

# THE URBAN CHRONICLE

NYC Urban Fellows 2009-2010

SPRING 2010

## FELLOWS AS FUTURE LEADERS

*Adriana Akers*



2009-2010 Urban Fellows with Commissioner Salvatore Cassano of the NYC Fire Department.

As I reflect on the past nine months, I am trying very hard not to write an article that slips into platitude. So it is not without reservations that I open with the following statement: The Urban Fellows program was the best thing that I could have done this year.

There are two main reasons for this. First, the program gave us tremendous opportunity from the start. Our supervisors somewhat inexplicably carried an innate trust in our skills, even when we made mistakes—and in the early months especially, we made many. Early in the year many of us found ourselves organizing Citywide events or being named project managers of agency programs. It is this aspect of the program that excited me when I applied, the potential to take on exceptional responsibility at an early stage in my career. In addition, my supervisor and coworkers immediately welcomed me into our agency and made me feel at once comfortable and confident. For that, I am altogether thankful. And although this article will not focus on this opportunity, it is a significant and rare thing to have so much expected of you during your first year out of college. Luckily, the Urban Fellows are the type of people who embrace challenge rather than balk at it.

*(continued on page 16)*

## A CRASH COURSE IN LEARNING

*Adler Prioly*

The Urban Fellowship afforded not a glimpse—but a panoramic vista of the operations, policy and decision making which take place in municipal government. In so doing, the Fellowship augmented the leadership and critical thinking skills of 23 young professionals. Even more than before we had entered into the Fellowship, we are impassioned with a mission to harness the capacity of local government in creative ways.

The interview process offered the first plain view of agency functions. Officials with ranks which spanned the organization chart spoke quite candidly about what it took to “get things done.” These interview conversations provided Fellows with a much richer understanding of the challenges of local government more than any political science textbooks had.

While some Fellows had developed interests in specific policy areas such as housing, public health or poverty, others maintained broad interests. As I focused on economic development, I found myself too intrigued by what an Inspector at the New York City Police Department, a Deputy Mayor or two or an Assistant Commissioner at the Department of Homeless services had to say. My peers felt the same way. The spectrum of placements offered by the program and considered by various Fellows speaks to the wealth of resources the Fellowship harnesses and the adaptability of the program’s participants.

If the interview process offered a plain view, a placement opened one up to the mechanics by which officials develop strategy, and plan and implement policy. I found myself overwhelmed much like the other Fellows within the first few days. Placed at the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development, I found myself bombarded with the lexicon of tax credits and pressured by private developers on calls. My peers also felt somewhat unprepared to handle work and uncertain about how to navigate the professional work environment at the outset. But this was exactly the crash course we sought, realizing that institutional education was merely a stepping stone to understanding how government really worked.

The ideal Fellow possessed humility, a drive to learn and some restlessness. Once the “change the world attitude” runs up against the way things work, resistance can be futile. But that resistance, that refusal to accept the status quo, to make something happen is in fact the attribute of which policymakers generate good ideas or decide to abandon the accepted ways of doing things. That is the quality I saw deep within my classmates.



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## ENDLESS POSSIBILITY

Diana Petty



Diana Petty and her supervisor, First Deputy Commissioner Ron Bergmann at the Department of Information, Technology and Telecommunication.

*The most significant lesson I have learned, however, is that true government innovation occurs when we look to the unknown. Where are the holes in our service delivery? What are we doing or not doing that could be better? How can we find new ways to operate in a more efficient and cost effective manner, and deliver services better?*

I think back to the early days of my Urban Fellows experience and am dumbfounded by how quickly the time has passed. Though my understanding of New York City and its government have dramatically transformed since I began as a fellow in the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), one thing remains firmly the same: an overwhelming sense of curiosity. Within every policy, procedure, and process the Fellowship has shown me, I see endless possible lessons for myself personally and for City government at large. The most significant lesson I have learned, however, is that true government innovation occurs when we look to the unknown. Where are the holes in our service delivery? What are we doing or not doing that could be better? How can we find new ways to operate in a more efficient and cost effective manner, and deliver services better? It is often the unknown answers to these questions which drive true innovation in City government.

When I first began at DoITT, I knew little more about IT than my everyday consumption of internet, radio, and telephone services. I certainly had no concept of how technology could powerfully improve public service. Since then, I've learned how DoITT manages and maintains the City's data centers, networks, circuits, routers, fibers, and applications that support business within and between agencies. These technologies also improve everyday service delivery to the ultimate customer: New Yorkers. DoITT views itself as the City's "business-enabling technology provider" and emphasizes creating "transformational change." Because the essence of technology is in fact constant change, updates, progress, and innovation, my supervisors and colleagues at DoITT have continually challenged me to look beyond what's at the surface and find ways that emerging technologies can fill the holes in or enhance service delivery to DoITT's customers.

