



THE MANAGER

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PANDEMIC: CITY MANAGERS BRAVE IT OUT

By Vanessa DeSantis

In March 2020, life changed dramatically for New Yorkers. State officials ordered non-essential businesses closed and workers to stay home to slow the spread of the novel coronavirus. But NYC managers and members of the MEA continue to do their jobs and contribute to their communities.

NIGHTMARE IN ELMHURST



Manny Lacayo

Manny Lacayo is a Senior Associate Director for New York City Health + Hospitals at Elmhurst Hospital Center in Queens. That makes him an essential worker at one of the hospitals hardest hit by the virus, with one of the highest rates of infection.

"It's a nightmare over there," he said.

Mr. Lacayo and his team continued to assist patients at a time when the entire state of New York was low on critical personal protective equipment, such as ventilators and masks. Mr. Lacayo had the good fortune to have a few surgical masks stashed away before the crisis started. He worked to protect his staff in the Finance Department, in the area of Managed Care, where he handles authorizations and assists patients in Telehealth meetings.

"As soon as this thing started, I said we aren't going to see patients in person," said Mr. Lacayo. "We are doing the same thing as before... except now, we assist patients over the phone."

Still, that didn't prevent Manny from eventually testing positive for the virus in mid-April. Though he showed no symptoms he took seven days off from work as advised by his agency. He recently had another clinical test, this time for antibodies to the coronavirus. Though he'd tested positive earlier, Mr. Lacayo didn't show signs of immunity to the disease – meaning he's still at risk if he's exposed again.

DANGER IN SPAIN

Marie Delus developed symptoms of the virus after a trip to Spain, weeks before New York officials issued their stay-at-home orders. Ms. Delus is a Director-at-Large for MEA and works in the Office of the Mayor as Deputy Agency Chief Contracting Officer. She and ten family members had planned a much-needed holiday for months. Their plane landed and the coronavirus began to sweep through Europe. They tried being careful: wiping down seats and wearing masks.

"Everyone had symptoms when we arrived back," said Ms. Delus. One family member came down with a severe case, hospitalized for over two months.

Marie recovered from her own illness quarantined at her home in Queens, N.Y., eventually returning to work at City Hall. In the first days of the "stay-at-home" order, Marie's co-workers split into two shifts to reduce how many workers crowded into their offices. Later, Ms. Delus worked from home.

Individual City agencies have differed on how to deal with the Pandemic – whether people should show up at their offices or not. "Getting the agencies on board with the same policies, that's something to look into," said Ms. Delus. "There are issues that came up, that we are just being made aware of, that MEA is going to follow up on."

Ms. Delus and Mr. Lacayo see COVID-19 as the biggest citywide crisis since 9/11, and in many ways, worse. "All our lives

stopped – the City workers are still out here working," said Ms. Delus. "We're doing everything we can to support the City, to keep it running."

HOW THEY'RE HELPING



Marie Delus

Ms. Delus began to feel a bit stir crazy, working from home. She found an organization called Invisible Hands Deliver, where volunteers deliver groceries to people with immune system issues. She shops on the weekends and helps a variety of people: a new mother, a young man in his 30s, the elderly.

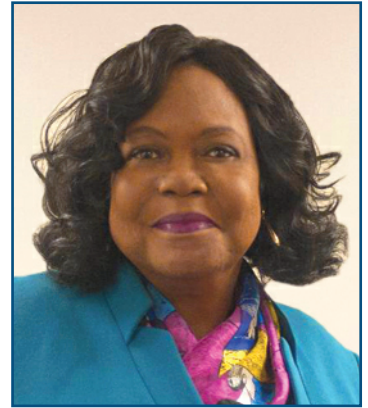
Mr. Lacayo also helps beyond showing up to work; he's been at Elmhurst for 26 years and is well-known there. He continues to educate his community about the importance of safety measures, such as social distancing. It's been a challenge; losses have been severe and people are desperate to cling to their jobs.

"If one family member gets sick, they all do," said Mr. Lacayo. "But they do what they can. They risk their lives because that's all they can do."

He's also a liaison to the consulates of Mexico, Ecuador and Colombia. They contact him about patients at the hospital, requesting information about the wellbeing of their citizens.

As for Marie Delus, she doesn't assume she has immunity just because she had symptoms. "I'll continue to wear my mask, my gloves, and keep six feet distance until we're living in a post-Pandemic world."

Bits & Pieces



DOWN BUT NOT OUT— WE'RE STILL STANDING

By Linda A. Barnes, NYC MEA Executive Director

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is a crisis we have not previously experienced. This has placed serious limitations on our social and economic well-being. On a daily basis, we consistently receive reports from government officials and the media regarding the number of citizens afflicted with the virus and those whose lives have been lost.

