



NEW YORK CITY

# MANAGERIAL EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019-2020

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since the New York City Managerial Employees Association's creation July 1, 1968, our primary purpose has been to provide superior advocacy services and support to all of our members. The NYC MEA will continue to be a catalyst for promoting public and agency policies that effect positive economic as well as social change for managerial employees. This will be achieved through collaboration and networking with city administration, agency leaders and community representatives by empowering members to seek and establish professional growth through educational opportunities, and by demonstrating awareness and respect for cultural diversity.

The Coronavirus pandemic has created challenging times for everyone and certainly for the managers of New York City. We are called upon to be on the front lines in every agency and every department. We are always required to go the extra mile, work all shifts and extra hours. At Health + Hospitals, managers are stepping up to help patients even if their regular duties did not involve patient care. Managers, like many City employees, are testing positive, some are ill, and some have passed away. My friend Derik Braswell, an MEA member and colleague at Elmhurst Hospital, passed away from the virus.

Our Executive Director Linda Barnes and her staff continue to serve our members during these times and have been there for you when needed.

But unlike other City employees, when managers work extra hours, we do not get overtime pay or compensatory time. In fact, one of the issues that still remain is that managers that have served more than 15 years had two days of annual leave taken away from them for Paid Parental Leave. This is an issue that we will not let go away and continue to bring up with the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations and the non-mayoral agencies.

Health + Hospitals is asking managers to work extra hours and weekends and serve patients. As you may recall, a little over two years ago is when they laid off hundreds of managers. As a retired Health + Hospital manager, it just reinforces what I have always said in that *"we should not be the last in line when we receive our raises and our raise should reflect the sacrifice we make and the respect that we deserve. We should not be the first in line when there are layoffs. We have the back of New York City. The city should have our back in return"*.

This past year has been a difficult year for the NYC Managerial Employees Association. We lost Joel Fishelson who passed away this past July. Joel was considered the "think tank" of the MEA, finding innovative ways to create new benefits and recruit new members. He brought in new and improved member benefits as part of his leadership as Chair of our Organization Committee. There, he reviewed member health care issues and worked with the City's Office of Labor Relations' Management Benefits Fund to expand benefits for all managers. I want to thank Linda Barnes, Stu Eber, Edgar Landas and Tina Ramsey for developing and implementing a plan to continue the Organization Committee's multifaceted activities.

Although we continue to lose members because of unionization and attrition, we have also gained new members through our recruitment and outreach efforts. These efforts include when our managers (current members) spread the word throughout the City of their appreciation and satisfaction of the work and advocacy that the MEA provided to resolve their issues and workplace challenges. Often times, this leads to charges against the manager being dropped or reduced and saving the manager from termination, demotion, salary reduction or fines.

Critical areas of MEA benefits and services are highlighted in Section I, with fuller details for each provided in Section II.

### **Section I**

- COVID-19 - The Coronavirus pandemic has created challenging times for everyone and certainly for the managers of New York City.
- Strategic Plan – The Executive Board continues to update and implement our Strategic Plan to move the organization and our members forward.
- Civil Service Merit System – MEA is a supporter of the Civil Service Merit System.
- Recruitment – In spite of a loss in membership, due to union accretion, we completed calendar year 2019 with a combined total of 2,964 active and retired members.
- The Organization/Compensation, Benefits & Professional Development Committee, under the leadership of Edgar Landas and Tina Ramsey, continues to plan, develop, implement, improve and monitor NYC MEA's "Members Only" benefits.
- Voluntary Insurance Program – MEA membership has been significantly enhanced with the availability of these optional supplemental benefits.
- Toastmasters International Program – T.I.P. Club is sponsored by the MEA and approaching its *Ninth Anniversary*. Toastmasters International is an award winning self-paced communication and leadership program that currently has over 358,000 members in 16,800 clubs throughout 143 countries. In the NYC area there are over 182 clubs.

