



ANNUAL REPORT 2026-2027



UNA★USA

Westchester Chapter

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Marcia Brewster | President, UNA-USA Westchester Chapter

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”

— Helen Keller

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends,

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”
— Helen Keller

These words remind us of the power of collective action and global cooperation. Many challenges we face stem from aggressive actions by nations that disregard international law and treaties. At the United Nations Association of the USA, we remain committed to the principles of the United Nations and international law in addressing wars of aggression, climate crises, humanitarian emergencies, and global pandemics.

Now more than ever, we need multilateral solutions, strong cooperation, secure alliances, and community engagement. We are deeply interconnected—and with that comes a shared responsibility to uphold justice, equality, and peace. As President of the UNA-USA Westchester Chapter, I am proud to be part of a global network that believes in the power of collective action to shape a better future.

I am pleased to present the Annual Report of UNA-Westchester for May 2025 through April 2026. We have achieved a great deal through public outreach events and educational programs.

My deepest appreciation goes to the UNA-Westchester Board of Directors, many of whom have just completed their first year. They have shown creativity, initiative, and commitment to creating opportunities for learning, connection, and leadership.

If you've been thinking about getting involved, now is the perfect time. We welcome your voice, your ideas, and your energy. Please reach out to me at mmbrewster.unausa@gmail.com or contact our chapter at unawestchester@gmail.com.

Finally, join us on May 3rd at Manhattanville University's Reid Castle for our Earth Day and Annual Meeting. It will be a wonderful opportunity to reflect on our progress and take action toward a more just and sustainable world.

Thank you for your continued support of our mission and our chapter.

With hope and gratitude,
Marcia Brewster
President, UNA-USA Westchester Chapter
www.unawestchester.org

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

Rosemary Uzzo, Co-Chair, Andy Laub, Co-chair

[Contacting political leaders to encourage support for full payment of U.S. obligations for UN Regular Budget and Peacekeeping.](#) Our Advocacy leads and members of the board contact Congressional Representatives to encourage them to vote in favor of full funding for the UN. In general, the two New York Senators and our Representatives in Congress do vote in favor of paying U.S. arrears to the UN. Our Advocacy Committee encourages all our members to write to their representatives and show their support for the UN and its agencies.

[Engaging local leadership across the County.](#) The Advocacy Chairs invited elected officials at the federal, state, and local levels, including mayors and council members to all public events sponsored by the UNA-USA Westchester Chapter. These engaged officials attend our events and also provide proclamations and certificates to speakers and honorees. We follow up with thanks and share event details and photos on the Website and social media, as well as in local newspapers. National, State and County level officials turned out in force to celebrate UN Day in October, honoring our outstanding speakers, honorees and youth panelists. We are very grateful for the support of U.S. Representative George Latimer, State Senate Majority Leader Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senator Shelley Mayer, Assembly members MaryJane Shimsky and Nader Sayegh, County Executive Ken Jenkins and many others who have graced our programs and demonstrated support for the United Nations and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We inform the public of the ways in which local activists are implementing one or more of the SDGs at our public events in Westchester County.



Marcia and Rosemary with Representative George Latimer & Yonkers City Council President Lakisha Collins-Bellamy



Marcia Brewster receiving proclamation from state senators, Andrea Stewart-Cousins & Shelly Mayer (with assembly member Maryjane Shimsky)

ADVOCACY COMMITTEE

Rosemary Uzzo, Co-Chair, Andy Laub, Co-chair (*continued*)

One of our signature events was the Women's Empowerment Summit, held in collaboration with Mercy University in late February for International Women's Day. The event was highly successful and well attended. Thanks to outreach by the advocacy team, the summit featured strong participation, with association members sharing their personal stories and highlighting how UNA-Westchester helps shape a better future for women and girls.

We look forward to welcoming and engaging our local elected officials at our Annual Meeting and Earth Day event at Manhattanville University on May 3.

UNA Representation on the Foreign Affairs Task Force. Our U.S. Congressional Representative George Latimer has appointed Advocacy Co-Chair Andy Laub to his Foreign Affairs and Military Affairs Task Force. We feel that it is extremely important to have a member of our Board serving with this group and keeping our representative informed of issues related to the United Nations.

