

WESTCHESTER YOUTH ALLIANCE

**BUILDING BRIDGES.
CREATING COMMUNITY.**

“Imagine a community whose members seemingly have more differences than similarities, one that is a diverse group of people that transcends racial, cultural, and religious boundaries but is united by the goal of doing good for humanity. **That’s WYA.**”

ERIC, WYA ALUMNUS,
STUDENT AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY

Westchester Youth Alliance connects high school age students across the county from diverse communities of faith, race, and identity and engages them in conversation, mobilizes them in community service, and empowers them to create a better, culturally informed world—starting with Westchester.

WestchesterYouthAlliance.org

**When there are no limitations on
who is included, there are no limits
to what we can accomplish.**



Hilltop Hanover Farm
YORKTOWN HEIGHTS

Who We Are

At WYA, we do more than encourage coexistence. We take action. And we make connections. Since our founding in 2012, we've reached out to teens from diverse communities of faith, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, gender identity, and more. We build bridges across individual communities by engaging teens in dialogue and working side-by-side on community service projects. We're committed to providing teens from different backgrounds with the skills they need to identify common values and foster authentic relationships.

“Stereotypes and ignorance reinforce barriers and add to divisiveness. The dream and work of WYA is to deepen understanding among youth, which in turn, will strengthen our communities.”

PAUL ALCORN
CO-FOUNDER WYA

Building Bridges and Creating Community Since 2012

Where We're Headed

WYA is on a growth trajectory! We're actively expanding our impact through additional partnerships, increased programming, and by broadening our geographic reach. WYA has partnered with more than 40+ faith-based and youth-serving community organizations to develop and deliver programs. These partnerships are vital to our programming model and we are continually broadening affiliations throughout Westchester County.

“By continuing to create opportunities to learn with and from each other, WYA is constantly evolving.”

NISA GELLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



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47%

Increase in the number of teens participating in the 2022-23 school year vs. 2021-22.



Number of schools represented in Westchester has grown over

30%

Number of events/service opportunities has **doubled** year over year.

Source: WYA Data Collection from 2022-23 events/service opportunities



Thanksgiving Cooking
MT KISCO

The experience of interacting with people different from me gave me more confidence in myself, stemming from the realization that so much of the differences we see in others, and the fear that comes as a result, is ill-informed.”

PORTER, WYA ALUMNUS
STUDENT AT UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREW

Why We're Here

WYA provides the tools teens need to be active participants in a democratic society and to become agents of change. Through WYA, youth find common ground on issues that are important to them — regardless of individual faith, race, and identity—and discover their place as an integral part of an evolving society. WYA supports them along a journey to discover their passions and find their voice, and by facilitating opportunities for them to act.



70%

of WYA teens said they feel more comfortable speaking to peers about controversial topics.*

Research shows that volunteering and acts of kindness toward others can decrease stress, increase self-esteem, and add meaning to life.



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Roadmap for the Journey

A thoughtfully curated curriculum guides all programming, from community service, to educational opportunities, to social justice activities, to fun recreational events. Curriculum is based on three pillars:

Nurturing Voice Members engage in active listening and learn effective use of dialogue and body language as an extension of voice. They learn to recognize a continuum of perspectives and to practice respectful disagreement.

Building Community Teens learn to appreciate the value in multiple perspectives and use cognitive dissonance as an engine for understanding community values. Through critical thinking about the society they live in and envisioning the one they want to create, members take steps toward designing a better future. WYA's democratic decision-making process guides them from brainstorming, to proposal writing, to debating, and ultimately, to voting on proposals.

Taking Action To go beyond simply seeing themselves as agents of change and actually taking action, members work collaboratively and collectively. They pose problems and map solutions, using voice to enhance one's authentic journey to community building and activism. Along the way, they develop resilience and courage, and by thinking interdependently in the problem-solving process, they learn the value of teamwork.

82%

of WYA teens said they feel more equipped to speak out against bigotry and bullying.*



* Source: WYA Survey 2019

The WYA Experience

At WYA not only is everyone invited, each participant is involved. Robust programming includes community service as a vehicle to bring teens together. We provide meaningful opportunities to learn with and from each other and provide opportunities for teens to engage in dialogue and action based on common values. Activities include service projects, art projects, and regular gatherings to connect, reflect, and plan.



A-Home
Affordable Housing
BRIARCLIFF

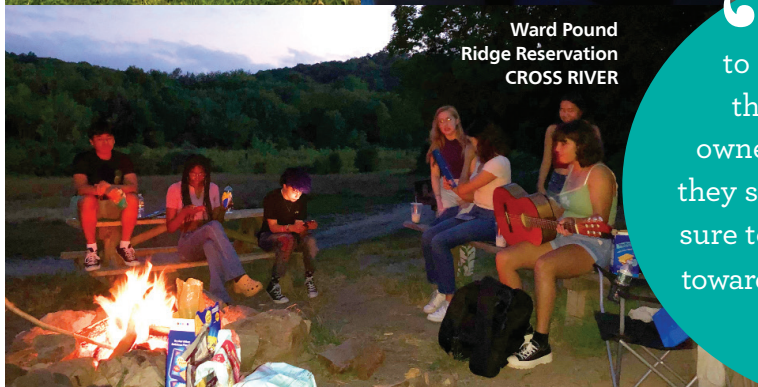
Not just invited. **Involved!**



Garden of Hope
YORKTOWN



Children's Aid Society
CHAPPAQUA



Ward Pound
Ridge Reservation
CROSS RIVER

“ For members to flourish, it’s important that they feel a sense of ownership over the time that they spend at WYA, and I make sure to tailor our programming towards individual youth goals.”

