 300 member organizations.

“Certainly, nonprofits offer as much value to society as do government and the business sector,” said NPW Executive Director Jan Fisher. “But we do know that people in the nonprofit sector are underpaid.”

As nonprofits compete for funding, moderate salaries can help keep budgets in check. But, as salary transparency gains momentum in New York State, NPW says nonprofit leaders need more tools to advocate for better pay.

That’s why WCF is helping fund a regional compensation survey by NPW. Fisher said the results will be crucial for advocacy, and, she hopes, a much-needed catalyst for change.

“The most important thing that we hope to do with this salary survey is to now have a critical resource for our nonprofit organizations to benchmark salaries against like organizations, and other employers in Westchester County specifically,” Fisher said. “We wanted to be able to respond to our membership with this service.”

The data can help in other ways, too, as when the facts point to underlying inequities that need to be remedied. As Fisher pointed out: “This is a workforce that is 80 percent women and 55 percent people of color. So there are surrounding issues that still have to be addressed.”

With the new salary survey results now being analyzed, Westchester’s nonprofit leaders will have a powerful new tool to advocate for fair and updated compensation for the work they and their staff do.
Helping Refugees Resettle and Thrive
HEARTS & HOMES FOR REFUGEES

When armed conflict or persecution compels people to flee their homes, they are truly in crisis. Forced to abandon their belongings, and often their families, they face an uncertain future.

The UN Refugee Agency has recorded 103 million displaced persons around the world. Thousands come to New York, but until recently, Westchester County was not considered a viable sanctuary for refugees.

Hearts & Homes for Refugees Board Chair Kathie O’Callaghan saw untapped potential in people of goodwill in Westchester to unite in welcoming refugees. “Today, we work with four resettlement agencies who confidently place their families in our care,” she said. The foundation is supporting this work.

The organization helps displaced persons from all over the globe, including Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Myanmar, providing housing, food, medical care; translators and language instruction; and other services.

O’Callaghan says the region hosted no refugees in 2016, but welcomed over 170 in the past six years.

“When community sponsors build scaffolding and offer networking support around new arrivals, refugees are more likely to thrive in dignity and safety, integrate into the community, and find success as new Americans,” O’Callaghan said.

New Rochelle resident Peter Ruocco and a new neighbor.
For BIPOC Leaders, a Safe Space to Navigate Change
ROCKWOOD LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Last October, with support from WCF, a group of 20 nonprofit leaders from throughout Westchester gathered for training in the Art of Navigating Change.

The training was given by the Rockwood Leadership Institute, which provides workshops for leadership development, with a focus on diversity and social change. By design, participants were 90 percent leaders of color.

Working from the premise that Westchester’s nonprofits are rich in talent just below the executive level, the Foundation designed the program to help these future leaders to develop strategies and share resources.

Sherrisse-Lee Lewis, director of operations at Sustainable Westchester, said the event became a safe space for BIPOC participants to speak openly about difficult issues such as racism in the workplace, particularly in white-led or majority-white organizations.

“The facilitators were very upbeat and welcoming and considerate to the diverse group that was in the room,” Lewis said. “The thing that I walked away with was just being able to give space to myself, which is what so many of us don’t do. We don’t get a lot of time as leaders to sit back and just breathe and just be.”

Free from the pressure to “perform” as leaders of their organizations, participants shared best practices and learned from each other, and have formed a cohort of emerging leaders in the region.
A Teacher’s Legacy Helps Young People in Need
AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN OF WESTCHESTER

The African American Men of Westchester address social issues related to education, youth empowerment, domestic violence awareness and environmental justice. The Foundation partners with AAMW through the Albertina Bloom scholarship program, which provides promising young people with financial assistance for college.

Born in 1904, Albertina Bloom taught in public schools in Harlem and the Bronx. She is remembered as a soft-spoken woman who often provided underfunded classrooms with art supplies purchased with her own money.

Bloom left her entire estate to the Foundation “to aid students of promising educational potential and good character, who have need of assistance and who might otherwise be unable to avail themselves of the advantages of college training.”

Laura Rossi, executive director of the Westchester Community Foundation, said the partnership with AAMW is honoring an important legacy gift to the Foundation.

“Albertina Bloom dedicated her life to educating young people, and her bequest continues that legacy,” she said. “The African American Men of Westchester have done a fabulous job of identifying stellar students. We think Miss Bloom would be proud.”

This year’s recipients were chosen from a pool of 29 nominees. They received their scholarship at AAMW’s signature event, the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Youth Awards, which recognizes outstanding students throughout the county for their service to the community.

Pictured, left to right: Rev. Hugh Marriott (AAMW), Scholars Arianna Ronan (White Plains High School), Lamyaa Hamid, Alexis Fernandez and Leonah Esteves ( Peekskill High School); Eon Nicholas, Esq. (AAMW)
## Top 10 Reasons to give through a community foundation

1. We are a local organization with deep roots in the community.
2. Our professional staff has broad expertise regarding community issues and needs.
3. We provide highly personalized service tailored to each individual’s charitable and financial interest.
4. Our funds help people invest in the causes they care about most.
5. We accept a wide variety of assets, and can facilitate even the most complex forms of giving.
6. We partner with professional advisors to create highly effective approaches to charitable giving.
7. We offer maximum tax advantage for most gifts under federal law.
8. We multiply the impact of gift dollars by pooling them with other gifts and grants.
9. We build endowment funds that benefit the community forever and help create personal legacies.
10. We are a community leader, convening agencies and coordinating resources to create positive change.

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EXPERIENCE

THE BENEFITS OF GIVING

THE POWER OF GIVING

THE JOY OF GIVING

Support the nonprofits that make this region a great place to live, work, and play. When you give, you make a difference.

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