

MEA Moving Forward in Tough Times

Summer Brennan

The New York City Managerial Employees Association's newly elected team and Executive Director Linda Barnes have been working hard to address the effects of the City's budget crisis while continuing the efforts to grow the membership and address members' needs.

MEA President Stuart Eber said, "We are operating in several arenas. We are meeting with DCAS to ensure all managers' rights are protected in the upcoming layoffs. We are working with the Management Benefits Fund to upgrade our benefits. We have met with Comptroller John Liu, Chairman John Rhea of NYCHA and the Department of Education Chancellor's Office to discuss their managers receiving the 4% and 4% raises the other managers received in 2009. We have been meeting with members and non-members in a series of informational meetings throughout the City."

"I have been very encouraged by the spirit and competence of the newly elected team," said Executive Director Linda Barnes. "My primary charge is to increase our membership. Our membership rolls grew by over 100 in March. We will continue to schedule field visits throughout 2010. All six officers have been actively engaged in the field, meeting with managers in ACS, DEP, DHS, DOE, DOT, HHC and NYPD."

"We are learning so much by meeting with the managers in their work place," reflected Executive Vice President Shelly Shulman. "They are concerned with job security, the Superimposed Major Medical Plan, dental benefits, salary compression and promotional opportunities. We can now take this feedback and develop



Managers at Kings County Hospital participate in an MEA informational lunch meeting

proposals to address these issues. It makes our meetings with the Mayor's Office, the Office of Labor Relations and the other agencies that much more productive."

Director at Large Joel Fishelson, who represents the MEA with the Management Benefits Fund, is enthused. "I've been active in the MEA for many years. More members are receiving more counseling and therefore have a better understanding, use and reimbursement of their benefits as a result of our field presence. We hope to expand these services by reinvigorating and expanding a Volunteer Corps to work with members on an ongoing basis."

"I'm a new kid on the block," said Director at Large Cynthia Vail. "I was the typical MEA member who sat back and watched our numbers decline along with our respect and benefits. In less than four months, we have begun to turn the tide. Our membership is growing. NYCHA and Comptroller's Office

managers may be getting justice in next year's budget. We are being proactive in the lay-off process. These are positive results of our collective efforts."

Recording Secretary Evelyn Correa is also a longtime member who became an activist. "I know how much we need to increase our profile with

all managers and the City administration. That's why I am focusing my time on publicity and public relations. This newsletter is one example of our commitment to improving communications. It will be published four times a year rather than two. The focus is on the members. We celebrate our diversity and keep members informed about the important issues."

"Our priority to increase membership is reflected in our spending plans," said Treasurer Warren Lewis. "This budget will enable us to close the budget gap by the end of this year and will provide us with balanced budgets moving forward." •

Bits & Pieces

On the Road Again

For the month of April, the Executive Director was on the road again conducting outreach for new members, as well as listening to and sharing information with existing members. Visits were made to Kings County Hospital Center, NYC Department of Transportation, NYC Department of Education, and the Administration for Children's Services Manhattan Borough Office. Fifteen new managers joined at Kings County, 10 at DOT, and smaller numbers for DOE and ACS. During follow-up discussions to learn what motivated the managers to join the MEA, the new members told the Executive Director: "the discussion convinced me that advocacy is greatly needed for managers"; "the Executive Director gave such a smashing, exuberant presentation, I was convinced" (LOL); "should have done it long time ago"; "strongly believe that full participation and strength in numbers is important".



Joseph Yacco, of DOT and a new MEA member

At each location, an interesting exchange of information was shared between the presenters and the participating managers. For example, managers expressed a great interest in the superimposed major medical plan (SMMP) benefit issue presented by Organization Committee Chairman **Joel Fishelson**. Executive Director **Linda Barnes** has

noted that the SMMP, dental plan and gym benefit are topics of interest at each informational session. MEA has strengthened its contact and interaction with Management Benefit Fund representatives in order to provide greater advocacy, as well as more informed updates to members regarding these issues. ●

Walk the Talk



Linda Barnes

MEA President **Stu Eber** and Executive Director **Linda Barnes** are beginning to feel that there may be a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel for Comptroller's Office and New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) managers still struggling with issues regarding salary adjustments. Meetings held with officials of these agencies have resulted in a sharing of information that shows steps in a positive direction for eliminating the problem. NYCHA Chairman **John Rhea** developed a performance-driven compensation plan as its tool for providing salary adjustments to managers. **Comptroller John Liu** appears to have included funding for his manager's retroactive raises in next year's budget.

● MEA Executive Vice President **Shelly Shulman** and Executive Director **Linda Barnes** attended at Q&A Breakfast with outgoing **Deputy Mayor Edward Sklyer**. They thanked him for his years of cooperation with the MEA. Mr. Sklyer's door was always open to the MEA and he always had the Mayor's ear. ●

Tell Me Something Good

Wow! What a difference a few postage stamps for an improved recruitment letter and a few good laughs at outreach sessions can make. The total number of new members for **March 2010 is 152** compared to **13 for March 2009**.

● Our MEA Recording Secretary **Evelyn Correa** could use more postage stamps in the months ahead. Ms. Correa has decided to retire and enjoy more sunshine and beautiful scenery. Ms. Correa is a long-time career manager with the NYC Division of Homeless Services and the Human Resources Administration. The MEA leadership, as well as a host of friends, guests and coworkers, extended their best wishes to Ms. Correa on May 7th. Director at Large **Cynthia Vail**, a long time colleague of Ms. Correa, said, "Evelyn's been a role model for professional women who balance family and career. The MEA and City government will miss her, but her friends will still share her joy."



