20 Westchester women reshaping our business landscape.

By David Levine, Stacey Pfeffer, Elaine Pofeldt, Gale Ritterhoff and Deborah Skolnik

Photography by Toshi Tasaki
The Westchester Institute for Human Development (WIHD) serves some 5,000 people with disabilities and 450 vulnerable children each year. Yet, before Susan Fox, PhD, became its president and CEO in 2016, board members and staff felt that the Valhalla-based organization wasn’t very well-known beyond its clientele.

Fox immediately set about to remedy that: “We’ve used a PR firm to get our name out in the media more, and we’ve worked hard to make ourselves seen as the place to go in Westchester County for services,” she says. She’s also recruited six new board members, and strengthened relationships inside and outside the disability community.
Improving WIHD’s financial strength has likewise been high on Fox’s to-do list. “We’ve just about quadrupled the amount of money we’ve raised through our fundraising efforts over the last three years,” she notes. Her emphasis on grant writing has helped WIHD yield seven new grants in the past year, which will total $7.4 million over the next five years.

Next up: Finding WIHD a permanent, affordable space, one better-suited to its needs. For Fox, optimizing the institution’s effectiveness isn’t just a professional mandate; it’s also a personal passion: Her 37-year-old daughter, whom she adopted at age 4, has developmental disabilities. (Fox has two other children as well.)

Fox is confident she’ll achieve her lofty goals — but only with her colleagues’ help. “I believe that if you hire good people, let them do their jobs, and support them, people will do good work,” she says.