- Pension Counseling – All current MEA members are entitled to unlimited pension counseling. Jay Warshofsky is our pension counselor.
- NYC Career Development Program – The NYC MEA Career Development Program was incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) on December 14, 2011. The CDP continues to fund our scholarship, tuition reimbursement and educational seminars for our members.
- Member Services – Our visibility and communication improvements go hand-in-hand with improving services to our members. The MEA provided 361 services to its members for Calendar Year 2019.
- Fiscal Discipline – Dues were increased by a unanimous vote at the February 23, 2020 General Membership Meeting. In service dues were increased from \$12 to \$14 per pay period and retirees from \$40 to \$45 a year. The 2020 financial report is delayed because of COVID-19.
- MEA Elections – We began our biennial chapter elections process in January 2020. We have suspended scheduling future chapter elections because of COVID-19 and the mandate for social distancing until agencies have returned to work and are permitted to hold meetings of more than 10 people.
- Visibility – MEA leadership continued its strategy of enhancing its visibility through onsite face-to-face interaction with members, as well as written communication.

## **Section II**

### **COVID-19**

Managers are just as susceptible as everyone else to infections, including COVID-19. Some managers may have family and others they live with. While others may have preexisting conditions and/or be 50 or older. Unfortunately, there are agencies ignoring these facts and not allowing some managers to work from home even while their staff are doing so, and others forcing some managers to work directly with infected populations even though they meet the CDC guidelines for at-risk people.

Even though we do not have collective bargaining contracts to define our working conditions, this does not give any agency the right to directly threaten or compromise the health and safety of managerial employees in an arbitrary manner. All union members alike working the front lines require PPE, so do the managers working beside them.

We are concerned about managers and other non-union full-time employees deemed as essential workers in all City agencies. We have contacted the Mayor's Office of Labor Relations and the non-mayoral agencies to ensure that all employees have proper Personal Protective Equipment and are allowed to telecommute.

It is appropriate to provide "hero-pay" or "combat pay", as some are calling it, for nurses and doctors on the front lines. We want to be sure all front-line staff in all City agencies are included, as well as managers.

Our members are proud of working for our great City performing their job responsibilities for the citizens and supporting front-line staff. However, we want all front-line workers, regardless of job title, to be included when it is time to compensate essential workers for their heroic service.

### **Strategic Plan**

**We continue to work with the Administration and the non-Mayoral agencies on other issues managers care about, including:**

- \* Prioritizing promotion from within
- \* Encouraging the agency heads to enhance diversity among managers
- \* Revising the Pay Plan for Managerial Employees (PPME) to address salary compression and addressing the inequity where promotions to a managerial title result in a minimal salary increase of \$1,091.
- \* Scheduling promotional and open competitive managerial civil service exams.

**The Strategic Plan also addresses the following areas:**

- Increasing active membership by 15% annually.
- Developing and obtain improved employee benefits and compensation.
- Improving finances by exploring innovative funding resources.
- Improving, developing and implementing new MEA members-only benefits.
- Improving agency operations for managers.
- Improving and developing better communications and publicity techniques.
- Facilitating increased member activism and participation in our organization through expansion of our Volunteers Program.
- Facilitating succession planning at both the Chapter and Officer levels through the adoption of a Mentorship Program initiative.

### **Civil Service Merit System**

The MEA, is a long-time supporter of the Civil Service Merit System. We are members of the Civil Service Merit Council and have testified before the City Council on the importance of providing required civil service promotional and open competitive exams on a timely basis.

**Recruitment**

Calendar Year 2019 was completed with a combined total of 2,964 active and retired members. This was achieved in spite of agency organizational restructuring involving title changes and union accretion. Total membership reflects a .01 decrease between calendar years 2018 and 2019. This is attributed to our enhanced efforts toward direct telephone communication to members to increase participation for chapter elections, as well as "cold call" follow up to non-members after MEA meeting activities (chapter elections, General Membership, and agency-specific activities). Under the direction of Executive Director Linda Barnes, the Member Services Representative recruited a total of 105 members using these methods in 2019.

**Compensation**

We continue to work with the administration to authorize a revised Pay Plan for Managerial Employees that addresses salary compression. We remain steadfast towards our advocacy approach that all minimum Level 1 salaries should at least be set at the same differential as the step-up from entry level to supervisory in that same career ladder or 10% above the immediate lower title's minimum, whichever is greater.

**Members' Only Benefits**

The Organization/Compensation, Benefits & Professional Development Committee continues to implement, improve and monitor new MEA members' only benefits. Our Scholarship Program for both members and their dependents, as well as our Tuition Reimbursement Program for members have been expanded. Through September 2019, we authorized \$23,752 in educational program funding. Members and their dependents benefitted from awards totaling \$14,800 in scholarship funding. Managers interested in enhancing their academic skills, enrolled into our Tuition Reimbursement Program and received \$8,952 in tuition assistance. We continue to work with the City University of New York (CUNY) to expand educational opportunities to the outer borough campuses.

