



# HRA/DSS PERSPECTIVE

**COMMITTED** TO ASSISTING PEOPLE IN REACHING THEIR MAXIMUM LEVEL OF SELF-SUFFICIENCY



## Commissioner Doar Presents Strategies for 2007

Speaking at a forum held by Center for New York City Affairs at the New School for Social Research on March 13, Administrator/Commissioner Doar and New York State Commissioner of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) David Hansell provided an extremely clear analysis and an important indication of policies New York City and State will pursue.



Commissioners Doar and Hansell with Sandra Killet, Community Voices Heard (l.) and Jillynn Stevens, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (r.)

Commissioner Hansell, formerly HRA's chief of staff, discussed impediments posed by some measures of new TANF law as enacted. One example he cited was the capping of wellness activity, such as medical or substance abuse treatment, at six weeks, and placing it in the same activity category as job search so that credit for one may eliminate credit for the other. New York City and State continue to advocate for a broader definition of work activity.

As clients continue to move from welfare into the workforce, the challenge presented is to support them in their struggle out of poverty. "Our work does not end when a client leaves the rolls," Commissioner Doar said, "HRA will partner with agencies citywide to strengthen the network and improve accessibility of supports to low income New Yorkers." These include food stamps, health insurance and the earned income tax credit (EITC).

Commissioner Doar proposed expanding informational outreach to the prison system so that upon release, ex-offenders can be connected with the opportunities needed to successfully re-enter society. He spoke about our need to engage young men so as to develop opportunities for advancement and empowerment, as we have for single mothers.

"We have a lot of work to do, but I am encouraged," Commissioner Doar said. "HRA has earned respect and support for our efforts to help New Yorkers. There is a general feeling that we are on the right course, even when there are adjustments to be made."

Commissioners Doar and Hansell were joined by Jillynn Stevens, Director of Policy, Advocacy and Research, Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies and Sandra Killet, co-chair of the Board of Community Voices Heard. Andrew White, director of the Center, organized the forum and moderated.

## HRA Program Updates

### NEW EVENING HOURS AT FOOD STAMP OFFICES

HRA wanted to further expand access to food stamps, especially to low-income New Yorkers, who because of employment cannot apply during traditional business hours. Currently at least one food stamp office in each borough is open to 6 p.m. and on Saturdays. As of March 15th, evening hours at these offices have been extended to 7:00 p.m. one night a week. Food Stamp office locations and hours are posted on HRA's Internet site. Please spread the word to clients and communities.

### BUSHWICK JOB CENTER OPENS AS MODEL OFFICE

On March 14th, the Bushwick Job Center and Williamsburg Food Stamp Office opened as an FIA model office. "The Center renovation and redesigned service process is making it possible for us to serve our clients more expeditiously," Patricia Garcia, Brooklyn Regional Manager said. "The community has responded very positively to the change."

### FY '08 PRELIMINARY BUDGET

On March 15th, Commissioner Doar presented HRA's preliminary budget for fiscal year 2008 to the City Council General Welfare Committee. You will find his testimony on the HRA Intranet by selecting the Office of Legislative Affairs under HRA Program Areas.

## Job Seekers Spring into Action at Jamaica Job Fair

The Jamaica Model Office, opened December 20, 2006, held its first job fair in the early evening of Thursday, March 29. Feedback from Back to Work job seekers was very positive. Victoria's Secret, BJ's, Time Warner Cable, Allen Health Care, Home Depot and the YMCA of Jamaica were among the most sought out employers in attendance. Employment applications were filled out by many job seekers, and several clients scheduled follow-up interviews with employers at the fair. The resources of the Jamaica Model Office in the newly constructed Muss building are an integral part of downtown Jamaica's revitalization.



### HRA Perspective Monthly Bulletin

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### Event Calendar

#### TAKE YOUR CHILDREN TO WORK DAY



#### Thursday April 26, 2007

Teach your children about your workplace and responsibilities; introduce them to your co-workers. HRA welcomes staff children and will provide entertaining educational activities that will help them formulate their future goals. Complete school release letter and contact your personnel officer for further information.

