#### **Backwards and Into the Future**

Where we've been is good; where we're going is better.

This is the way Westchester ARC President and Executive Director Peter Clark and Ric Swierat summarize the agency as it begins its 50th year of serving people with developmental disabilities.

The two, who bring a combined total of 21 years involvement with Westchester ARC to their respective positions, say there is much satisfaction to be derived from the gains of the first 50 years, but those advances could pale in comparison to what can be achieved over the next 50.

"But whether we perform at the same level of success or accelerate, we can all take pride in what has been accomplished since 1949," they note. It has grown into an agency that employs close to 600 people, serves thousands, allies with numerous organizations addressing similar challenges and controls a budget of \$30 million.

"And all in just 50 years, which is a relative blink of the eye in terms of the planet's history," says Clark. "As a parent of a child with a developmental disability I am very encouraged by what has been accomplished through the joint efforts of parents, government and assorted other allies.

"It really adds up to a revolution in terms of attitudes and performance," says Swierat. "The past 50 years have seen a remarkable increase in advocacy, alliance building, individual action, government interest and media interest. It's all part of a comprehensive approach that is taking people with developmental disabilities out of their isolated worlds and into an environment in which there is more choices and more sources of help."



Governor George Pataki and advocate Henrietta Messier and her daughter, Cheri, during the Governor's historic announcement in 1998 about NYS CARES.

#### **NYS CARES Initiative**

Fifty years and so many

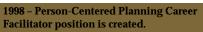
achievements later, our

Governor George E. Pataki made history when he announced a comprehensive 5-year plan to eliminate the waiting list for residential services for people with developmental disabilities in New York State. Westchester ARC opened the first NYS CARES home in Bronxville for six individuals and has plans to develop small unit housing/apartments for up to 35 individuals in '99.

-photo courtesy of NYSRA



parent driven organization is "just warming up" for the challenges and opportunities that await us as we enter the 21st century! Avery Connors starts life's adventure



1999 - NYS CARES housing initiative launched with first house in Bronxville.



Peter J. Clark President



Richard P. Swierat Executive Director

Watch for special article by Lawrence Faulkner, Esq., "50 Years of Litigation, Legislation and Family" in next issue of Lifetime. Space prevents us from including memories of all the people who have been a part of Westchester ARC's first 50 years. Please continue to share your memories, stories, clippings or photos to be used in subsequent issues of Lifetime

"WESTCHESTER ARC'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY MEMORIES" A SUPPLEMENT OF



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#### The Archive Project

The collection of materials used for our 50th Anniversary Celebration was made possible by a project led by volunteer teacher Gino DeMartino, from the Yonkers School District. "The Team" of Westchester ARC individuals collected photos, newspapers, clippings, etc. dating back to 1940's. They researched documents, restored and compiled them in journals. We are grateful to core members Elizabeth Albert, Sandy Allen, Janice Idorio, Amy Tell, Ben Seckel, Jamal Williams and Mr. DeMartino for giving us this priceless library to share with others.



# Fifty Years of Achievements













### **Looking Back**

What better way to tell an organization's history than to capture the memories of people who shaped its progress. The following are observations of a small handful of individuals who contributed to, participated in or simply observed the steps taken by Westchester ARC to evolve into the County's largest organization serving the needs of people with developmental disabilities.



It all began 50 years ago with a \$3 ad that was placed in The New York Post by, Ann Greenberg, desperate to find some playmates for her child with a developmental disability.

On April 17, 1949 a small group of equally frustrated mothers and fathers gathered at the Mount Vernon Public Library to discuss ways of helping their children. It was in this little gathering that the Westchester Association for the Help of Retarded Children (Westchester AHRC) was born.

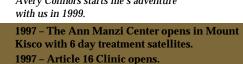
A few months later the new Westchester group purchased the house at 975 Split Rock Road in Pelham and fought and won, through court action, the right to have a school there. In 1951 they opened the first parents' cooperative day school for



First Dinner Dance Committee at work in 1951 are: (I to r) William E. Weaver, President AHRC, John F. O'Connor. William H. Childs, Inge Childs and Bernard Gagliano.

retarded children in New York State. And so, the modest beginnings of Westchester ARC, which is now the largest such agency in the county serving over 1600 children, teenagers and adults with developmental disabilities everyday.