The Financial Services Seminar Series Committee, a sub-committee of the Organization/Compensation, Benefits & Professional Development Committee continues to schedule and hosts workshops that are informative and applicable to making better financial decisions. Workshops offered include but not limited to life insurance, retirement planning, first-time home ownership, basic investing, managing debt with budget tracking, estate planning, tax preparation, and deferred compensation.

Several specialty workshops have been held such as special needs and single parent households. Additionally, workshops have been held to educate members regarding how their Leave balances are calculated when they leave City service, as well as, workshops to instruct our members how to properly complete the education and experience parts when applying for City civil service exams. At the conclusion of the workshops, Members are provided a survey form to complete for which they have an opportunity to list their topics of interests for future workshops. Members have the option to contact the MEA at any time to request topics to be hosted in future workshops too.

### **Voluntary Insurance Program for Currently Employed Members**

MEA membership has provided the opportunity to purchase enhanced insurance coverage. These benefits, called our Voluntary Insurance Program (VIP) provide members with comprehensive options and greater choice to meet their individual lifestyle and family security needs. They have been designed to enhance and complement the benefits already in place through the Management Benefits Fund.

Our members continue to have access to an outstanding portfolio of voluntary benefits, all offered on a guaranteed-issue basis (i.e. no exams, no tests or even medical questions). Members will not be turned down for coverage regardless of past or present health problems. Universal Life Insurance with Long Term Care Benefits and Lay-off Waiver, Short Term Disability Income Protection Plan, Discount Dental & Optical, a no cost EPIC discount Hearing Aid Benefit, and Critical Illness Benefit are all available. We continue to explore new areas for program expansion.

### **Toastmasters International Program (T.I.P. Club# 1914665)**

T.I.P Club, the MEA sponsored Toastmasters International Program is approaching its *Ninth Anniversary*. Toastmasters International is an award winning self-paced communication and leadership program that currently has over 358,000 members in 16,800 clubs throughout 143 countries. In the New York City area there are over 182 clubs. Toastmasters Clubs are growing so rapidly that the current District will split into two separate Districts. Beginning July 1, 2020, the T.I.P. Club will be in District 119 which represents Clubs south of 34<sup>th</sup> street in Manhattan, all of Brooklyn, Queens, Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

While COVID-19 has presented many challenges to City Managers, Toastmasters faced less adversity because it had already begun to transition its course material to digital content for the last several years. The T.I.P. Club quickly transitioned to on-line meetings using Zoom and modified its schedule to provide more content to its members.

The City order to 'Pause' and stay home presents issues with isolation and depression. Having more meetings gives our members an opportunity to do something fun and productive without the stress associated with working. Members are connecting with clubs throughout the world and finding that we truly are 'in this together'. That sense of solidarity contributes to a better frame of mind and stability.

Although it may have been a challenge for many to work all day and attend an evening meeting, the rewards of membership far out- weigh the challenges when you consider the many benefits. As City Managers and Toastmasters, we face challenges with vigor and purpose and forge ahead.

The new Toastmasters Program, called Pathways, consists of on-line modules and manuals. There are tutorials and podcasts that demonstrate the lessons as you go along, so that you get a hands-on idea of what is expected. At the meetings you put what you learned into practice and receive supportive and encouraging feedback for improvement. As we are an International organization, members are able to view videos of other members around the globe demonstrating a particular communication skill. Members can also communicate across the globe with other members to discuss techniques and issues they may be experiencing with a project. Now that is going GLOBAL.

We also want to congratulate MEA Retiree member and T.I.P. Club Secretary Jacqueline (Jackie) Brown for her dedication to the club and the District. Jackie is pursuing her Distinguished Toastmaster educational award and was the Area Director for our Club and 5 other Clubs. Now That's Leadership in action. Jackie is also pursuing certification in Career Coaching simultaneously. Kudos to all our Retirees that retire from City Service but not from service to our Communities!

We had to cancel plans to host our *Ninth Anniversary* celebration because of COVID-19. However, we look forward to next year's Decade celebration. We will be planning this spectacular event complete with all the bells and whistles. Come join us and find out all about our club and Toastmasters International. Information on how to join us is on the NYC MEA Website.