As the Coronavirus spread throughout the City and managers continued to express fear and uncertainty in their communications, there were moments when I thought about noted psychologist and humanist Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. It became apparent that all of us were experiencing the second level of Maslow's Hierarchy and that is the need for safety and security. It has become clear that no one person is safe or secure from this virus, and it is for this reason we stand strong and together. There is truth to the phrase "We're all in this together".

The MEA pays tribute to all of its members who are working city managers and their teams who continue to stand on the front lines daily as essential employees in spite of the dangers. Each essential employee risks his or her life every day to help save and protect the lives of New York's citizens.

We cannot overlook or minimize the fear our members have expressed to us. MEA members leave their homes to report to their assigned responsibilities providing health care, social, economic, environmental, and a myriad of other services at City agencies throughout New York. Managerial employees have committed their skills and expertise to everything humanly possible to save lives and stop the spread of the devastating COVID-19 virus. During this crisis, we have talked to several managers who are afraid for their lives, as well as the lives of their loved ones. Yet, they forge ahead to ensure the safety and well-being of others.

The MEA continues to support our members' concerns and to do everything within our professional ability to help them survive the COVID-19 crisis. We talked to members who have job responsibilities in hospitals, shelters, correctional facilities, social work functions and office settings requiring direct contact with clients without Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). We understood that based upon supply shortages, many agency leaders were struggling to prioritize the use of PPE supplies, however, this understanding was not enough to quell the fears of managers being placed in positions of possible exposure. In their heroic efforts to

save others, the lives of managers were being placed in hazardous situations without protective work gear. The MEA initiated action by submitting a Letter to the Editor of the Chief and to the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations (OLR) and non-mayoral agencies stating our position regarding the need for managerial employees to receive much needed PPE supplies. New government regulations requiring the use of PPE for all essential workers have helped to abate this situation.

In addition, the MEA has advocated in advance with the OLR and other non-mayoral agency officials regarding Bonus and Hazard Pay for all managerial employees deemed as essential workers. We do not want to wait until final decisions are made and learn that approvals have been granted to only individuals in collective bargaining titles.

Yes, the COVID-19 pandemic has knocked us down, but amazingly our members and the rest of City's managerial workforce are still standing strong and proving that we really can get through this together. This situation is just another challenge where the MEA will emphatically state: "We're still standing and

"WE'VE STILL GOT YOUR BACK!"

We express our wishes for everyone to stay well and safe.

A SPIRITED AND STRONG WOMAN

Remembering Georgia Williams February 19, 1922 - April 3, 2020

By Vanessa DeSantis



Aunt Georgia is Georgia Williams, who would rise up the ranks working in the Department of Social Services.

Ms. Williams received her Masters Degree in Social Work from the New York School of Social Work in 1946 — a rare accomplishment given the era. She started her career at the American Red Cross, then as a caseworker at the Hospital for Joint Diseases. In 1952 she joined City service as a Medical Social Worker and passed additional Civil Service exams, becoming Director of Medical Social Work before reaching the management ladder and then being appointed a Brooklyn Borough Manager in 1978. She retired in 1985.

"Georgia was integral in MEA's move to a business model. She served as Past-President all through my eight years as president," said President Emeritus William Dworkin. They shared many spirited discussions at Executive Board meetings. "We both secretly enjoyed them. I miss the Georgia I knew."

Ms. Williams created the MEA Retirees Chapter and was MEA's first representative to the reconstituted Council of Municipal Retirees Organizations (COMRO) 25 years ago. "She was a pioneer among and a forceful advocate for various constituencies throughout her life," said COMRO President Stu Eber.

"My relationship with Aunt Georgia began when I was 10 days old and I lived with her and my grandparents while my mother was recovering from surgery," said Deborah Beasley. "When I became school age, I lived with them for 3 years. She showed me what it meant to be a strong, intelligent Black woman."

A VITAL ROLE AT THE MEA

Georgia was the MEA's seventh President. "She was the only woman as well as the only African American to serve as MEA president," remembers Director-at-Large Darrell Sims. "Sharing the early history of the MEA, she offered invaluable advice and leadership to the Executive Board."

Executive Director Linda Barnes vividly remembers Ms. Williams with great respect and fondness: "On the date of my initial visit to the MEA, Ms. Williams was the first person I met. We immediately bonded, chatting and laughing about issues related to everyday life. I had no idea she was one of the panelists who would be interviewing me for the position of Executive Director."

A GRACIOUS MAN AND A TRUE PROFESSIONAL

Remembering Frank Cascio June 11, 1943 - April 23, 2020

By Vanessa DeSantis

Frank Cascio made everyone he met feel important. Working in HRA from 1965 to 1999, he was known by colleagues and loved ones for his kindness and self-deprecating humor.