While DoITT has been the cornerstone in learning what I don't yet know, my fellow Fellows have also been critical in forcing me to challenge my assumptions and outlook on the urban environment. The discussions I have been privileged to after seminars, on long bus rides, and over City Hall Park lunches, have provided countless and priceless insights into our common professional experience. Debates on MTA budget cuts, the merits of charter schools, the justice system, administration changes, food policy initiatives, and how to most efficiently word a memo are only a few of the thought provoking tutorials I will carry with me beyond the Fellowship. The observations of my classmates have been invaluable in allowing me to see all that I don't know and still have yet to learn.

During my time as a New York City Urban Fellow, I have memorized the acronyms of countless City agencies, learned their missions, and had the opportunity to collaborate with many of them. I have become an expert in social media policy and also become savvy in strategic planning behind data center and network operations. I have written executive level reports, briefings, and presentations. I have had the privilege of meeting with Commissioners and hearing their ideas on new initiatives, and sometimes even sharing my own. I have been in countless seminars with some of the most innovative and dedicated leaders in New York City. I work alongside some of the most interesting people I have ever met. These experiences are still unbelievable to me. And, if you had asked me what my expectations for the Fellowship were before I began, I would not have included reference to any of these things because at that time I did not know.

The Fellowship has been challenging and it has prepared me for many potential next steps. What I will always remember is that this is only the beginning, and one should always look forward to discovering the things they do not know.

**UF Year:** 1977-1978

**UF Agency Placement:** NYC Health and Hospitals Corporation

**Current Position:** Staff Attorney, New York Public Interest Research Group (NYPIRG) and its mass transit project, the Straphangers Campaign

**1. What did you remember most about being an Urban Fellow?**

The other Fellows. Six out of twenty attended the 40th anniversary celebration last year in Gracie Mansion. It was great to be part of a cohort of people interested in public service. I loved the seminars. It was remarkable to hear from high level city officials. There was great access to information in City government.

**2. In your opinion, what makes a successful Fellow?**

Curiosity. Having an interest in how City government works. A daily newspaper reader, willingness to try new things, willingness to get an outside point of view about your agency and not be in an insular bubble. Fellows should be open to different perspectives about their agencies. Fellow should also find out about non-profit organizations working on the same issues and hear from advocacy groups.

**3. How did the Fellowship contribute to what you are currently doing?**

The Fellowship certainly influenced the way I approach things. A lot of people are doing good work in government. It helped me with getting a better perspective in establishing relationships with people in government. It has helped with my style of advocacy.

**4. Any lasting advice to current fellows?**

Stick around. Change and progress do not happen quickly. The Fellowship has given you only a taste and the goal is to get a better perspective on how government works. Don't rush back to grad school.

**Among NYPIRG's biggest accomplishments are to help win:**

- Creation of Independent Budget Office
- Mailing of Multilingual Voter Guides
- Campaign Finance Reform Law
- MTA Unlimited Ride Passes
- MTA's Rebuilding Program (promoting spending to fix subways and improve service).

On Thursday, March 25, a small group of Urban Fellows joined a volunteer from the NYC Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) to scour a central area of Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn to inform the neighborhood of fraudulent foreclosure prevention activities. In conjunction with NeighborWorks, DCA has launched an anti-foreclosure scam initiative targeting highly affected areas in New York City.

The Urban Fellows-DCA volunteer group broke into smaller "street teams" to cover a large area east of Nostrand Avenue and west of Sumner Avenue. The two teams uncovered several publicly displayed pieces of evidence in the form of advertisements soliciting illegitimate foreclosure assistance services. During this time, the teams asked residents and storekeepers whether they knew of individuals in need of foreclosure assistance and whether they have seen or been approached by service providers offering foreclosure services.

Team members distributed flyers outlining how to spot fraudulent activity, report it, and seek free consultation services via New York City's 311 hotline. The confiscation of fake materials and the direct outreach made to individuals and businesses should mitigate the destructive consequences brought forth by fraudulent foreclosure assistance activities.

**ALUMNI INTERVIEW:  
GENE RUSSIANOFF**

***Fact:** New York 1 News named Gene Russianoff New Yorker of the Year in 1997 for his coalition work to win unlimited-ride MetroCards.*



*Gene Russianoff with Mayor Bloomberg during a 2007 news conference.*

**FELLOWS VOLUNTEER  
DURING DCA'S FINANCIAL  
SCAM AWARENESS  
CAMPAIGN**

*By Benjamin Blackwood*



## ALUMNI INTERVIEW: DAVID BARKER



*David has helped convert 256 schoolyards to community parks as part of the mayor's PlaNYC, including the yard shown here, PS 226K in Borough Park, Brooklyn.*

### What is PlaNYC?

PlaNYC is the most extensive plan to strengthen New York City's urban environment ever undertaken by an American city. Unveiled by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in April, 2007, the 127-point plan is designed to create the first environmentally sustainable 21st century city. PlaNYC focuses on every facet of New York's physical environment—its transportation network, housing stock, land and park system, energy network, water supply and air quality—and sets a course to achieve 10 aggressive goals to create a more sustainable New York by the year 2030.