Stroll with us down memory lane in this eight-page supplement to Lifetime. We hope you will share our pride over what has been achieved since 1949 and that you will be inspired to be a contributing part of our next fifty.



1997 - 1st Annual Art Show at Crowne Plaza.



Bernard Rosenberg

### **Greetings from our First President**

"The rallying cry 'In Union There Is Strength' means as much to the Westchester Association for the Help of Retarded Children as it did to the founders of our great United States. If all parents of retarded children will ban together and work actively, we will surely provide the many things that our children have lacked until now. Our School, of which we can be justly proud, will be the first of many schools. Along with this achievement will come the development of all our goals. These will include preventive research, diagnostic clinics, parental education, and normal acceptance of our children in the home and in the community."

Excerpted from 1949 address. Bernard served as president from 1949-1951.

#### **Memories from Inge Childs**

"My relationship with Westchester ARC goes back to April 1949 when my husband, William, and I met with about 25 other parents at the Mount Vernon Public Library.

Most of our early work consisted of fund raising. We held raffles, dinner dances, and sold ads for the journal. One year we raffled off a car and in others we had cannister drives. I ended up serving as treasurer and spent a lot of time working on the books while my husband found places for us to meet and helped plan each meeting.

We were involved in the purchase of our first school building in 1950 and were there when it opened its doors in Pelham to three children in February of 1951."

Inge is a co-founder of the agency and its preschool program, and was very active in its initial 15 years.

## The rallying cry 'In Union There Is Strength'

#### **Memories from Rose Simon**

"My daughter, Renee, is 51 years old, so I became involved with Westchester ARC in its very early days. My most vivid memories revolve around the purchase of the first agency school on Split Rock Road in Pelham Manor and the hostile reactions to it. We moved into the school in the middle of the night to avoid confrontations with the neighbors, but when they found out about who would be using the building they were up in arms. They fought the school and we went all the way up to the Supreme Court before we won.

**Our Presidents** 

Bernard Rosenberg

**Evald Gasstrom** 

William Weaver

John O'Connor

**Evald Gasstrom** 

Abraham Raboy

William Woodson

Robert Meltzer

Doris Hosmer

Hector Dowd

Louise Weston

Hector Dowd

Peter Clark

Don Friend

Vacant

Vacant

Morris Barrett

Norman Reich

Carmine Mangano

Anthony Lombardo

Eugene Laughery

Joseph Bernstein

Richard Swierat

Ann McDonnell

Charles Kingsley

Douglas Ferguson

Elizabeth W. Buck

Elizabeth Schaefer

Herbert Katzenberg

Michael Marcellino

Mark Feer

Justin Israel

1949-1951

1953-1954

1959-1960

1963-1969

1970-1971

1973-1977

1978-1982

1983-1985

1986-1987

1989-1990

1991-1994

1955-1956

1957-1959

1961-1963

1964-1965

1966-1967

1968-1970

1972-1981

1981-1983

1983-present.

1971 ...

1995-present.

**Our Executive Directors** 

1952

1955

1962.

1972

1988

I have fond memories of the people I worked with back then. There aren't a whole lot of us left, you know."

Rose Simon is a former vice president of the Yonkers League. She was very active in agency activities in Yonkers and Mount Vernon, and established the Rose Simon Camp Scholarship Fund.

Memories from George Hirsch

"I'm proud of the fact that Westchester was the first ARC chapter to get real property. That was the school in Pelham Manor and I can still remember driving there to sign the lease.

I was a vice president of the organization back then and I got to work with a lot of dedicated parents.

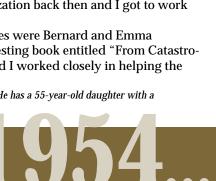
Two of my favorite former colleagues were Bernard and Emma Rosenberg. Bernie wrote a very interesting book entitled "From Catastrophe to Help for the Retarded." He and I worked closely in helping the agency's constituents find jobs."

George is a former vice president of the agency. He has a 55-year-old daughter with a developmental disability.

1951 - Westchester AHRC opens its first school with three young pupils.

1951 – Agency's first dinner dance held at Vernon Manor on February 10th. 1953 – A parents' auxiliary, the New Rochelle League for Retarded Children is formed.

1954 – The agency hires its first executive director, Elizabeth W. Buck.