"He was loved and respected by all who had the good fortune to work with him," said former HRA colleague Enrique Arroyo, echoing the sentiments of dozens of Mr. Cascio's friends and former colleagues. "I will always remember Frank as a kind and gracious man with a quip and a smile. He was a true professional."

He passed away on April 23rd from complications caused by COVID-19.

Mr. Cascio began his career as a Caseworker at HRA in 1965. He was appointed Director of Electronic Payment File Transfer (EPFT) implementation in 1980. The new EPFT system eliminated the need to mail paper Public Assistance checks and Food Stamp Program authorizations. It also reduced theft and fraud while safeguarding benefits.

"Frank was a highly intelligent and competent manager," said one of Frank's former supervisors, MEA President

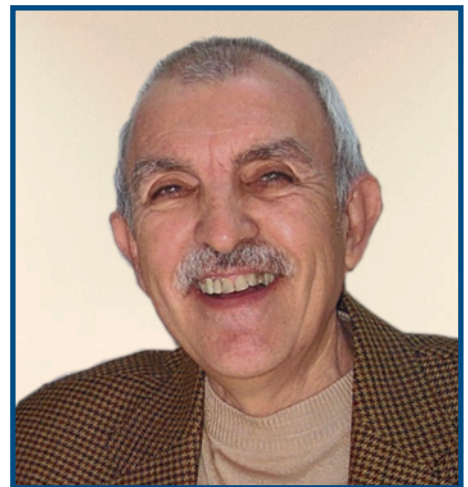
Emeritus Stu Eber. "Fifteen years before the Federal government converted SNAP to a cashless electronic benefits transfer (EBT) system, he helped develop and then run the agency's EPFT system."

Mr. Cascio also oversaw the eventual conversion from EPFT to EBT as the Director of Program Implementation & Management.

Besides his 18 years as a New York City managerial employee, Mr. Cascio was also a sports fan. He enjoyed the Horrendo office football pool, the NY Islanders and the Mets.

He had a deep appreciation for music and an affinity for opera. "Al Giove, my late husband, and Frank were best friends and opera lovers," reminisced Barbara Giove. "They mused upon the love stories in La Boheme and Puccini, but also Frank Sinatra and Dean Martin."

He was also known for his great cooking, which he'd share with his many colleagues and friends. "People depended on him at work and at home and he never



disappointed," said wife Norma Cascio. "People loved him and have very fond memories of him."

"I was so fortunate to have such a husband for 50 years," said Norma. "He was happy during the last six years of his life where he lived in the Alzheimer's unit in assisted living: he was always smiling, dancing to music, enjoying his meals and walking around."



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A LOVING HUSBAND, FATHER, AND FRIEND

Remembering Derik Allen Braswell January 16, 1963 - April 12, 2020

By Vanessa DeSantis



Derik Braswell put thought and care into everything he did.

He loved his job at Elmhurst Hospital where he worked as an Associate Director, in the Department of Materiel Management, Supply Chain, at New York City Health + Hospitals.

"Derik was a dedicated employee and made the ultimate sacrifice for the City of New York," said Shelly Shulman,

Derik's former colleague at Elmhurst and current President of the MEA.

Mr. Braswell began his career at Elmhurst Hospital as Motor Vehicle Supervisor in 1987. In 2004, he was promoted to Assistant Director of Materiel Management and then to Director in 2012. He went on to earn a Bachelor's degree of Science in Business Management, graduating Cum Laude in 2014 from CUNY's York College.

"He spoke highly of the staff in his department, the hospital police, human resources, the union reps, the Queens Hospital transportation staff, and the employees downtown in Central Office," said Veronica Jones-Braswell, Derik's wife.

Nothing mattered more to Derik than family.

"As a child, he would pick me up from school and take me to his college courses in the evening and he'd ask me to help him study on the exam day, using flash cards. It turned into a really fun bonding

experience." said his son Justin Braswell. "He taught me how important education is and that it can be enjoyable, too."

His daughter, Dr. Jessica Braswell, who works as the Medical Director at New York Life Insurance, hopes to carry on her father's legacy. "I've always known that my dad worked hard so that I could achieve my dreams. Since his death, so many people have reached out and I never knew how much he bragged about us until now. He did so much," she said.

Beside caring for his family, Mr. Braswell was active in his community as First Vice-President of LP Fam's Youth Organization, INC. and a little league baseball coach. He was also a defensive driving teacher and sole proprietor of Drive Safe.

Derik was always curious to learn and grow. He also made you feel at home in his presence. He held yearly BBQs for friends and colleagues in the neighborhood. There, you'd find Derik smiling, dancing and being a friend.