Evelyn Correa

● For those of us still dreaming of retirement, did you know that the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) developed a really convenient online system? The NYCAPS Employee Self Service (ESS) online system provides payroll, tax, benefits and personal information about you that you can review, update, or print anytime that you like. To log in: <http://cityshare.nycnet/ess> ●

CHECK OUR WEBSITE
www.nycmea.org

The Superimposed Major Medical Plan Benefits



Learn about the reimbursement procedure. **If you are an active member or a non-Medicare eligible retiree you need to know about this!**

Click on the LINK tab to get to the Management Benefit Fund website.

MEA Scholarship Applications!

Due on July 1, 2010.

New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) First Deputy Commissioner Patricia M. Smith received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the Managerial Employees Association (MEA) 40th Anniversary Party last year – quite a distinction for a woman still at the height of her career, and with many more achievements ahead of her.

Born and raised in the Bronx, where she still resides, Ms. Smith first got involved with the City to teach English.

However it was a difficult time for teachers, with many layoffs.

“The only business that was booming was public assistance,” Ms. Smith said, a field in which she took an interest. The system was getting larger every day, and she decided to change her career direction. While working for the City as an Eligibility Specialist and then a Staff Analyst, she pursued an MBA, which she completed in 1980. Shortly thereafter, she was appointed Deputy Director of what are now called Job Centers.

“The most challenging time,” from her early managerial days Ms. Smith recalled, “was when tens of thousands of people were coming to us from Cuba and some from Haiti in the early 1980’s, many of whom had been taken from prisons and transported to the United States.” Ms. Smith was second in command of the Special Services Center that served the refugee community during this crisis period.

“It was a sink or swim assignment, and I swam,” she said. “I knew how to do the work, I had done the work – but up to that point there had been nothing on that scale.”

Merit, Excellence & Advocacy

**Patricia M. Smith,
HRA First Deputy Commissioner
and MEA Member**

Administration for Children’s Services, and the Department of Homeless Services.

“When there are changes that go on around you, you have to keep up on the mission,” Ms. Smith said. “That mission is to move people to self sufficiency, and you must be very careful in the way that is done, while giving the support they need.”

The biggest major challenge for 2010, she said, is not losing hope in light of the current fiscal restraints – of not going back “to the bad old days”.

Most of the system’s sea changes, she said, have occurred as a result of Federal and City initiatives of welfare reform in the 1990s. Now there is more emphasis on work support to help move families to employment and independence, including the Food Stamp Program and Medicaid. Ms. Smith feels lucky to have been associated with the system during this historic period, as it has also been a period of major reorganization with HRA being divided into many different agencies, including the



Patricia Smith, HRA First Deputy Commissioner

As a manager, one must “jump in with both feet,” and understand what the staff are doing on a daily basis. Ultimately, it is a manager’s job to decide which programs must be reduced considerably, or even cut entirely. It is necessary to take a critical look at things, and see where to remove money, what is required, and what is discretionary.

“That is where a manager’s skills come into play,” Ms. Smith said.

— **Summer Brennan**



HRA Commissioner Robert Doar (right) looks on as Patricia Smith receives the MEA’s Lifetime Achievement Award from Stuart Eber.



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FROM THE FRONT LINES

A Series about MEA Members Giving Service Throughout the World

Marie Delus in Haiti

As told to Summer Brennan

If you go to work in Haiti, you must be honest and sincere; a Haitian person can smell a phony a mile away. I'm guessing it's because we've had our fair share.

Although I am not a doctor or nurse, I was still able to lend a hand during the four long-weekend trips I took to Haiti to help with the aftermath from the earthquake.

As a non-medical personnel, I was invited by a group called HAVA, because I am a Haitian-American and a veteran. I also have disaster service training, and am an American Red Cross Disaster Action Team Agent. As a Mayor's Office Deputy Agency Chief Contracting Officer, I possess a good understanding of political structure and some diplomacy, and I am a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps.

Most importantly, as a Haitian-American, I understand the overall mentality of Haiti, its religion, character, capabilities and belief system.

When working in Haiti, it is important to leave your arrogance and pride at the door. Although the Haitian people need our help, they are a proud bunch and would rather starve than feel that they're being given undeserved charity.

At the clinic, we saw more than 300 patients daily. I had to ask security to close the gate and tell clients they must go to another facility, or come back the next day. The Swedish Doctors Without Borders facility in St. Croix had a generator with lighted tents; that facility was open 24-hours.

It's essential to know the language—not just French, but Creole—or at least have enough interpreters, as a lack of understanding can be dangerous. For example, the Swedish Doctors Without Borders facility did not allow the presence of weapons. One day a soldier came to their facility with a very sick woman, and the Deputy Administrator asked the soldier—who carried



Marie Delus

a rifle—if he could wait outside. The soldier was highly offended, left the patient, and walked out, leaving the administrator without an explanation of the sick woman's condition. I had to run after the soldier and insist he stop, so he could explain it. This patient might have died just from this simple misunderstanding, but I was glad I was here to help.

During each trip, there were still many patients with everything from broken bones to various types of infections. We were able to help many people, but towards the end, we ran out of medicine. Haiti had not yet reached the "recovery stage", but remained in the "rescue stage".

Looking ahead, Haiti still needs help in rebuilding homes and communities. The people of Haiti must also be educated. The country's literacy rate is only 52.9 percent. It is with education that Haiti will be able to lift itself from such poverty. ●

Marie Delus, an MEA member, is a Deputy Agency Chief Contracting Officer in the Office of Fiscal Operations, Office of the Mayor.

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