### **Community Involvement Surges Forward with the Opening of the Ann Manzi Center and Satellites**

After 20 years as the agency's northern Westchester hub, the Mount Kisco Training center moved across town to smaller, newly renovated headquarters at 699 Main Street. The purchase of the old AT&T building was made possible by a capital campaign whose main contributor at \$250,000 was Jim Manzi. The new center was named in honor of his mother and longtime agency volunteer and parent advocate Ann Manzi.

The move put into motion a strategic goal to decentralize the agency's day programs—six new community day treatment satellites opened in the process in Ossining, Peekskill and Mount Kisco.

"There's been a tremendous surge toward community options for our consumers," Tom Hughes, ARC associate executive director, said in the Winter 1997 *Lifetime*. "Given the fact that more people are now being served in the community than ever before, we felt that turning bricks and mortar into the transportation and staffing resources that are crucial for services in the community was important."

### **Special Services: Cornerstones** of Community Options



Intervention Program and Minority Outreach Project greatly expanded the agency's abilities to meet the needs of individuals and family

The Crisis

members in community settings with critical, timely supports. Together with the Article 16 Clinic, Individual Case Management Services and a new person-centered approach, we are able to help people access services and plan their future, "one person at a time."

The agency Guardianship Program increased its services to assist hundreds of parents and family members concerned about who will make educated, sensitive decisions for their children.

1986 – Crisis Intervention Program starts. 1987 – First Spring Ball held for program participants.

1993 - Transitional Services launched.



Westchester ARC board president Peter Clark presides over a ribbon-cutting ceremony to commemorate the opening of the agency's first day treatment site—The Hosmer Day Treatment Satellite at St. Francis Church in Mount Kisco.

#### **Community Employment Soars**

Major emphasis was placed on assisting individuals with developmental disabilities to gain employment in local community settings. Through partnerships with Westchester businesses and major corporations, and through the deployment of agency resources into job coaching/supportswe made great strides in the 90's.

By 1997 over 60 percent of people in our vocational program were working in community-based jobs.



Employer Breakfast welcomes John F. Kennedy, Jr. at the Crowne Plaza in 1991.

1994 – Dr. Beth Mount begins to train staff in Person-Centered Planning.

1994 - Preschool children begin to move into inclusionary settings.



The new Ann Manzi Center located at 699 Main Street, Mount Kisco.

#### **Memories from Debra Weeks**

What a learning experience!
When I hired Sadie McSwain in 1991,
I figured it would be a temporary
relationship in which she assisted our
records management people by putting
microfiche material into a printer and
printing it out. But I didn't take her
positive "can do" attitude into account.

She has constantly taken on new tasks for us and has more than justified our decision to add her to our permanent payroll in 1992.

She now does computer work, handles email and organizes our files. Co-workers don't think of her as someone with a disability; they think of her as Sadie.

While a lot of the credit for her growth in the job belongs to Sadie, her family deserves accolades for their verbal and moral support. And being part of a mainstream experience has helped develop Sadie's upbeat attitude.

I'd definitely recommend hiring people from Westchester ARC to other companies.

Debra Weeks is an assistant vice president and records manager at MBIA Inc.



Sadie McSwain working in MBIA's record department.

1996...

#### **Memories from Milt Hoffman**

There have been several changes in the way the media have covered the subject of developmental disabilities over the years. The emphasis has changed as the issues have changed.

Back in the fifties and sixties, we wrote a number of stories about sheltered workshops for retarded children. Then, starting in the late sixties, there was a greater emphasis on living conditions and placing retarded citizens in group settings. Our newspapers supported the idea but faced considerable community opposition. There also was a lot of interest in plans to use property at Bryant Avenue and North Street in White Plains for a large facility. The emphasis changed after the Willowbrook decree in 1975, and focused on smaller facilities spread throughout communities.

Help also came in the form of legislation initiated by State Senators John Flynn and Nick Spano. Additionally, CRISP (Community Residences Information Services Program) released a study in the early nineties showing that property values were not hurt by the placement of group homes into a neighborhood setting. We gave that report a lot of coverage. We also devoted a lot of news space and editorials last year to the housing needs of people with developmental disabilities. This helped to convince the governor to provide more facilities.

Assisting people in need was a motivation for the 1924 establishment of our newspaper group, which has now become The Journal News.

