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**Media Contact:**

Sherry Bruck / Harquin Creative Group

914-738-9620 / [sbruck@harquin.com](mailto:sbruck@harquin.com)

**WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MARKS A SUCCESSFUL YEAR**

**Business and Community Leaders Participate in Westchester-Putnam's Workforce  
Development Board Annual Breakfast Meeting**

**(Mahopac, NY)** — On June 26, 2018, the Westchester-Putnam Development Board (WPWDB) celebrated a successful year of collaboration between state and government agencies, non-profits, public education, and the private sector to strengthen the skilled labor force in the two counties. The event kicked off with the Board's Annual Breakfast Meeting led by Thom Kleiner, WPWDB Executive Director. While the Board was conducting its annual meeting, Westchester County Executive George Latimer and Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell joined business, community youth organization, civic, and educational leaders in a networking breakfast and mini expo of program offerings. Both county executives gave opening remarks to the full group highlighting their outlook and vision for building skilled workforces in the counties.

"We want to work with our businesses to reduce the skills gap between what the workforce needs and those of the available workers," said Westchester County Executive George Latimer. "The Board's business sector partnerships were devised to help identify these gaps, and to work with our educational institutions to try to address them."

Thom Kleiner, Executive Director, Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board added, "Even though the unemployment rate in our two counties is at record lows, many of our fellow residents are still struggling to find work. We have innovative programs to help them achieve their goals."

This year's meeting theme "Full Steam Ahead," communicated the Board's ongoing mission to move forward with ambitious industry sector partnerships, programs and services, and events to build a robust workforce to attract and retain businesses. Keynote speaker Anthony Viceroy, Chief Executive Officer of Westmed Medical Group, discussed the business climate in the counties and the in-demand jobs in the healthcare sector.

The Board recognized former executive director Donovan Beckford for his significant contributions to building the WPWDB into one of the foremost organizations in public-private job skills development in New York State. Thom Kleiner called his predecessor "visionary" and "the architect of an organization that is a model for workforce boards." Members of the Board presented Donovan with a sculpture titled "Fire Mountain."

"When I was looking for a gift to commemorate his tenure, I found this sculpture and it immediately struck me as representing Donovan because of his steadfast strength and passion for the cause," said Allison Madison, President, Madison Approach Staffing, and WPWDB Board Member.

“This year’s meeting is of particular importance because it is our opportunity to express gratitude to our former Executive Director, Donovan Beckford, who, fortunately, continues to work with both counties in his new capacity as the CEO of WestCOP,” stated Putnam County Executive MaryEllen Odell.

The chairs of the seven Business Sector Partnerships also addressed the group and highlighted the initiatives and programs ongoing in their individual sectors – Joe DiCarlo (Healthcare); David Singer (Green); Natasha Caputo (Hotel & Hospitality); Joanna Staub (Not-for-Profit); Harold King (Advanced Manufacturing); Kevin McCarthy (Professional Services); and Natalie Griffith (Biotech). The partnerships focus on identifying skills needed in their sectors and ensuring the workforce can meet these skills needs.

“When I became the Board Chair in 2008, Westchester faced many challenges as the result of the economic downturn,” said David Singer, Chair, Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board. “The Board answered these challenges by developing the business partnership strategy to create a pipeline between the business needs and the required jobseeker skills.”

A highlight of the morning were testimonials from three individuals who have benefitted from the work of the WPWDB and its dedicated staff. Claudia Collazo spoke about the impact that The Guidance Center has on her life by helping her to finish her high school education, gain confidence, and look toward college. Kara Mac, founder of Shoe Candy, discussed how the skills and confidence she gained as part of the “Just Add One” Business Academy allowed her to launch a successful business. Nalini Addanki, an adult learner at Westchester Community College, reviewed her path to reinvent herself and develop a new set of skills for today’s workforce.

Additionally the volunteers for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program were recognized for their help in 2018’s income tax preparation program that helps working families and individuals maximize their tax credits.

The event concluded at 10:30am with a celebratory raffle of donated prizes!

**THE WESTCHESTER-PUTNAM WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WPWDB)** is comprised of leaders and staff of state and county government agencies, non-profits, public education, and the private sector who work together to strengthen the partnerships between business, education, and service providers within the “Career Center Network” to meet the needs for a skilled workforce. The WPWDB pursues funding opportunities and develops model programs and leading-edge practices. The “Network” is made up of four Career Centers (White Plains, Mount Vernon, Peekskill, and Carmel) as well as partner agencies that provide state-of-the-art technology, training, resources, and services to youth, adults and employers. For more information, visit [www.westchesterputnamonestop.com](http://www.westchesterputnamonestop.com).

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**WESTCHESTER COUNTY**, located in the heart of the historic Hudson Valley, covers 500 square miles and has a population of just under a million. The County is a blend of bustling cities, quaint villages and picturesque towns as well as open spaces and a network of beautiful parks. Westchester County is known for top-notch public schools, and a high quality of life. The County is also an intellectual capital, boasting a highly educated workforce, competitive colleges and universities, Fortune 500 companies, world changing non-profits, and cutting-edge research centers. Westchester is led by County Executive George Latimer, who took office in January 2018 as the ninth County Executive. Learn more about Westchester County by visiting [www.westchestergov.com](http://www.westchestergov.com)

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