Pension Counseling - Pension Counseling- In 2019, Pension Consultant Jay Warshosky provided services to 16 members. This is slightly up from 2018 (14) based upon members' changes in plans regarding effective retirement dates. Our members have expressed sincere appreciation with the services provided by Mr. Warshosky.

### **NYC MEA Career Development Program**

The NYC Managerial Employees Association Career Development Program (CDP) was incorporated as a 501 (c) (3) on December 14, 2011. The purpose of this corporation is to solicit tax deductible grants and contributions for financial support and informational assistance in furtherance of scholarship and career development programs for the benefit of managerial employees working in various mayoral and non-mayoral agencies who dedicate their careers to providing the best quality services to the people of New York.

The corporation seeks to help our members in their efforts to improve their skills and enrich their knowledge while increasing potential for career advancement by providing:

- Tuition reimbursement and scholarship awards for qualified programs and courses that relate directly to member's service careers. Our CDP awarded \$23,752 to members and dependent children last year.
- Test preparation services, including study guides and exam prep sessions to help our managers pass their civil service exams. This activity was not needed in 2019 based upon DCAS' (Department of Citywide Administrative Services) exam protocols. The MEA continues to provide this member benefit, based upon the number of requests received.
- Referral services to help our members improve their communication, public speaking and leadership skills.
- Holding educational seminars to provide information to members.
- CDP also provides scholarships for dependent children of MEA members.

The CDP now uses MEA and other contributory funds to finance all of the above in addition to our CDP Holiday Scholarship Party. In honor of the passing of Joel Fishelson and his commitment to the MEA for the betterment of its members through the expansion of services and benefits, the CPD Holiday Scholarship Party last year was renamed the CDP Joel Fishelson Holiday Scholarship Party.

### **Member Services**

Under the leadership of the Executive Director, the MEA provided 361 services to its members for Calendar Year 2019. Requests for services relating to pay parity, performance appeals, EEO (Equal Employment Opportunity) and DOI (Department of Investigation) continued as the dominant need for MEA assistance. In December 2018, our attorney (Stuart Salles) began handling EEO interviews, based upon a Board-driven recommendation. Advocacy related to Benefits issues increased by 80%. More of our members reached out to the MEA to obtain information related to hearing aids, group life insurance, as well as the reimbursement process for the SMMP (Superimposed Major Medical Plan). This enhanced visibility is attributed to agenda topics discussed at chapter elections and standard lunch and learn meetings.

As the representative to the NYC Management Benefits Fund for our members, the MEA continues to successfully appeal adverse health and benefits claims determination. We encourage our members to contact the office regarding such situations. Since its inception in 2018, we have continued a regular Benefits Corner Column as part of our quarterly newsletter. Participation in the Volunteer Corps created by Joel in 2009 accepts members with varying skills and expertise. Members are involved in various research projects and organization activities. Contact us if you want to join.

### **Fiscal Discipline**

Dues were increased by a unanimous vote at the February 23, 2020 General Membership Meeting. In service dues were increased from \$12 to \$14 per pay period and retirees from \$40 to \$45 a year.

The 2020 audits are postponed because of COVID-19. In 2019 the MEA was successfully audited, including a review of procedures to ensure that we maintain best business practices, maintenance of regulatory documentation, and a detailed analysis of our internal control of financial transactions. This yearly audit assures our compliance with the standards of the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. Assurance of our strong financial base is especially important as we face a downturn in our membership numbers because of union encroachment. This conservative approach to the development and adherence of our budget will allow MEA to remain strong in our resolve to continue the fight for respect that city managers so richly deserve.

### **MEA Elections**

We began our biennial chapter elections process in January 2020. We have suspended scheduling future chapter elections because of COVID-19 and the mandate for social distancing until agencies have returned to work and are permitted to hold meetings of more than 10 people.



**Visibility**

MEA Officers, the Executive Director and Member Services Representative visited a total of 27 chapters and three Municipal locations in 2019 to fulfill the requirements for Chapter Elections. This strategic initiative was completely successful.

Development of the new website has been completed. MEA members now have the capability of submitting applications online. The new site allows our members to view MEA newsletters, as well as event activities using a variety of digital devices. Communication through social media will also be a focal point of our new website. Clearly, we are "moving on up" to closer connection to our members.

Above all, we respect ourselves and our fellow managers based upon the tremendous contribution we all make to this City. Respect is a mutual process. If we want all those in our chain of command to respect us, we must do the same. We are an association of professional managers across all municipal agencies with an incredible array of skills, education, experience, and community service.