Milton Hoffman is senior editor of the editorial page of The Journal News. He has been affiliated with the newspaper and its predecessors for the past 47 years.



1982 - Yonkers Training Center is renamed

providing trips for people in the community.

#### **Fund-Raising Efforts**

The MBIA Invitational which held its first event on October 3, 1985, represents a unique partnership between the non-profit and the business community of Westchester County. It was the vision that Charles Kingsley, then president of ARC's board of directors, suggested to his friend Jack Butler, then president of MBIA's managing agency, that the corporation sponsor a golf tournament to aid people with developmental disabilities. Since 1985 this annual Golf and Tennis Tournament, which is now linked to the Dannon Tour de Wagner, has raised over \$3,000,000 for Westchester ARC and Westchester-Putnam Special Olympics. The 200-mile biking marathon was started in 1989 by Harold Wagner.

**De-Institutionalization** 

the opening of 14 residences, from

Bedford to Scarsdale to Bronxville.

For 20 years, Senator John Flynn

Westchester at the state's capital and

was a champion for people with

who took over as chairman of the

impact on the lives of people with

disabilities.

Senate Mental Health Hygiene Com-

(shown left) represented the people of

disabilities. Shown at left with Senator

Flynn in 1987 is Senator Nicholas Spano

mittee. Both senators have had a major

**Legislative Support** 



Former Yankee first baseman. Don Mattingly (shown above), has been the Invitational's honorary chairman since 1986.

Shown above right, Charles Kingsley with his wife Emily at an MBIA awards banquet.

Harold Wagner, (shown right) founder of the Tour de Wagner bicycle marathon.





#### **Yonkers Center Dedicated to the Sheibs**

Yonkers Avenue was renamed the Simon Sheib Center in 1982 and later in 1998 re-dedicated to

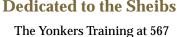
include Stella Sheib. Their and major fundraising Westchester. They were honorees at the agency's Annual Ball in 1972.

#### **Becomes a Reality** Between 1977 and 1984 WARC **Camp Echo Moves to** became the largest provider of commu-**Fahnestock State Park in 1983** nity-based housing in Westchester with

"I also worked at Camp Echo for the past eight years. It's a great place for campers and workers alike. When I was a camper there, a contest was held to rename the camp, which was then Camp Croton. Standing in the park, I watched the trees and, off the top of my head, I thought of an echo. It just seemed to fit."

—Carolyn Holodak

Carolyn Holodak is a long-time participant in Westchester ARC activities and is a 19-year veteran worker with Sodexho-Marriott at Manhattan College. She was nominated to become a director of the agency in 1999.



leadership, parent organizing significantly impacted agency efforts, especially in southern



**Memories from Justin Israel** 

Learning in 1954 that my son was

exposure to the subject of developmen-

tal disabilities. That was a time when

people felt there was a stigma attached

reluctant to talk about it. There wasn't

a lot of information available to me.

Nor were there people with whom I

sheltered workshopwith Tony

affiliated with United Way.

Lombardo and three clients in an

unheated garage in White Plains.

experiences.

could easily communicate to compare

I remember Westchester ARC's first

I remember selling raffle tickets door-

to-door and in local groceries before we

I'm proud of the fact that I encour-

aged two friends, who had no personal

reasons to care about developmental

Westchester ARC. Bill Wishnick has

financed the purchase of the agency's

building at 121 Westmoreland Avenue.

And Bob Meltzer became a president

leadership, dedicated service, success-

ful fund raising and personal generos-

ity over the years made him invaluable

Justin Israel is a

former president

and director of

currently serving

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Westchester

ARC. He is

as the agency's

chairperson.

and board member whose creative

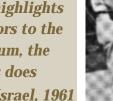
been a generous benefactor and he

disabilities, to become active in

mentally retarded was my initial

to retardation and were therefore

"Firstly, the passage of the State law which makes public



#### **First Clinic Opens**

The agency opened a Diagnostic and Guidance Clinic at the Burke Foundation in White Plains in October, 1958 with the help of the Community Menal Health Board and a 3-year grant from the Rockefeller Brothers Foundation.

The multi-discipline diagnosis was only available in New York City before then and with excessive delays in getting appointments.



