

ROBERT KESTEN BIO

Born and raised in Westchester, **Robert Kesten** has spent his career building coalitions and facilitating partnerships on the local, national, and international levels.

Since 2009, Robert has served as a consultant for PDHRE, a small but impactful non-profit established in 1988 to respond to the unmet need for Human Rights Learning at the grassroots level, with the goal of turning knowledge into action. Since then, PDHRE has conducted and/or facilitated Human Rights Learning and training in over 100 countries. PDHRE was the force behind the United Nations Decade of Human Rights Education, a global initiative promoting the need to integrate human rights and democratic values into all aspects of people's daily lives.

Pathways for Educational Success

Prior to PDHRE, Robert spent his career working with a variety of nonprofits. Among his proudest achievements was creating and running *America's Future Through Academic Progress*, an educational program in the NYC Public Schools that developed pathways for success for academically, socially and economically challenged students. Robert also created and administered a domestic national agriculture initiative, which established an international scholarship for American farmers, and set up training programs for agricultural communities nationwide. Robert also served as the first North American president of the acclaimed educational program, *March of the Living*, where he was an integral part of an international team educating high school students about the Holocaust. His film on the project won the Jury Prize at the Moscow Film Festival.

With a passion for film and the arts, in 2000 Robert produced the first of five consecutive Director's View Film Festivals in Fairfield County, CT. As a result, he was appointed Vice Chair of the state's film and television commission and was asked to serve as an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut teaching film, theater, and the Business of Entertainment.

In 2006, Robert ran the Center for Screen Time Awareness in Washington, DC, where he pushed for a FCC Task Force to study the impact of screened media on children's health, specifically obesity. The taskforce included leading advertising agencies, film and television producers and networks, food companies and others. Some of the Center's programs were later adopted by the US Department of Health.

National, State & Local Campaign Experience

A lifelong political junkie, Robert began his career working on the campaigns of several prominent U.S. Senators (including Tom Daschle and Paul Simon) as well as for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC). At the state level, Robert worked for NYS Senate Minority Leader Manfred Ohrenstein, where he did fundraising for the NYS DSCC. Robert oversaw the development and political affairs for AIPAC's New York Office, where he served as Deputy Director.

Robert remains politically active to this day, particularly on the local level where he serves as a Lewisboro Democratic District Leader and active member of the Lewisboro Democratic Committee. On a nonpartisan front, Robert started Lewisboro Citizens, a Facebook group for people to engage on local nonpartisan issues.

Robert is a longtime member of SAG-AFTRA (AFL-CIO) and a licensed real estate agent. Robert, his husband Thomas, and their two sons—Richard and Lucas—have lived in South Salem (Lewisboro) for the last 20 years. Both Richard and Lucas went through the Katonah-Lewisboro School System. Robert is himself a graduate of Fox Lane High School (1973) and Syracuse University (1977).