**UF Year:** 2007-2008

**UF Agency Placement:** NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

**Current Position:** Deputy Director, PlaNYC, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

**Responsibilities:** David is responsible for program administration and broad oversight of the seven PlaNYC initiatives that Parks is implementing. He reports to City Hall to discuss progress on the initiatives and works with different city agencies to resolve issues. Over the next year, he will be liaising with City Hall to update the plan.

### 1. What did you remember most about being an Urban Fellow?

The interview process stands out. It was an incredible two weeks of running around the city and learning about the work of different city agencies. I did about 35 interviews during the whole process. I also enjoyed the weekly seminars. Listening to really successful people discuss their career paths was an inspiration. I returned to the office jazzed up after the seminars.

### 2. In your opinion, what makes a successful Fellow?

Building relationships and friendships with other Fellows is very important. It is good to know what Fellows are doing everyday. Meeting the Fellows outside the seminars is also key. Discussing the different topics during happy hours is a good way to extend the conversation beyond DCAS. Humility is also an important trait to have. As a Fellow, you are exposed to people in the highest levels of city government, but it is imperative to treat everyone in the office equally and with respect.

### 3. Did the Fellowship influence your current area of interest?

Yes, I wanted to be involved in urban development and was lucky enough to be placed on the capital side of the Parks Department as a Fellow so I could learn about the on- the-ground implementation of public policy. The beginning of my placement coincided with the beginning of the implementation of the PlaNYC Schoolyards to Playgrounds initiative, a program to renovate and open 290 schoolyards as community parks to ensure that all New Yorkers live within a ten-minute walk of a park.

### 4. How did the Fellowship contribute to what you are currently doing?

I was able to take on a significant amount of responsibility at Parks Capital since the Schoolyards team was quite small in the beginning. I attended participatory design meetings and helped improve coordination among the agency and non-profit partners. Though I was placed as a Fellow far out in Queens, I interacted often with the Assistant Commissioner of PlaNYC in Manhattan who would eventually hire me as Deputy Director.

### 5. Any lasting advice to current/future fellows?

Immerse yourself in civic life outside of the office. Go to lectures at the Museum of the City of New York. Bike through neighborhoods in the outer boroughs. At work, try to interact with the civil servants at your agency delivering services and implementing initiatives in the field. There's often a communications gap between the implementers in the field and the analysts working at 30,000 ft where public policy is created.

**UF Year:** 1993-1994

**UF Agency Placement:** Department of Correction, Investigations Division

**Current Position and Responsibilities:** Partner in the Litigation Department at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP. Eric represents and advises clients at all stages of the litigation and arbitration process, from developing the claim through discovery to trial, and on appeal.

## ALUMNI INTERVIEW: ERIC ALAN STONE



*Eric Alan Stone at the office of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP.*

### 1. What did you remember most about being an Urban Fellow?

The challenge and getting to know my classmates. I spent a year trying to reduce violence among adolescent inmates at Rikers Island, studying how other jail systems had been successful and had failed, and working with the Department's civil and uniformed staffs to see what we could do differently. It was an immense challenge with not one right answer, and any answer can be necessarily short-lived in the ever-adapting environment that is jail. I loved the devotion that I saw from the Department staff, despite the burdens and hurdles they faced. Being able to take a break on Wednesday mornings and at night, to learn, question, laugh, and eat and drink with my classmates, listening to the challenges they faced in their day job, was itself an equally valuable and long-lasting benefit of the Fellowship.

### 2. In your opinion, what makes a successful fellow?

Self-reliance, creativity, and humility. The best Fellowship placements ask a recent college graduate to tackle a significant, discrete problem that might otherwise be neglected, and to devote a whole year to identifying, defining, and solving the problem. In those placements, the supervisors are looking for someone to run with the ball, consulting as needed and keeping people informed. Doing that takes self-reliance and creativity. Doing it without coming across as too big for 21-year-old bristles takes humility.

### 3. Did the Fellowship influence your current area of interest?

Indirectly. I knew I wanted to be a lawyer before I did the Fellowship, and deferred enrollment for a year at NYU so I could be a Fellow. The Fellowship had a bigger influence on where I ended up once I knew I wanted to be a lawyer in private practice. Paul, Weiss has had at least six former Fellows during my time at the firm, and we're all drawn to it in part by its commitment to public service. In my own pro bono practice, I've been able to represent clients in matters involving the City, and to draw on my Fellowship experience to help navigate those waters.