#### **First Workshop Opens**

Under the direction of agency president Evald Gasstrom, the chapter opened the workshop in Mount Vernon on November 7, 1955. At that time only four individuals were ready to start. But just as soon as it became known that such a training program was available, young adults appeared from all over the county and soon the capacity of the Mount Vernon space was reached. A grant was obtained from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to enlarge the facility and, after a search for larger quarters, a site on Hillside Avenue in White Plains was found.



(At left) Car washing and polishing were among the things done by workers in the first workshop located in Mount Vernon.

(Below) The agency's first day camp program started in the summer of 1954 in Pelham Manor. The basketball courts are waiting



to the organization."

education of trainable children mandatory, is a milestone in the history of our local and State organizations. It highlights the strides made in educating the public and legislators to the realization that retarded children deserve, at mimimum, the same consideration and training at public expense as does every child in the community." — Justin Israel. 1961



1956 - WARC opens program for brain-injured children at Starpoint School in Pelham Manor. 1960 - Workshop moves to Hillside Ave. in White Plains. Forty people attend program.

1963 - The Yonkers League, a parents auxiliary, holds its first meeting. 1965 - The Yonkers Training Center opens on

**Simon Sheib Training Center.** 1983 – Weekend respite program starts,

1985 - Minority outreach offices open in Mount Vernon, New Rochelle and Yonkers. 1985 - MBIA Golf and Tennis Invitational kicks-off at Mount Kisco Country Club.

#### **Memories from Fran Porcaro**

The differences in education for children with a developmental disability have just been tremendous since I came to the agency in 1968.

Back then, there were programs specifically set up for such children in self-contained locations all over the county and few opportunities for inclusion. Additionally, education of children with learning and developmental disabilities was not a front-burner issue.

Now there is much more openness about the topic. Parents also are more knowledgeable about their choices, better informed about their rights as parents and more willing-and able-to advocate on behalf of their children.

Equally important, there has been a change in philosophy at the State Education Department. We always felt our children would be better off in community settings and this philosophy is clearly taking hold in Albany.

It took us a long time to set up classes at our first inclusion program (at the Whitney Young Head Start program in Yonkers), but once parents, educators and community leaders saw the results, success bred success. We now have programs in seven sites throughout the county. Frances Porcaro is director of Westchester ARC's Children's School for Early Development shown here in 1971 at the New Rochelle School at Temple Beth El on North Avenue.



#### **Memories from Ann Nehrbauer**

I think of how things were when I first became involved with Westchester ARC in the mid-'50s and how things are now, and I feel a miracle has happened!

Of course, we still need more, but there are just so many services available today. I hope parents will always be involved to provide energy and support. Although my husband, George, and I attended Westchester ARC meetings since our son, Stephen, was an infant, I became especially active when we took our son out of Willowbrook and joined the effort for local housing. I remember being very impressed by Stella Sheib and an organization she helped form called Citizens Committee for the Immediate Establishment of all Necessary Community Services for the Handicapped of Westchester County.

Another person who impressed me was Herb Katzenberg. He was a real "spark plug." You would talk to him for a few minutes and he would get an idea and move on it.

Ann Nehrbauer was a Westchester ARC board member for 20 years and currently serves on the Residential Services Committee.

#### **Memories from Laura Scolaro**

My involvement with Westchester ARC can be traced to knowing Joan Warnock when we were both active in a parents group for children with disabilities at P.S. 9 in Yonkers. What a wonderful woman! She was very active in Westchester ARC and did a fantastic job of convincing me to become active, too.

Working with Westchester ARC and the Yonkers League has given me great insights into the world of developmental disabilities and has enabled me to develop life-long friendships.

I am troubled, though, that the generation of parents that followed us isn't as active. This is due, in part, to demands that two-income family life have on their time. I also believe that some parents think that because there are so many programs now available to

their children, they don't have to be active as advocates. This is a challenge that has to be addressed.

Laura Scolaro is a director of Westchester ARC and the Yonkers League. Her son, participates in the Yonkers Day Training Program.

Westchester ARC was the first agency in New York State to open community residences for people with developmental disabilities. At right is one of the earliest homes opened in the 60's.



First site of Yonkers Center on McLean Avenue.

#### **PACDS Established**

Barbara Levitz and Emily Perl Kingsley understood the need to help parents of children with Down syndrome and formed a parent support group called the Parents Assistance Committee on Down Syndrome in 1972 under the auspices of Westchester ARC. Countless families have realized the incredible resource and friendships provided by this parent run group.