CHLOE FERNANDEZ
PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Programming

WYA organizes a variety of large-scale events, focused experiences, and guided discussions based on themes determined by our teen members. Because our membership is constantly evolving, our areas of focus are continually changing based on membership and informed by current events. Teens use WYA as an engine to fuel their passions! Recent issues of importance have included:

- Mental health
- Food insecurity
- Gun violence
- Climate change
- Rise of hate



WYA's Impact

Uniting Diverse Communities to Effect Change

350+

Events
Since 2012



“WYA has created a forum and framework for my son to develop his own voice and passion for social justice and advocacy. WYA has inspired confidence in my son for him to go out and make a difference in his community and his world and has taught him how to do it.”

LYNN PARENT

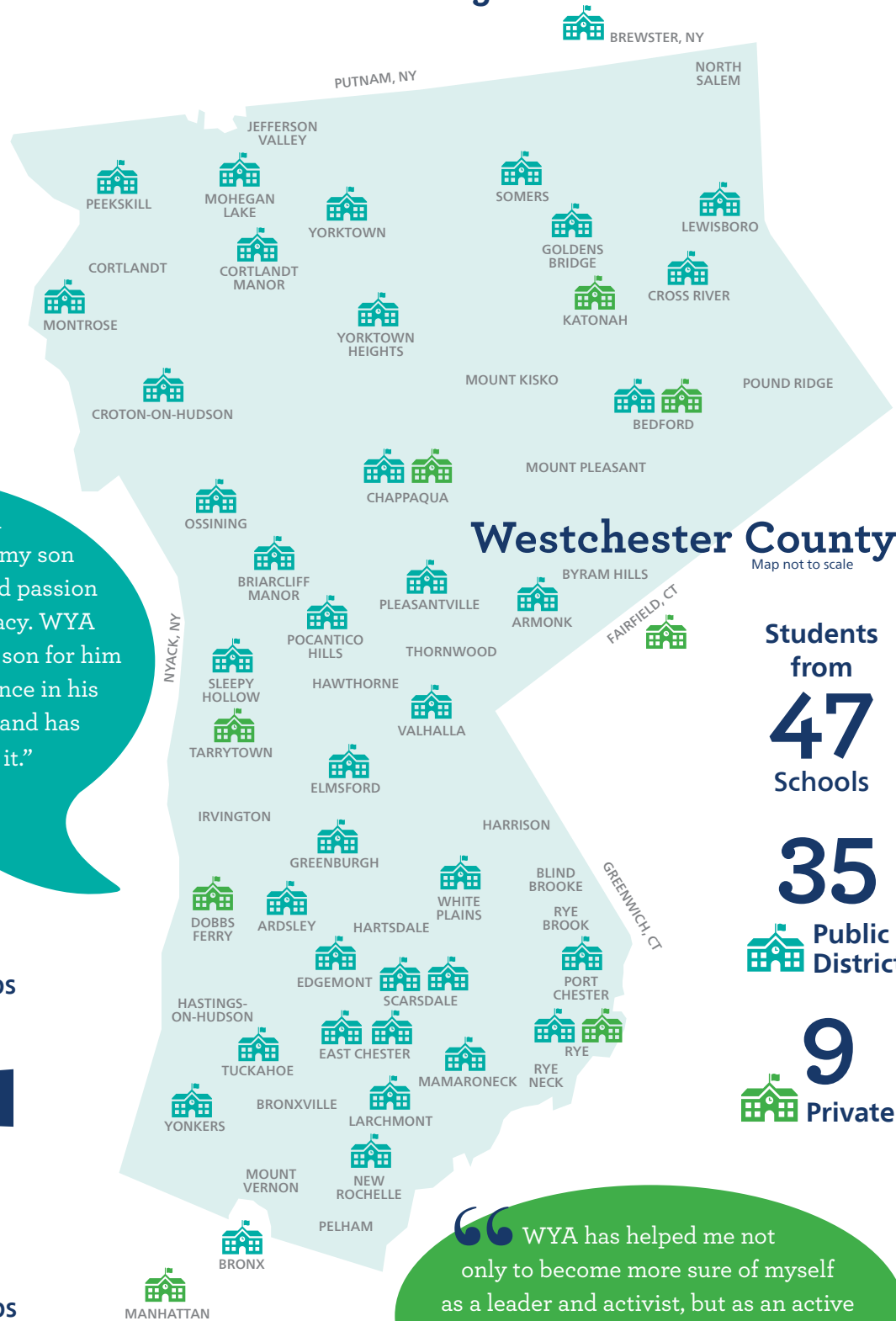
22

Faith-Based Partnerships



20

Community Partnerships



Students from
47
Schools

35
Public District

9
Private

“WYA has helped me not only to become more sure of myself as a leader and activist, but as an active part of my community.”

ROXIE
SLEEPY HOLLOW HIGH SCHOOL



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Become an Ally!

You can help support WYA in a variety of ways...

Partner with Us Introduce youth from your community to our programs and/or team up with WYA to enhance your organization's efforts and help enable your mission.

Volunteer Get involved by helping teens find their voice and developing opportunities for them to act on their passions.

Make a Donation Increase our impact through a financial contribution. You can designate your gift in honor of a special person or event.

Become a Board Member Join our board or participate in a committee and help us maximize our current efforts and plan for the future.



“WYA is experiencing unprecedented interest in our work, and we are in an exciting period of growth. New funding and resources will enable us to continue to increase program access, engage more teens, and amplify our impact.”

LAURIE HIRSCH SCHULZ
BOARD PRESIDENT



Visit our Website

WestchesterYouthAlliance.org

Contact Us

WestchesterYouthAlliance@gmail.com

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@wya_ny

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