### 4. How did the Fellowship contribute to what you are currently doing?

There isn't a week that goes by in which I don't rely on a life lesson or a business lesson I learned from my Urban Fellows supervisors, Lacy Johnson and Amy Singer, or from the Sergeants and Captains in my division, or from my Fellowship classmates.

### 5. Any lasting advice to current fellows?

Your project will fade into the history of the City. Your friendships with your classmates won't.

*The best Fellowship placements ask a recent college graduate to tackle a significant, discrete problem that might otherwise be neglected, and to devote a whole year to identifying, defining, and solving the problem.*

**AGENCY SPOTLIGHT:**  
NEW YORK  
POLICE DEPARTMENT,  
COUNTERTERRORISM DIVISION  
*Nathaniel Young*



Tucked far away in the virtually unreachable and undetectable depths of Brooklyn lies the New York Police Department's Counterterrorism Division (NYPD CTD). The unmarked warehouse is home to approximately 100 police officers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains and chiefs as well as civilian intelligence analysts and administrative staff. CTD is a subunit of NYPD's Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Counter Terrorism, along with the Joint Terrorism Task Force and the Terrorist Threat Analysis Group, and is responsible for nearly all of the non-investigative counterterrorism activities in the City.

The Counterterrorism Division is comprised of several sections; Maritime, Special Projects, Training, Threat Reduction and Infrastructure Protection, Project Management Office, NYPD Shield (an information sharing initiative between NYPD and private businesses in the city) and the Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives (CBRNE) unit. As an Urban Fellow, I was assigned to CBRNE in order to assist the unit in their mission of protecting the City from the threat of weapons of mass destruction (WMDs).

The CBRNE team includes former military personnel, explosives experts, radiation health physicists and experienced detectives. The unit is responsible for researching and analyzing detection technologies used to interdict and combat chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive weapons. In addition to crafting CBRNE related policies, team members are also deployed to high profile events and targets around the city where they utilize detection equipment to ensure that no dangerous weapons, materials or sources are present.

My major responsibility throughout the course of the Fellowship has been to administer and manage several aspects of the federally funded Securing the Cities (STC) Program. STC is an initiative that the Department of Homeland Security's Domestic Nuclear Detection Office created in an effort to mitigate the threat of illicit radiological weapons that could be used in major metropolitan areas. The program involves multi-jurisdictional cooperation between the NYPD and other regional law enforcement agencies such as the Suffolk County Police Department, New Jersey State Police, Connecticut State Police, and nine others. The funding goes towards equipping the agencies with radiological detection equipment, relevant personnel training and support for a full scale region-wide exercise. In my role as an Urban Fellow, I have attended meetings with STC partners, liaised with representatives from the 13 agencies and assisted senior CBRNE staff with research as well as qualitative and quantitative analysis of STC related matters.

I have worked on many other projects at CTD focusing on issues such as maritime security, radiological detection equipment, thwarted domestic terror plots, the 9/11 terror trials and how a terrorist might construct a chemical weapon. As a civilian in a paramilitary organization with no scientific background or any prior experience in the field of counterterrorism, I found myself constantly learning not only about the issues unique to CBRNE, but also the culture, organization and operations of the police department. Working for NYPD CTD has truly been an eye-opening experience that has broadened my professional and intellectual horizons. It has also forced me to challenge my own previously held convictions and brought me tremendous satisfaction and joy, knowing that when I woke up every morning, my day would be spent keeping New York City and its citizens safe from terrorism.

Rikers Island is a large and daunting place when one really thinks about it. On one small stretch of land, the City of New York has managed to create 10 jail facilities and house 13,000 inmates. No matter how large or daunting the task, the Urban Fellows are never intimidated to investigate and learn. On Wednesday, April 28, we all convened at the Jackson Heights/Roosevelt Avenue Station, dressed to a tee in our business attire, but with as little personal possessions as possible as requested beforehand. When the bus arrived, we all met our tour guide, Ms. Freddie Wallace-Rakis from the Department of Correction (DOC). She was full of energy and highly-anticipated the Urban Fellow tour.

Our first destination was the DOC headquarters located in a nice corporate-style building in Astoria. There, our Urban Fellow colleague, Candace Mitchell gave a presentation on the work that she does at the DOC and some general information on Rikers Island. We learned that Rikers Island was originally a farm owned by the Rikers family. But the most astonishing facts were the demographics of the inmates and the recidivism rates. 92 percent of the inmates are Black and Latino and the rate for recidivism is 60 percent.

The tour was based around Discharge Planning, so we learned that reducing the recidivism rate heavily depends on the quality and effectiveness of this service. Surprisingly enough, discharge planning is completely voluntary which means the initiative to seek help has to come from the inmate. Some may argue that this can be very difficult. However, there are many discharge planning programs for the inmates to take advantage of.