#### GIVE BLOOD GIVE LIFE

Support **HRA's Blood Drives** by donating blood at:

#### Wednesday, April 11, 2007

**Metrotech Center Busmobile**, 15 Metrotech, Brooklyn, from 10:00 a.m. 3:30 p.m. To make an appointment, call **Larry Brown** at (718) 510-0371.

#### PAI LUNCH & LEARN WORKSHOPS

#### Monday, April 16, 2007

**HRA Headquarters**, 180 Water Street, 5<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, 1 to 2 p.m. Ms. Erin Quinn, coordinator of the Employee Smoking Cessation Assistance Program (ESCAPE) at the NYC Bureau of Tobacco Control, will hold a **Smoking Cessation Workshop**. Contact Karin Feldhamer at (212) 331-3325 for an application for the program.

#### Tuesday, April 17, 2007

**HRA Headquarters**, 180 Water Street, 12<sup>th</sup> floor conference room, 1 to 2 p.m. Dr. Albert Farvate, neurologist, at St. Vincent Medical Center, will speak on **"Signs and Symptoms of Stroke."**

## The Unstoppable Mr. B: HRA's Ambassador Citywide



Burton Blaustein, OCCA Deputy Commissioner

HRA created the centralized Office of Constituent Affairs to assist consumers in resolving their issues in 1998 and chose Mr. Blaustein to head it. He and his staff know how to obtain all the necessary information from a distraught client and troubleshoot their issues. As the outcome, the unit may guide clients in the right direction for service, or, if they determine a client needs emergency service, they will cut through red tape to help.

In their work, the unit sometimes encounters uncharted territory. In those cases, Mr. Blaustein uses his excellent judgment and years of experience to devise a fair solution.

Mr. Blaustein's staff has been shaped by his leadership. "We have absorbed his determination that no constituent be turned away without being listened to, his thoroughness and his willingness to go the extra mile for a client," his special assistant Iris Bailey said.

His influence has had a powerful impact on OCCA's ability to successfully carry out the Community Affairs branch of its mission, which is to meet with elective officials, legislators, and community groups to disseminate information about HRA policies and to bring feedback to HRA about their needs or difficulties so as to resolve them. "Mr. Blaustein is recognized as an encyclopedia on social services information and for his commitment and hard work. When I introduce myself as a member of his office, I too am respected," Carlos Infante, OCCA Manhattan borough representative said.

Burt Blaustein, HRA's Deputy Commissioner of Constituent and Community Affairs, began his career at HRA as a social services investigator 45 years ago during the Kennedy Administration, a time, he says, when being of service was a national goal. Those who have worked with him or have been helped by his intervention have directly experienced the depth of his concern for people in need and the effectiveness of his problem-solving.

The Council of Jewish Organizations of Flatbush honored Mr. Blaustein with a Distinguished Public Servant Award, at the 28th Community Legislative Breakfast on Sunday March 11, 2007. Among the ten other 2007 recipients were The Honorable Yvette D. Clarke for public leadership, The Honorable Malcolm A. Smith for government leadership and The Honorable Vito J. Lopez for legislative leadership. At the breakfast, many prominent City officials sought Mr. Blaustein out to pay tribute and others wanted to meet the man preceded by his reputation.



Clockwise: OCCA Assistant Deputy Commissioner Barbara Ramirez-Giove, OPPD Executive Commissioner Jane Corbett and Commissioner Doar with Mr. Blaustein

## 1000 Visited 18th Annual Queens Resources Awareness Fair

The 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Queens Resources Awareness Fair took place on Tuesday April 10<sup>th</sup> at York College. The fair, whose theme was "Freedom through Education, Employment Experience & Community Awareness," was sponsored by the HRA Community Advisory Council and the Jamaica Job Center. Representatives were present from 180 organizations to provide information about the many free programs and services available in the community, including sponsored employment, health and mental health services, nutrition, child care and youth services. FIA Deputy Commissioner Seth Diamond thanked the residents, organizations and officials who enriched the day's celebration of Queens.