Attending sessions at the United Nations. In addition to engaging elected representatives, the general public, and chapter members here in Westchester, President Marcia Brewster and other board members have attended a number of meetings and conferences at the United Nations, which keep us abreast of positive global initiatives at the UN. Several of us participated at International Women's Day and the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March. During CSW, the World Water Development Report on Gender and Water was launched. As a former UN staff working on these issues, our President made sure to attend and to inform other members of the UNA-USA during a seminar on World Water Day held on 23 March.



COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Raina Kadavil, Chair, with volunteers Marika Adam & Ivy Mininger



- Published quarterly issues of The Global Connection featuring UNA Westchester's events, Digital Media Contest, UN updates and personal reflections from key Board members.
- Onboarded a Comms intern to post relevant updates from the United Nations to the UNA Westchester Instagram and Facebook pages, in order to keep members informed.
- Continued to update and improve the chapter website, unawestchester.org.
- Utilized Instagram, Facebook, Constant Contact and Weebly to advertise events hosted by the chapter including International Women's Day, Earth Day and UN Day, and support the Program Committee in ensuring high attendance.
- Engaged members and event attendees using Zoom and Eventbrite.
- Supported the Education Committee in advertising their Digital Media contest and supported the Young Professionals in advertising their membership.

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Colleen Gardephe, Connie Hairston, Michele Shivers, Co-Chairs

The Program Committee remained the most active and dedicated to showcasing the priorities of United Nations work, including the Sustainable Development Goals, through public outreach events, both virtually and in person. The three co-chairs were supported by leads for different events, including Marcia Brewster, Paul Presendieu and Jose Nunez.

UNA programs generally feature keynotes on global issues by international speakers and spotlights on local practitioners who are implementing those priorities at the local level. We typically host four to five public events per year.

Earth Day and Annual Meeting, 4 May 2025. *“Protecting the Environment for Healthier Communities”* was held at the Grinton I Will Library in Yonkers and was organized by Paul Presendieu and Marcia Brewster. It featured an excellent international speaker, Valentina Buj of UNICEF, and a dynamic panel of local climate leaders: Oded Holzinger, Executive Director of Groundwork Hudson Valley; Pamela Stewart-Martinez of WE ACT for Environmental Justice; and Sarah Wilson, President of the Sierra Club Lower Hudson Group. The discussion was very inspiring for the audience, especially the students who were already involved in climate action. The event honored outstanding Westchester climate leaders and celebrated student award winners from the National Model UN Conference. During the annual meeting portion, President Marcia Brewster presented the Chapter’s activities over the past year, and Paul Presendieu, Chair of the Earth Day program, welcomed our newly-elected board of directors. The networking reception provided an opportunity for participants to meet our new board and talk with the speakers and local environment-oriented organizations.



International Day of the Girl, 13 October. UNA-Westchester was one of the partners who planned and organized an amazing event for middle and high school girls at Manhattanville University. Marcia Brewster, Alison Christmas and C. Michele Shivers presided at our UN information table, which attracted a lot of interest, and our Communications Chair, Raina Kadavil, led one of the workshops.

United Nations Day, 24-26 October. UN Day in Westchester County began with the ceremonial raising of the UN flag in the City of White Plains and the Village of Hastings-on-Hudson with proclamations from both mayors. UNA’s public UN Day

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Colleen Gardephe, Connie Hairston, Michele Shivers, Co-Chairs (*continued*)

“Restoring Justice, Saving Lives,” was held on 26 October at the Greenburgh Public Library and was organized by Colleen Gardephe and Connie Jones Hairston. It highlighted the reintegration of child soldiers in post-conflict societies at the global level and the importance of restorative justice at both global and local levels. The program brought together over 100 attendees from across generations, including prominent local leaders such as U.S. Representative George Latimer, State Senate Majority Leaders Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Senator Shelley Mayer, and County Executive Ken Jenkins.



