
Media Contact

Michelle Barbero
Assistant Account Executive
Buzz Creators, Inc.
(914) 358-5080
michelle@buzz-creators.com



Nonprofit Westchester Launches First-Ever Affinity Group for Nonprofit Personnel of Color in Westchester

Peer-to-Peer Affinity Group Was Established After the Taking Action: Charting an Anti-Racist Path Forward in Westchester's Nonprofit Sector Forum

White Plains, New York, May 23, 2022 - [Nonprofit Westchester](#) (NPW) is proud to announce the establishment of Peer-to-Peer, the first-ever affinity group for nonprofit personnel of color in Westchester. The group first met on May 19, 2022, at the [Westchester Library System](#) and will meet every other month throughout the year.

Before the pandemic and the public documentation of acts of brutality against Black people, Nonprofit Westchester committed to advancing racial equity throughout Westchester County's nonprofit sector. The racial disparities in death rates and health outcomes, educational resources, housing and workplace conditions, a growing digital divide, and overall safety between those that are Black, Brown, and Asian, as compared to White people during the pandemic reinforced the importance of this commitment.

“Research, data, and lived experiences clearly demonstrate that existing injustices in other parts of our society also exist in nonprofit agencies,” said Jan Fisher, Executive Director of Nonprofit Westchester. “Yet, it is within the nonprofit sector that we find the wealth of resources, expertise, and leadership that is essential to building a more just and equitable Westchester across nonprofit, business, and government sectors.”

The creation of the Peer-to-Peer Affinity group is a direct result of the organization's April 7th forum launching the report, [Taking Action: Charting an Anti-Racist Path Forward in Westchester's Nonprofit Sector](#). The report was based on years of community reflection, education, and dialogue. The event, which was attended by more than 200 people, reviewed four key issue areas essential to building anti-racist systems. One of those areas was “supporting people of color to lead” and was the impetus for the formation of the Peer-to-Peer Affinity Group.

“I didn't realize how much I needed to have honest, vulnerable conversations with other BIPOC colleagues until NPW's Affinity Group,” expressed Amy Rivera, Communications Manager of Nonprofit Westchester, one of the 75 participants. “It was therapeutic and gave me the energy to start my workday with more presence and confidence. I'm looking forward to participating in the future meetings taking place every other month.”

Amanda Hinkson, Director of Operations at [SPARC](#) also had a positive reaction to the meeting, stating that she was thankful “for the creation of a space to curate the conversations necessary to lead as a woman of color.”

The Peer-to-Peer group was jointly planned and facilitated by Lucria Ortiz, [President and CEO of Yonkers Family YMCA](#), Dr. Alexandria Connally, Equality and Inclusion Consultant of Nonprofit Westchester, and Michelle A. Nicholas, Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer and Director of Community Development of [PCSB Bank](#).

“As a member of the NPW Board, I am so encouraged by its focus on supporting nonprofit leaders of color. An affinity group dedicated to the development of our leaders is imperative and I am honored to be a part of its formation” stated, Lucria Ortiz. “We are creating a pathway for leaders of color in the nonprofit sector to see themselves in higher positions, to bring the language of equity to the right tables and push for organizational policy change.”

The success of the first meeting can be attributed to the amount of research that was put in place in preparation for the meeting. Nonprofit Westchester wants to ensure that these sessions are informative and beneficial and that all voices are heard.

"When NPW engaged in this important action, we did so intentionally," said Michelle A. Nicholas, Board Member of Nonprofit Westchester. "This Peer-to-Peer Affinity Group is a safe and brave space for people of color to express, heal and support each other with the aim of promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion across nonprofits in Westchester County."

Peer-to-Peer group meetings are open to NPW members. Registration is required to attend. To learn more about NPW upcoming events and how to register for Peer-to-Peer meetings, visit npwestchester.org/Upcoming-Events.

About Nonprofit Westchester

Nonprofit Westchester (NPW) is Westchester’s only membership organization dedicated solely to advancing and advocating for the needs and interests of the county's nonprofit sector, the people and populations served, and the nonprofit workforce. Representing more than 300 members, NPW’s vision is to build a thriving county with vibrant nonprofits and resilient, inclusive communities that value equity and inclusion, innovation, and integrity. The mission of NPW is to strengthen Westchester’s nonprofit organizations as they transform lives, empower communities, and drive positive change. This mission and vision are strengthened through advocacy, education, and connection. To learn more about Nonprofit Westchester, visit their website at www.npwestchester.org.

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