1967- The agency's first community residence opens in White Plains.1970 - Camp Hudson opens.1972 -PACDS Support Group formed.

1972 - Westchester ARC Guardianship Program established.

1973 – The 121 Westmoreland building is named in honor of Herbert Katzenberg.

1973...

#### Willowbrook Closes Doors



Public awareness was brought to a head in 1972 when Geraldo Rivera reported on the inhumane conditions in the State Schools for the retarded such as Willowbrook and Letchworth Village through his expose, "The Last Great Disgrace-Willowbrook," and his investigative reportings on the deplorable conditions and need for reform. He was guest of Honor at the Yonkers League's Dinner Dance held that year. Flanking Mr. Rivera in picture above from left, Mrs. Henry Warnock, Mrs. Candela and Mrs. Frank Scolaro.

#### **Memories from Rita Ross**

I became active in Westchester ARC about 30 years ago when my daughter attended the pre-school program at the Presbyterian Church in Katonah.

The agency was much smaller then and I remember working with Executive Director Gene Laughery and his wife, Bea, getting members' names on index cards.

That was about the same time I got involved with the Northern Westchester League. We did a lot of fund raising then. What a thrill it was to open an envelope and find a \$5 check.

One of my more vivid memories was having Jim Jensen of CBS speak at a Fashion Show luncheon in the early seventies and later Margaret Truman talking about her White House days.

I also remember the excitement of helping the Mount Kisco Training Center open on Main Street in 1977. I can still see my husband and I driving our station wagon onto the property, along with the Martabano family and an entourage from the agency.

Working closely with so many people over the years made it feel as if we were one big family.

Rita Ross is president of the Northern Westchester League and a director of Westchester ARC.

1975 – Yonkers Training Center moves to Yonkers Avenue.

1977 – Mount Kisco Training Center opens. 1977 – Camp Echo opens at Croton Point Park.

#### **Memories from Barry Zander**

I was very happy to leave Willowbrook. It was a bad situation there. People weren't treated right and it definitely was not the right place for me. Now that I am on my own I very much enjoy my freedom. I'm doing excellent. I manage my finances, pay my bills on time and like what I am doing working at Stop & Shop. I also like being on the Westchester ARC board. It is good to know what the board is doing and it helps me as an advocate for others. The agency is moving in the right direction in getting people with disabilities involved.

Barry Zander, a current Westchester ARC board member and former resident of Willowbrook, has been an outstanding advocate and role model for people with developmental disabilities. He has his own apartment in Yonkers. Zander received the 1999 Developmental Disabilities Planning Council Achievement Award for his independence, self-determination and community participation.

#### **Memories from Al DelBello**

When I was running for my first term as County Executive in 1973, I stopped at a function for people with disabilities at Mercy College. Meeting people who were sitting around in a circle not doing very much was quite depressing at first.

We started talking and they got very engaged in the problems they were confronting. It was apparent there was very little attention being given to the plight of people with disabilities.

I told a young man named Matty O'Connell, who was a quadriplegic, that if I got elected I would open an office in the county government to address the needs and issues of the disabled. I did, and hired him to be the first director.

Westchester ARC was a valued ally in those efforts and I got to work with many of its key people. I also remember being involved in the agency's move to its office in White Plains.

I'm very proud that Westchester County played such a leading role in the disabilities arena and in shaping policies that are integral parts of the Americans with Disabilities Act.



One of the many vivid memories of Northern Westchester League president Rita Ross. She is pictured here with CBS Anchor Jim Jenson at Northern League Fashion Show in the 1970's

1980 – Workshop to Community Employment Program starts.

1981 - Agency opens Westchesters' first preschool class for autistic children.

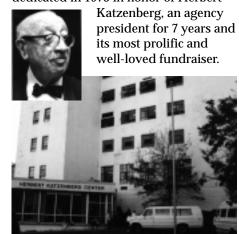
Alfred B. DelBello is a former Westchester
County Executive and Lieutenant Governor. An
attorney, he is a partner with DelBello, Donellan

Weingarten & Tartaglia in White Plains.



In 1977 the Mount Kisco Training Center opened its doors on Main Street and in honor of staunch parent advocate, Doris Hosmer.

The White Plains Training Center was dedicated in 1973 in honor of Herbert



1981...