UN Day 2025: board members
with honorees

A keynote address was delivered by Hawa Taylor-Kamara Diallo, who shared powerful firsthand insights from her work with the United Nations and her experiences supporting communities marked by conflict in Sierra Leone, Somalia & Cambodia. The event also featured a dynamic

youth panel, including members of the White Plains Youth Court and a graduate of the Opportunity Youth Part program, who discussed local restorative justice initiatives as alternatives to incarceration. Cultural enrichment was provided by a performance from the Srishiti School of Music, showcasing a piece composed for the United Nations on world peace. The program concluded with the presentation of proclamations honoring community leaders, recognition of President Marcia Brewster for her impactful service, followed by a closing reception showing valuable networking opportunities, particularly for students, reinforcing the event’s mission of engagement, education, and global citizenship.



UN Day 2025: board members
with youth panel

Human Rights Day, 13 December UNA partnered with the Yonkers Human Rights Commission to participate in its Human Rights Day Brunch Gala, held in Yonkers. UNA Board members Mezaun Arnone, Thellenza Krasniqi, Rosemary Uzzo, and Jose Nunez attended the event, which highlighted a vibrant celebration of culture, honored dedicated human rights advocates, and reflected on meaningful local history. The gathering emphasized mutual respect and community unity, bringing

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Colleen Gardephe, Connie Hairston, Michele Shivers, Co-Chairs (*continued*)

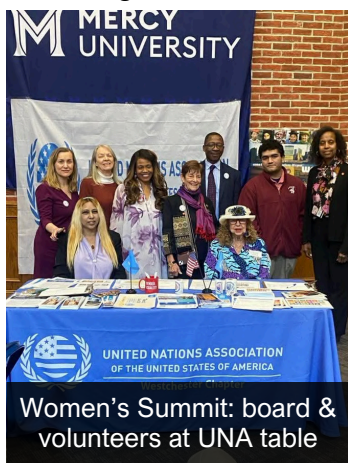
attendees together in a spirit of collaboration and understanding. The event highlighted UNA member Thellenza Krasniqi, who spoke on the importance of protecting and promoting human rights.



Human Rights Day: Jose, Mezaun, Thellenza, Rosemary

IWD/Women's Empowerment Summit, 27 February

The Power of Our Stories: Women Shaping Tomorrow's World" was co-hosted by UNA-Westchester with Mercy University, as UNA's contribution to International Women's Day in 2026. C. Michele Shivers and Alison Christmas were on the planning committee. The event attracted a diverse, cross-sectoral audience of community leaders, educators, advocates, and emerging leaders from across Westchester County. The setting provided a dynamic, collaborative environment for dialogue, reflection, and engagement. The program was anchored by keynote



Women's Summit: board & volunteers at UNA table

speaker Luchina Fisher, an Emmy Award-winning storyteller and documentarian, whose remarks challenged participants to reflect on personal growth, resilience, and the pursuit of purpose. Her message reinforced a central theme of the program: leadership and impact are not defined by timing, but by intention and action. A panel discussion followed, moderated by C. Michele Shivers, featuring distinguished leaders with local, national, and international impact, including: Dr. Amanda Gunning, Dr. Melissa Ramdas, Hawa Taylor-Kamara Diallo, and Judith Watson. Panelists offered thoughtful ideas on leadership, equity & systems-level

change, emphasizing the importance of collaboration in advancing opportunities for women and girls. The program also reflected UNA-USA Westchester's continued commitment to the international perspective as an umbrella to strategic community engagement and partnership. The event generated strong engagement and dialogue, fostering connection across sectors and generations. Participants left with strengthened networks and a shared commitment to advancing gender equity within their communities. The Women's Empowerment Summit demonstrates UNA-Westchester's ability to translate global priorities into local impact—elevating leadership & amplifying voices of women & girls throughout the region.

Videos and photos are available at our website, www.unawestchester.org.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

C. Michele Shivers, Chair

The 2026 Nominating Committee: C. Michele Shivers, Dan Bena, Nicole Benjamin, and Lilli Schindler, is pleased to present a strong slate of candidates for the 2026–2028 Board of Directors. Following a thorough process aligned with the Chapter's bylaws, the Committee reviewed a highly qualified pool to ensure both leadership continuity and fresh perspectives.