The first place we visited was the RIDE (Rikers Island Discharge Enhancement) Support Center and the nursery for the female inmates. The RIDE Support Center offers emotional and psychological support for female inmates to help them overcome their problems and adjust to life outside Rikers. We then visited the nursery, where mothers with babies under one year old can stay and take care of their baby. This was not always available and is a great service for mothers who are incarcerated.

We then witnessed a demonstration from the Canine Unit. We learned the methods the DOC uses to prevent drugs from getting smuggled into Rikers. The officers demonstrated how a German shepherd actively searches for drugs inside the cells and how a Labrador retriever can locate drugs from inspecting a group of people.

An amazing lunch was prepared by male adolescent inmates enrolled in Island Academy, a school inside Rikers. The last program we visited was the Institute for Inner Development (IID) program for 16-18 year old male inmates. This program was designed to create a communal positive atmosphere with groups of adolescents. These are communities where they can build trust with one another and avoid the culture of violence. While in the program, they learn life skills such as learning how to perform well during an interview. All in all, this was an informative and eye-opening trip for the Urban Fellows.



## A VISIT TO RIKERS ISLAND

*David Brown*

*No matter how large or daunting the task, the Urban Fellows are never intimidated to investigate and learn.*

# THE URBAN CHRONICLE



*Teresa Pratt's major project involved Cities of Service, a bipartisan coalition of 16 cities across the country to promote volunteerism.*



*Louisa Aviles with Police Officer Cheryl Shea, Detective Charlie Mills, and Deputy Inspector Terrence Riley of the NY Police Department.*



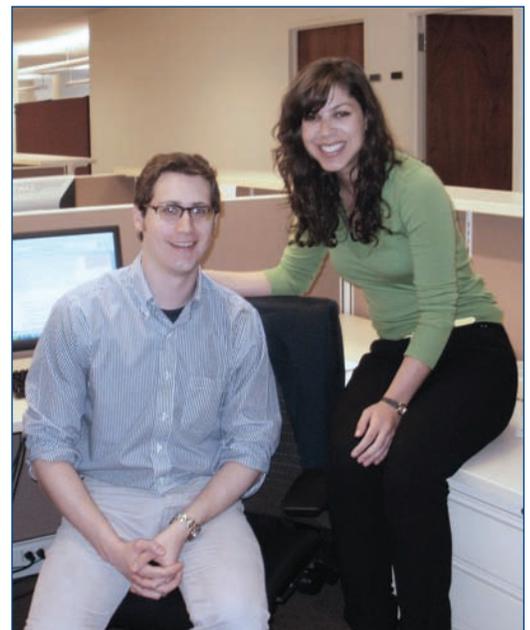
*Adler Prioly keeps himself busy at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.*



*David Brown with his supervisor, Chief of Staff Mark Neal at the Department of Homeless Services.*



*Annie Koo and Aaron Cohen participated in the Police Ride-Along Tour with officers from the 23<sup>rd</sup> Precinct in Spanish Harlem.*



*Benjamin Blackwood and Kathleen Casanova are Fellows at the Department of Small Business Services.*

# THE URBAN CHRONICLE



*Adriana Akers with her supervisor Deputy Commissioner Ariella Maron at the Division of Energy Management, Department of Citywide Administrative Services.*



*The GreeNYC Birdie (UF Aaron Cohen) and Mayor Bloomberg take questions from the press during Earth Day 2010 in Times Square.*



*Michael Pomeranz with his supervisor, Sara Kaufman, Director of High School Planning outside Tweed Courthouse.*



*Morissa Sobelson and Philip Young are Fellows working at City Hall.*



*Kunchok Dolma and her supervisor, Pauline Toole at the Mayor's Office of Adult Education.*



*Long Tran and his supervisors, Dane Martinez and Tracy Breslin at the Department of Education.*

**AGENCY SPOTLIGHT:**  
DEPARTMENT OF  
HOUSING PRESERVATION  
AND DEVELOPMENT,  
STRATEGIC PLANNING  
GROUP

Annie Koo



Annie Koo and her supervisor, Kaye Matheny at the Department of Housing Preservation and Development.

*My placement has been a crash course on housing policy and operational efficiency.*

The Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) is the nation's largest municipal developer of affordable housing. It also actively promotes the preservation of affordable housing through education, outreach, loan programs, and enforcement of housing quality standards. HPD is currently implementing Mayor Bloomberg's *New Housing Marketplace Plan* to build and preserve 165,000 units of affordable housing by 2014.

The Strategic Planning Group (SPG), housed in the Office of the Chief of Staff, is responsible for the planning and implementation of the agency's priority projects. SPG functions like an internal consulting arm of the agency, working with Commissioner Cestero and his senior management team to identify agency priorities and change initiatives, design and manage project work plans, and monitor key performance measures against established targets.

