



HRA/DSS PERSPECTIVE

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



CHEERS TO THE 40+ YEAR STAFF AT THE COMMISSIONER'S HOLIDAY PARTY

by Melinda Mousouris

At this year's Open Forum, Commissioner Eggleston told staff she planned to hold a holiday party to honor the HRA employees who have served forty years or more. And that staff lucky enough to have drawn a forum bracelet that was specially marked would also be able to attend.

As night fell on December 14, HRA's holiday party got underway in the central space on the 12th floor of HRA headquarters. The space was decorated with tiny lights and holiday ornaments, and the New York skyline beamed in through the loft-size windows of the beautifully renovated space. A buffet of hors d'oeuvres, finger sandwiches and desserts gladdened spirits even further.

But it was the chemistry between the Commissioner and staff that lit up the room and resonated in the laughter. "I have never loved work the way I love working with you," she said, as she invited staff to reward them-

selves for the intense work they do by dancing and celebrating with her.

Commissioner Eggleston paid tribute to our 47 colleagues who have served within HRA for more than forty years and led staff in forming a circle dance around Wilhelmina Lee, who with 49 years, has served the longest. What stood out in speaking to the honorees was the value of their dedication in their own lives. They had worked in many capacities and most had advanced their education and professional standing. "I've always been a social worker at



Commissioner Eggleston and staff celebrate Wilhelmina Lee for 49 years of service with a circle dance.

heart," Maurice Borah said, summing up his choice. "I wouldn't trade anything for all the experience that I had," Shirley Wright said. Their words echoed the sentiments of their fellow honorees and of all others who have been enriched by their commitment to public service through HRA.

Building Policy to Support Low-Wage Earners

"Pathways to Economic Independence," a series of policy-building forums on reducing poverty in New York City, was held during the fall. The series brought together government and civic leaders to develop a plan of action based on recommendations proposed by the Commission on Economic Opportunity in its report to Mayor Bloomberg. Commissioner Eggleston was one of four New York City Commissioners invited to address the forum at its opening session on October 10. She spoke on the critical importance of work supports in helping low-income families to remain self-sustaining and proposed a legislative and collaborative framework in which support to the working poor could be increased.

Commissioner Eggleston was also an invited speaker before a national conference on "Welfare Reform: 10 Years," organized by the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC on November 16. In speaking on the success of welfare reform thus far, she emphasized the necessity of supporting those who have become employed with initiatives to make work pay and of welfare prevention among young adults.

HRA Program Updates

OFFICE OF CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT HOSTS SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYER CONFERENCE

On November 14, 2006, OCSE held its second Employer Conference at the American Indian Museum. The conference included presentations and workshops designed to increase employers' understanding of laws, regulations and processes pertaining to payroll deductions for child support and medical insurance. The 156 attendees had an opportunity to raise questions and concerns. Their evaluations of the conference were positive. OCSE is planning future conferences in an effort to reach more employers and to provide an ongoing dialogue for those who have attended earlier events.

HRA HEAP ON CALL FOR WINTER EMERGENCIES

The Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) serves all low-income New Yorkers, including the working poor. The HEAP Season opened on November 1. Since then, HRA, which administers the New York City Home Energy Assistance Program, has issued more than 333,788 HEAP grants totaling \$20,481,830. HRA's HEAP Central staff receives on average 100 emergency calls a day. These emergencies include providing assistance with gas and utilities shut-offs, obtaining service extensions, as well as emergency oil deliveries and furnace repairs. HRA must respond by alleviating emergencies within 18 hours.



HRA Perspective Monthly Bulletin

Published by the City of New York Human Resources Administration/ Department of Social Services

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor
Verna Eggleston, Administrator/Commissioner

Office of Public Information & Communications
Barbara Brancaccio, Exec. Deputy Commissioner
Connie A. Ress, Media Director
Melinda Mousouris, Writer/Editor
Patrice Moller, New Media Producer
Mailen Nunez, Public Relations Coordinator
Ivan Celin, Intern

Event Calendar

HOPE 2007

January 29, 2007: Help identify unsheltered individuals. At midnight small teams with experienced leaders will take to the streets to count the number of homeless. Training will be provided for volunteers the same night at 10:30 p.m. To find out more information and to volunteer, call 311.

FAMILY HOMES FOR ADULTS: A SAFE HAVEN

By Lula N'zinga Strickland

Family Homes for Adults (Foster Care Services for Adults), an alternative housing program for adults ages 18 through seniors with physical or mental disabilities, came into existence under Title XX of the Social Security Act of 1974. Since that time, the program has grown as an Adult Protective Service (APS) program proven to be cost effective for the state and city. Today the Family Homes office is located in Manhattan with a small staff consisting of the director, six field managers, three supervisors, a placement director, an Intake/Outreach coordinator and clerical support staff.

Family Homes enables adults who might otherwise require institutional housing to remain in the community while receiving a high level of personal care and supervision in the setting of a private home. The program's placement director meticulously matches residents to provider homes.

Caretakers are enlisted through various routes including referrals from Department of the Aging; community organizations, hospitals, city hotline numbers, and word of mouth.

There are currently 178 Family Homes licensed by the state's Office of Children & Family Services and 258 residents. Residents are pleased with the unique care they receive in this family-type atmosphere. APS is exploring ways to expand the program to include more provider homes and residents in all boroughs.

FIA Presents Its 2006 PAI Awards



Above: 2006 FIA Individual Awardees;
Below: Bronx Region First Deputy Commissioner Barbara Mouzon with FIA Deputy Commissioner Seth Diamond.

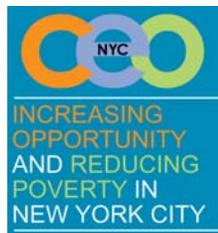


Above: Employment Services' Welfare-to-Work Division; Below: 2006 honorees.



FIA recognized staff for outstanding achievement at its 6th Annual PAI Ceremony at the Alexander Hamilton US Custom House on December 18. The theme of this year's ceremony was "FIA's Valuable Players." First Deputy Commissioner Pat Smith and FIA Deputy Commissioner Seth Diamond spoke at the ceremony, thanking staff for their important public service. "Your award-winning work has made life better for someone in New York City," he said. Mr. Diamond presented Barbara Mouzon of the Bronx regional office with a lifetime achievement award. This year the PAI awardees received mounted star trophies. The thoughtful and entertaining presentation was directed by Theresa A. Williams, FIA PAI liaison.

2007 Will Bring Increased Collaborative Solutions to Assist the Working Poor



In 2006, Mayor Bloomberg appointed a commission to study the causes of poverty in New York City and to submit recommendations on new strategies to help the roughly 1.5 million New Yorkers who live below the Federal poverty level.

The commission's report, "Increasing Opportunity and Reducing Poverty in New York City," focused on three large groups of people whom it identified as being able to benefit rapidly and dramatically from interventions, and it recommended creating a system to track their progress. These groups are: the working poor, children under age six, and young adults.

Some of the commission's recommendations involved working intensively through initiatives already in place that have proven successful. One such example is the strategies for building skills and career paths that are basic to the Back to Work Program, the latest generation of HRA's employment services program.

Other of its recommendations have not been previously tried. These include tax credits to low-income parents of children under age six to ease child care costs and cash rewards to encourage young adults to stay in school and families to receive preventative medical care.

The Mayor directed the relevant City agencies to develop plans of action putting the report's recommendations into policy and practice. You can read the report on HRA's Internet website.