The Committee extends its sincere appreciation to those Board members whose terms are concluding, as well as to those who have stepped down during their term. Their dedication, leadership, and commitment to UNA-Westchester have significantly contributed to the Chapter's growth, visibility, and impact across Westchester County.

Slate of Nominees

The following individuals have confirmed their willingness to stand for election:

Nominees for Re-Election (Two-Year Terms, 2026–2028)

- Marcia Brewster – President
- Mezaun Arnone
- Colleen Gardephe
- Connie Jones-Hairston
- Victor Petenkemani – Treasurer
- Alison Christmas
- Nikolina Gelmanovski
- Rosemary Uzzo

Nominee for Re-Election (One-Year Term, 2026–2027)

- Nicole Butterfield

New Nominees for Election (Two-Year Terms, 2026–2028)

- Thellenza Arifi Krasniqi - Secretary
- Rebecca Snyder



Continuing Board Members (Terms Through 2027)

- Nicole Benjamin
- Andrew Laub
- C. Michele Shivers
- Raina Kadavil
- Demetrios Mihailidis

Board elections will be held electronically before May 3rd, 2026. Annual Meeting; candidate bios are at www.unawestchester.org. Thanks to all candidates!

PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

Nicole Benjamin, Chair

Partnerships Chair Nicole Benjamin, and the entire membership of the UNA-USA Westchester Chapter, are very grateful for the support of our partners and co-sponsors for our public outreach programs over the past year, all of whom have made valuable contributions. Our most loyal and long-term partners are: The Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., Zeta Nu Omega Chapter; and the Links, Incorporated, Westchester County (NY) Chapter and Greater Hudson Valley (NY) Chapter. These two organizations are included in UNA-USA's reduced rates for membership.

Other important partners over the last year include: Clean and Healthy New York; the Greenburgh Public Library; the Grinton I Will Public Library; Manhattanville University's Mary T. Clark Center for Social Justice; Mercy University; the National Council of Negro Women, Inc.; The New York State Association of Conservation Commissions; The Rotary Club of New Rochelle; Sierra Club Lower Hudson Group; UNA-USA Southern New York State Division; WE ACT for Environmental Justice; and Women United of Westchester Social Club.



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Mezaun Arnone, Chair

Karen Rockwell El Badry and Demetrios Mihaiidis, Co-chairs; Team members: Alison Christmas, Connie Jones-Hairston, Audrey June May, Thellenza Krasniqi, Lilli Schindler, Michele Shivers, Dr. Rosemary Uzzo.

Good Neighbors Program, November, led by the Westchester County (NY) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, with 25 Westchester high school students at the Yonkers Riverfront Library. Education Committee members helped with the coordination, and two of them made presentations. The White Plains Youth Court and Manhattanville University partnered with the Education Committee to send volunteers. The group explored global pathways, leadership opportunities, and community impact.



Lower Hudson Valley Social Studies Teachers Conference, December, Education Committee members represented the UN and UNA-USA at a social studies teachers conference in White Plains.

Other initiatives



- Partnered with the Ramapough Lenape Nation on human rights and UN SDG 2026 presentations at Sweet Water Cultural Center in Stony Point.



- Updated UN & SDG presentations: White Plains, Yonkers, and Armonk schools.
- Revived Model UN programs in Mount Vernon and Woodlawn High Schools.

Activities related to the World Federation of UN Associations (WFUNA)

- Volunteers and interns attended WFUNA International Model UN (Feb 2026).
- Observed an Emergency Security Council meeting held at UN Headquarters
- Participated in a panel discussion with EU delegates at EU Headquarters.
- Held dialogues with UN Security Council Presidents (monthly positions).
- Provided interns to volunteer with WFUNA at UN Headquarters.
- Celebrated UN Kids Day (February 21, 2026)

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Nicole Butterfield, Chair

This has been a year of change for UNA Membership. Whereas Youth members used to be able to join for free up to age 26, such free Youth memberships are now available to those 17 and under. Members who are 18 to 30 years old may now join as Young Professionals at \$25 per year. During this transition we have seen a steep decline in our membership, because many of our Youth members were college students who did not opt in at the Young Professional level.