My placement has been a crash course on housing policy and operational efficiency. My projects have spanned diverse program and policy areas, allowing me to engage with people across the agency and affordable housing industry. For instance, I worked with the Office of Development on a strategy for evaluating and streamlining HPD's marketing process. Marketing is the process by which tenants and homeowners are selected for affordable units; it is critical to HPD's mission and the overall project lifecycle. My project involved several series of interviews with the marketing team, program managers, developers, compliance officers, and various external partners. This interview feedback, along with document review, culminated in a final written strategy, presentation, and off-site event that would steer implementation.

The breadth and volume of work in HPD's portfolio is remarkable. HPD is in the business of developing and preserving affordability for low-, moderate-, and middle-income target populations, but it really serves all New Yorkers. Perhaps most ubiquitous is the Office of Enforcement and Neighborhood Services and its branch offices, which resolve heat, hot water, and other complaints for all tenants in the city. I believe housing policy itself underpins all social services. Since it is fundamental to building stable neighborhoods, it is inextricable from other public needs like education, health, and safety.

HPD also has been instrumental in keeping New York City afloat during the worst recession in recent history. Its programs and policies have quickly adapted by seizing the downturn as an opportunity to preserve housing affordability. For example, HPD extended regulatory contracts. In fact, preservation has outpaced new construction as the agency's primary affordability tool. SPG is working to integrate these functions currently scattered across the agency. Most recently we are involved in the development of a property risk evaluation tool that combines data from several divisions to help prioritize the agency's preservation portfolio. It is one of many projects aimed at addressing the physical, financial, and regulatory health of HPD's and all of New York City's housing stock.

One of the most rewarding projects of my Fellowship has been my involvement with the *New Housing Marketplace Plan*, which was updated in February 2010. The strategy and its offshoot events—a housing conference hosted jointly by HPD and the NYU Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy; a five-borough event to celebrate the 100,000 unit milestone have all reminded me that HPD is a national model for affordable housing policy. I feel extremely lucky to be able to contribute to that effort, and even more so to be working alongside and learning from such talented colleagues at HPD.

Over 40 years ago, the New York City Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) was created as the consumer protection and business licensing arm of the City government. We license more than 71,000 businesses in 57 different industries in New York City, and we enforce City laws to ensure a fair and vibrant marketplace for consumers and businesses. DCA frequently conducts inspections of City businesses. For example, we recently levied fines that totaled almost \$1 million to 800 tax preparation businesses that illegally advertised “instant” or “rapid” refund anticipation loans (RALs).

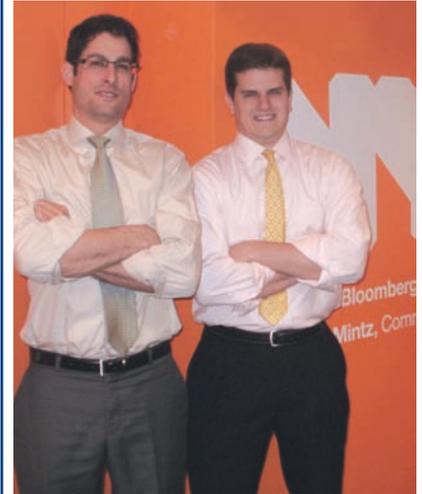
Aside from mediating and resolving consumer complaints and ensuring that businesses treat consumers fairly, DCA seeks to educate and empower consumers through its Office of Financial Empowerment (OFE). OFE works with other city agencies, community organizations and non-profits to find new ways to educate low-income New Yorkers on how they can improve their financial situation, protect them from predatory and fraudulent financial products and services, and improve access to affordable financial products and services.

Working for the Senior Policy Advisor to DCA’s Commissioner, I helped advance the Department’s goals through the legislative process. For example, New York City’s economy and residents were greatly affected by our country’s recent economic collapse. The Obama administration and Congress are working on reforms to the financial services industry, and DCA has been very active advocating for smart reforms and programs that will ensure a safer marketplace for consumers. In this effort, I have helped develop our advocacy strategy, met with policymakers, researched issues for agency articles and op-eds, and analyzed how the proposed reforms could affect New Yorkers.

My work at DCA has taught me more about the legislative process and the connection between federal and local issues. This fellowship has also opened my eyes to new ideas on how government can enhance people’s lives by giving them better information and more opportunities to improve their financial well-being.

## AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

*John A. Howes, Jr.*



*John Howes and his supervisor, Mitchell Kent at the Department of Consumer Affairs.*

### 2010 SEMINAR SPEAKERS

**Christine Heeg** (UF Alum), President, Urban Homesteading Assistance Board

**Martha K. Hirst**, Commissioner, Department of Citywide Administrative Services

**Ronnie Lowenstein**, Director, NYC Independent Budget Office

**Doug Turetsky**, Communications Director, NYC Independent Budget Office

**Steve Lemson**, Vice President of State Government Affairs, American Express Corporation

**Michael Best** (UF Alum), General Counsel, Department of Education

**Brad Tusk**, Campaign Manager for Mayor Bloomberg’s Re-election

**Alan D. Aviles**, President, Health and Hospitals Corporation

**Megan Golden** (UF Alum), Director of Planning and Governmental Innovation, Vera Institute for Justice

**Jodi Kantor** (UF Alum), NY Times Reporter

**Dan Feldman** (UF Alum), Special Counsel for Law and Policy, Office of NY State Comptroller

**Patricia L. Gatling**, Commissioner/Chair, NYC Commission on Human Rights

**Richard Falkenrath**, Deputy Commissioner for Counterterrorism, NYC Police Department

**Chanelle Figueroa** (UF Alum), Deputy Chief of Staff, NYC Board of Education

**Gene Russianoff** (UF Alum), Staff Attorney, New York Public Interest Research Group

**Ben Thomases**, NYC Food Policy Coordinator, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services

**John B. Mattingly**, Commissioner, Administration for Children’s Services

**Salvatore J. Cassano**, Commissioner, NYC Fire Department

**Steven Miller** (UF Alum) Chief Financial Officer, Majestic Research

### Albany Speakers

**Kevin Parker**, (UF Alum), State Senator Democrat, District 21 (Brooklyn)

**Brian Kavanagh**, Assemblyman, District 74 (Manhattan)

**Tim Mulligan** (UF Alum), Fiscal Director, Mayor’s Office of State Legislative Affairs

**Micah Lasher**, Director, Mayor’s Office of State Legislative Affairs

**AGENCY SPOTLIGHT:**  
 HUMAN RESOURCE  
 ADMINISTRATION,  
 OFFICE OF EVALUATION  
 AND RESEARCH

*Anastasia Korolkova*



*Anastasia Korolkova and her supervisor, Angela Sheehan at the Department of Human Resources Administration.*

*From the sands of Coney Island to the hills of Fordham Road, I have been to Food Stamp Centers and Job Centers galore.*

Working at HRA has provided me with a first-hand look at how the City handles social services, primarily Food Stamps and Cash Assistance. True to the name, much of my work involves research – doing it, finding it, reading it. The most interesting research I have conducted involves time spent in the field. From the sands of Coney Island to the hills of Fordham Road, I have been to Food Stamp Centers and Job Centers galore. I have seen waiting rooms packed with tired faces, babies screaming and paint peeling, fingers nervously rustling pay stubs and birth certificates and whatever other documents necessary to prove that they are eligible to get help. Talking to the applicants has been most enlightening and most heartbreaking. One woman, whom I was interviewing to see whether she was complying with HRA regulations for a child support order shared a horror story of how her husband killed their youngest child. Numerous women spoke of abuse by their partners. Most were no longer involved with their children’s fathers. I learned that the face of New York City poverty is often female, often of color and frequently supporting dependents.

My main project was a study to learn whether there is a relationship between public assistance use and availability of social capital. I spent the fall gathering and reviewing literature. I drafted the proposal in the winter and worked with my colleagues to conduct interviews in the spring. We spoke with 198 respondents at HRA Food Stamp and Job Centers, and another 51 at community organizations and colleges. Our main finding states that those who have a history of cash assistance use are less likely than those who do not to identify having any acquaintances in well-paid or low-paid occupations. They are often more likely, however, to have at least one family member in a well-paid occupation. Since lacking acquaintances impedes the transmission of new information, cash assistance receivers are less likely to learn of new opportunities, especially job opportunities and thus, stay poor.

In addition to honing my research skills, my work on this project has helped me learn statistical software since I spent much of April conducting data analysis. Other skills I have gained as a result of my placement include the ability to filter through a myriad of newspaper articles and scholarly publications to discover HRA-relevant information to share at staff morning briefings, a capacity to not be overwhelmed by the gallons of data provided by the US Census Bureau and the American Community Survey, and an understanding of what it is like to work in one of the largest agencies in the most populous city in the United States. It has been a truly eye-opening learning experience.

**AGENCY SPOTLIGHT:**  
 DEPARTMENT OF  
 EDUCATION

*Michael Pomeranz*

Tweed is the oldest government building in New York other than its next-door neighbor, City Hall. We often see the Chancellor and his senior staff walking out the back door of Tweed and into the back door of City Hall. Both the geography and the governing approaches of City Hall and Tweed Courthouse are proximate. The Chancellor has adopted City Hall’s emphasis on transparency. Grade reports are accessible on-line. (PS 163, for example, was an A school in 2009 and a B school in 2008.) There are no offices, only desks, so that conversations are public. En route to the men’s room, I might hear comments on new school development, enrollment planning, and charter placement. Tweed’s only meeting room shares the first floor with two elementary schools. (Once, a cacophony of questions rising up our glass elevator shaft revealed itself to be a miniature science class. At that moment, elevators seemed more interesting than proposed changes in school utilization. But those students must go to high school somewhere, and so we returned to work.)

