

Teamwork is the union difference

WHITE PLAINS — The line was out the door to enter Westchester County's legislative chambers for a jam-packed budget hearing, but a group of local daycare providers weren't deterred.

The providers, VOICE/CSEA members who run licensed family daycare centers, were there to fight for children and families. They were also there to support their CSEA brothers and sisters from the Westchester County Unit, roughly 25 of whom were slated to lose their jobs under County Executive Rob Astorino's proposed budget.

As new union activists, VOICE/CSEA members are learning that standing with our brothers and sisters in need is an essential part of unionism.

"They've stood with us when we've struggled to receive fair daycare subsidy payments from the county for families in Westchester," Hope Pierce, a Westchester County VOICE/CSEA activist, said of Westchester County Unit members. "Many of these union members provide services that help the children in our care, so even though we have different jobs, it's clear that we're stronger together."

Union strength lies partially in the connections among different unions, even when priorities sometimes differ. VOICE/CSEA members in Westchester County have counted on support from CSEA members in their county in their continued lobbying efforts to receive fair and on-time payments through the county daycare subsidy program.

"I am always glad to see other union activists standing and participating with us in times of challenges," said Westchester County Unit President Kwabena Manu. "Many members simply do not care to get involved with their locals and units to fight the challenges we face day in and day out. I really appreciated seeing members of VOICE/CSEA at the budget hearing."

As for the 2016 Westchester County budget, VOICE/CSEA members got to witness the satisfaction that comes when union activism pays off. Manu got word during that hearing that legislators planned to restore many of the jobs in question.

— Jessica Ladlee



Westchester County Unit President Kwabena Manu, second from left, thanks VOICE/CSEA activists for standing with his members. Pictured with Manu are, from left, Miriam Morgado, Early Learning and Care Representative Wendy Nashid-Jackson, Hope Pierce and Gertrude Smith.



Westchester County Unit activist Juliet Aguiar, left, thanks VOICE/CSEA member Hope Pierce for her support.