As of March 2026, we have 119 active members, a smaller but loyal and engaged group. We are holding steady at 9 Lifetime members, who demonstrate their commitment with a one-time payment of \$1000. We are grateful to our cadre of 33 Standard members (down from nearly 50 last year) who pay \$50 annually. Our two Bronze members go the extra mile, paying \$100 annually. We have 55 GenUN members, our under-18 contingent who are still able to join and participate for free. Our 14 Young Professional members enjoy the benefits of networking events and special opportunities led by our Young Professionals co-chairs, Jose Nunez and Ivy Mininger.

UNA-USA recently announced a special membership drive that allows members of some of our closest partners to join at the rate of \$25 per year. Our long-term partners Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Incorporated and The Links, Incorporated are both included at the special membership rate. This is very exciting news for our chapter.

Looking ahead, our main goal is to work on building up our membership base through public events, as well as through word-of mouth. We'd like to thank Rosemary Uzzo, Demetrios Mihailidis and C Michele Shivers for their work on this committee over the past year. Our membership table is a fixture at our local in-person events, and we always enjoy meeting new members, networking and catching up with old friends at these important community gatherings.



FINANCE COMMITTEE

Nikolina Gelmanovski, Chair

Over the past year, the Finance Committee focused on building the financial foundation of UNA-Westchester and expanding opportunities for sustainable growth.

The Committee developed a comprehensive Donations & Sponsorships Program to present to potential corporate sponsors. It defines the structure and mission of the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), the UNA-USA and the Westchester Chapter, while also highlighting the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Chapter's changemaking initiatives. The purpose of the program is to engage community members and organizations in supporting our programs through donations, sponsorships, and continued learning. The Summary was distributed to over 60 stakeholders and generated dozens of follow-up inquiries.

We also continued to cultivate relationships with prospective donors and corporate sponsors throughout the Westchester community. A preliminary Corporate Sponsorship Program was designed to connect with corporate leaders and heads of giving, to introduce partnership opportunities and align philanthropic goals with the Chapter's mission. The Committee contacted 35 priority organizations, with over \$100,000 in potential sponsorships identified. Internally, the Committee worked with the Treasurer and Board of Directors to develop strategies to increase funding. Chapter investment initiatives were identified in support of a prospective 30% budget increase based on potential funding. The Committee also collaborated with board leadership to support programmatic initiatives, including sponsorship partnerships connected to the Education Committee and Arts & Culture programming.

Collectively, these efforts establish a stronger financial framework and expand the Chapter's capacity to support its mission through strategic partnerships and resource development.

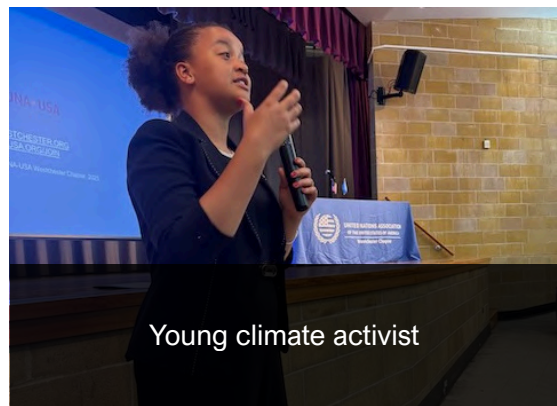


YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

Jose Nunez and Ivy Mininger, Co-chairs

- The Young Professionals Program hosted a series of roundtable discussions throughout the year, both virtually and in-person. These focused on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), encouraging dialogue on global issues and local impact.
- As Co-chairs, Jose and Ivy guided the program's focus on engagement, service, and issue-based discussions;
- The YP program Increased member engagement through structured conversations that allowed participants to share perspectives and explore solutions to key challenges;
- Young Professionals were offered volunteer opportunities at major public outreach events, such as UN Day and Earth Day/Annual Meeting. Participation in these events strengthened community involvement and provided hands-on experience in service and event coordination;
- Outreach to local high schools, colleges, and community networks aim to expand membership and to increase program visibility;
- Ongoing efforts were made to identify and develop new leadership within the Young Professionals Program to ensure sustainability and growth;
- Procedures were put in place to have a consistent leadership transition process.

