



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
of the United States of America
A PROGRAM OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

**United Nations Day 2014 celebrated at YWCA White Plains
October 26, 2014, 3:30 to 6:30 pm**

The United Nations Association (UNA-USA) of Westchester and the YWCA White Plains and Central Westchester celebrated the 69th anniversary of United Nations Day on October 26, 2014 in White Plains. The theme of the event was “Empowering Youth in Westchester and the World”, which was in line with the UN Day theme “Global Citizenship and Youth.” The event featured a dialogue with youth to discuss “The World We Want”, which is a worldwide process of defining the sustainable development priorities for the period beginning in 2015. We were pleased to welcome 70 young workshop participants, including 10 excellent group leaders, as well as 36 UNA members and partners and eight volunteers. These 114 people gathered together not only to celebrate UN Day but also to make the world a better place.

Maria Imperial, the CEO of YWCA White Plains and Central Westchester, welcomed the workshop participants and guests to her beautiful YWCA facility. Marcia Brewster, the president of UNA-USA Westchester Chapter, explained the process of defining the development goals beyond 2015 at the national and global level. UNA-USA considers it very important to include the priorities of young people into the broader United Nations agenda. The voices of youth need to be heard, as they will be inheriting the consequences of both the good and bad decisions that have affected the earth and our place in it.

The discussion groups were led by 10 group leaders who had selected six priority topics for youth from among the 17 goals listed in “The World We Want” (www.worldwewant2015.org). The 70 workshop participants were divided into ten groups, and participants decided which topic interested them most: Equality between men and women; a good education; freedom from discrimination and persecution; protection against crime and violence; action taken on climate change; and better job opportunities. Some adults also joined the discussion group on better job opportunities. The discussion groups had an hour to answer five broad questions and make recommendations. The room filled with the enthusiasm and passion of the young participants, and they came up with some brilliant observations. Following the working groups, the discussion leaders presented their main conclusions to the plenary session. All of the leaders were outstanding young professionals or students who were firmly committed to this event and to improving the world we live in. Their leadership encouraged a lively participation among the people at their tables, and they came up with great ideas and recommendations for each topic. In fact, the real value of the event was the mobilization and involvement of so many college and high school students who may not have participated in such discussions in the past. The UNA values the voices of all these outstanding young people as part of its input to the US contribution to the negotiations on the United Nations agenda after 2015.

UNA-USA also values its partnerships with many civil society organizations and local political leaders. We welcomed MaryJane Shimsky, a County Legislator, who provided inspiring remarks to the young people and Ambassador to the UN Patrick Sciarratta, who provided information on the Youth Assembly at the UN. At the end of the event UNA and YWCA recognized the group leaders and the partners who contributed so much to making this event such a great success. Our partners included: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority (Zeta Nu Omega and Pi Iota Omega chapters), the Friendship Ambassadors Foundation, Girls Empowered Through Meaningful Support (GEMS), Jack and Jill of America, Inc., LINKS Inc., Sister to Sister International, Inc. and the Youth Bureau of White Plains. Participating colleges and high schools included: EF International Language School, Horace Greeley High School, Manhattanville College, Mercy College, Mount Vernon High School, White Plains High School and Woodlands High School. We sincerely appreciate all the efforts they made to put together such a great group of young people who participated in the event. We were also extremely grateful to UNA-USA headquarters for providing a grant to cover the costs of the program as well as the information packets for each of the young workshop participants. Finally, we want to thank all of the volunteers, including our interns and Board members, who made the event run very smoothly.

It was gratifying to see all enthusiastic youths who conferred on the selected priority issues. We could see the possibilities of making the world a better place if these young people are part of the process. We expect that they will go back to their homes, schools, or workplaces, and will enlighten their classmates and peers with the ideas that they had talked about. If they can all initiate small changes, the cumulative effect will make huge alterations in our society, country and throughout the world.

UN Day 2014: Group leaders with UNA Board members and interns



