



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
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**UNA-USA Westchester and Partners celebrate UN Day 2015
October 23 and 25, 2015, YWCA White Plains, NY**

The United Nations Association (UNA-USA) Westchester chapter had an amazing October weekend celebrating the UN's 70th anniversary. On Friday, October 23 Mayor Thomas Roach of White Plains graciously presided over a ceremony to raise the UN flag at City Hall. UNA board members and UN Day partners from the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Links, Inc. and YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester attended the ceremony. Mayor Roach honored us with a proclamation recognizing Saturday October 24, 2015 as UN Day and stated that he appreciated the work of the UN and its many partners, including those who participated in the ceremony at City Hall. Marcia Brewster, President of UNA-Westchester, noted that, "We are celebrating the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations this year and our chapter is involved in raising awareness of the good work of the UN. This includes the recently-adopted Sustainable Development Goals that will shape the global agenda for development, peace and security, and human over the next 15 years. It is at the local level where UNA has its greatest impact, working with partners such as those present here at City Hall."

The main celebration of UN Day in Westchester took place on October 25th at the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester. The theme was "Fostering Global Citizens to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)." Over 140 people attended the event, representing communities throughout Westchester, including high school students from several Westchester schools. MaryJane Shimsky, County Legislator, presented the chapter with a proclamation Resolving that "... the members of the Westchester County Board of Legislators take great pride in joining with their esteemed colleagues... as we celebrate United Nations Day" and that "the 24th Day of October 2015 be proclaimed 'Westchester United Nations Day in all of the county.'" Cosponsors of the event were Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. (Zeta Nu Omega, Xi Chi Omega, Pi Iota Omega chapters), The Links, Inc. (Westchester County and Greater Hudson Valley Chapters) and the YWCA White Plains & Central Westchester.

Maria Imperial, CEO of the YWCA, and Marcia Brewster, President of UNA-Westchester, welcomed all the participants and thanked all their partner organizations. Ambassador Thomas Gass, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, was our keynote speaker. Ambassador Gass provided a broad overview of how the SDGs were negotiated and what they mean to each of us as global citizens. He noted that we can all be involved directly in achieving the goals and that they are not only for governments or for developing countries. These goals apply to everyone – governments, civil society organizations and individuals. His presentation was followed by an exciting personal account related by Martha Perez, co-chair of our Young Professionals Program, about the practical application of the SDGs in renewable energy projects she has undertaken in Westchester and the Dominican Republic. The two presentations were followed by a Q and A discussion, moderated by Narinder Kakar, Vice

President of UNA Westchester, who has also been directly involved in the negotiations and drafting of the SDGs.

The highlight of the event was presentations by seven high school students on individual sustainable development goals and ways that individuals and communities can contribute to achieving the SDGs. Aliyah Dinkins, Shadae Leslie, and Brianna McLaughlin from Mount Vernon High School, Avery Williams and Celine Bills from White Plains High School, Chanya Holness from Woodlands High School, and Amanda Guy from Valhalla High School presented their visions on how to take action locally on one of the Sustainable Development Goals and contribute to the good of their communities.

It was inspiring that the overview of the Sustainable Development Goals given by Thomas Gass and Narinder Kakar was so directly linked to actions we can take at the household and community level, as articulated by Martha Perez and the seven students. Besides the action examples given by the students, participants were able to view and discuss sustainable energy solutions as demonstrated at a table outside the room. These included a biodigester, a solar stove and an ethanol stove. We all enjoyed the reception where high-level UN officials were interacting with the students and community participants -- all speaking the same language. If we all work together, we can achieve wonders!

The UN Day event showed a high level of collaboration and consensus on the importance of the new UN agenda, Transforming Our World. We truly had a great team of UNA board members, partners and volunteers. We want to express our appreciation for all the contributions of everyone, especially the YWCA, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Links, Inc. who participated from the very beginning. We would also like to thank our speakers and student participants as well as Troy Wolfe and Rachel Pittman, from UNA-USA headquarters, who helped with the education and membership components. Our interns, Nao Shimizu and Samantha Hernandez, and the team of volunteers did an outstanding job.

-- Marcia Brewster, President, UNA-USA Westchester Chapter



First photo: White Plains Mayor Thomas Roach welcomed UN Day organizers to raise the UN flag over White Plains City Hall on 23 October 2015. Participants represented the Board of Directors of UNA-Westchester and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Second photo: President of UNA-Westchester Marcia Brewster (5th from left) with student award winner Celine Bills (2nd from left) and members of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. and the Links, Inc., co-sponsors of the UN Day event at the YWCA of White Plains and Central Westchester.