Looking ahead, the Young Professionals Program is committed to building on this year's momentum by expanding SDG-focused programming, increasing in-person engagement opportunities, and deepening its impact through service and partnerships.



BUDGET SUMMARY

Victor Petenkemani, Treasurer



- Beginning Balance: January 1, 2025: \$ 7,129
- 2024 Revenue: 3,731
- 2024 Expenditures: (4,640)
- Ending Balance: December 31, 2025: \$6,219

Revenues included payments of membership dues from UNA HQ of \$1,275 and contributions to our programs from partners and Board Members of \$2,455. Expenditures were primarily for programming and communication costs. Our budget has been declining for several years, and it will be necessary in 2026 to raise revenues through partners or a fund raiser.

OUR CURRENT BOARD



Marcia Brewster
President



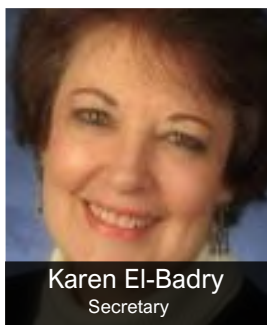
Demetrios Mihailidis
Vice-President



Colleen Gardephe
Vice-President



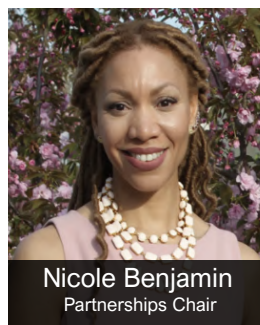
Victor Pentenkemani
Treasurer



Karen El-Badry
Secretary



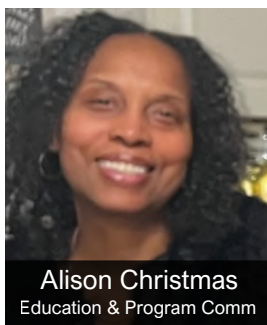
Mezaun Arnone
Education Chair



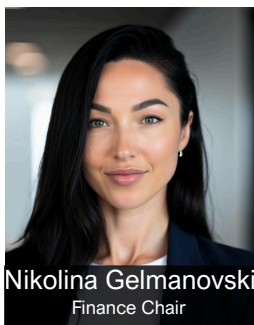
Nicole Benjamin
Partnerships Chair



Nicole Butterfield
Membership Chair



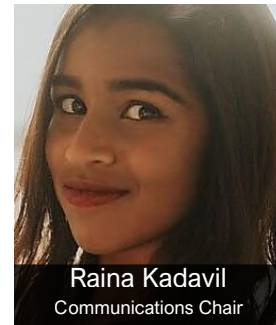
Alison Christmas
Education & Program Comm



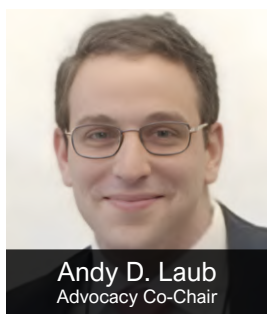
Nikolina Gelmanovski
Finance Chair



Connie Hairston
Co-Chair Program Committee



Raina Kadavil
Communications Chair



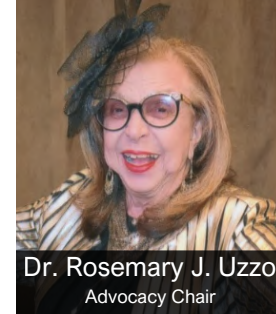
Andy D. Laub
Advocacy Co-Chair



José Nuñez
Youth Program Chair



C. Michele Shivers
Nominating Chair & Program
Co-Chair



Dr. Rosemary J. Uzzo
Advocacy Chair

JOIN US AND USE YOUR VOICE FOR CHANGE!



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Westchester Chapter

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Marcia Brewster | President, UNA-USA Westchester Chapter