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**T**he mission: to transform a Jersey barrier wall on Queens Boulevard between Skillman and Jackson Avenues using only paint, creativity, fun, and dedication.

On Saturday, April 24, the Urban Fellows participated in NY Cares' 16<sup>th</sup> annual "Hands on New York Day," where over 300 volunteers painted artwork on 150 individual concrete barriers that line pedestrian paths and bicycle lanes in Manhattan, Brooklyn, the Bronx, and Queens.

The Fellows worked as a team, along with over 100 other volunteers from local schools, at the largest and busiest of the four sites – in Queens, on an overpass underneath the rumbling 7 train, where there were constant pedestrian and bicycle traffic and frequent traffic jams on the roadway. The site was loud, sunny, windy, and dirty. Instructions and conversations could not compete with the roar of the trains and passing trucks that stirred up dust in volunteers' faces as they sat on the ground painting the pedestrian walkway. However, none of these challenges deterred the volunteers from completing this project.

Artist Niko Courtelis designed "NYCamo" in which each borough of New York City is assigned a distinct color (green, magenta, blue, orange, and yellow) of a train line that runs to Queens. The map of the city is then rearranged to produce a camouflage effect. The result was a vibrant mural that enlivened an often overlooked space in the city. Many of the Urban Fellows spent a great deal of time meticulously stenciling the shapes of the boroughs out onto the Jersey walls, while others discovered the joy in painting and a reconnection to creating art. Despite the challenging environment, we all were motivated by passersby, who frequently asked us questions and complimented our efforts and the design. We were also encouraged and excited to see what a huge difference a few colors of paint had done in a short amount of time.

As the Urban Fellow in the Department of Transportation (DOT) Urban Design and Art Unit, I had been involved in this project from first hearing about it in staff meetings early on in my fellowship, to helping to review over 100 submitted designs, to being the DOT site manager of the Queens location during the Hands on New York Day. Early morning, as I unloaded the DOT truck that brought all the supplies we needed for the project, I was excited to finally see the design that I had seen so many months ago painted on the concrete barriers. As the day progressed, my excitement grew to amazement as I realized that I was watching policy in action. I was seeing an idea, the DOT Commissioner's vision to transform the city's "in-between places" into "bright, colorful, celebrated spaces that everyone in the community can enjoy" become a reality in front of my eyes.

**S**ince November, the Urban Fellows have been volunteering with the IMPACT (Improving Mentor Practices and Communication Techniques) Coalition, an organization dedicated to empowering New York students through debate. It is a non-profit, mentoring and educational development organization that expands opportunities for urban students, schools and organizational partners by providing debate training, debate curricula, and support services to develop informed, concerned citizens.

Throughout the program, the Fellows have collaborated with IMPACT on numerous activities including judging debate rounds, holding a workshop on anti-poverty policy and supporting staff with event logistics. In early May, we participated in the last official service event of the Fellowship by helping IMPACT host their Annual College Fair. At the event, Fellows handed out college brochures and wore apparel from their alma maters

*(continued on page 16)*

## FELLOWS PARTICIPATE DURING HANDS ON NEW YORK DAY

*Tami Lin*



*Tami Lin and her supervisor, Neil Gagliardi at the Department of Transportation.*



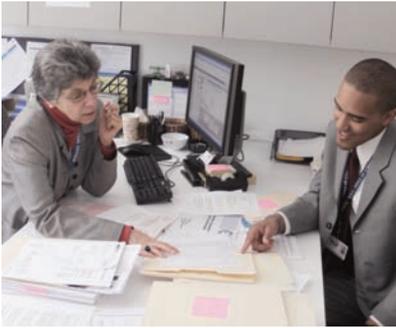
*Fellows had a great time painting the Jersey barrier wall.*

## UF PARTNERSHIP WITH IMPACT COALITION

*Kathleen Casanova*

**AGENCY SPOTLIGHT:**  
**NYC HEALTH AND  
 HOSPITALS CORPORATION**

*Jeremy Gunn*



*Jeremy Gunn and his supervisor, Frances Pandolfi at the New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation.*

*This project has exponentially increased my management skill set and my understanding of organizational effectiveness, operations, and finance.*

*Agency Spotlight: Department of Education*

*(Continued from page 12)*

The primary mission of the New York City Health and Hospital Corporation (HHC) is to provide comprehensive health services of the highest quality to all New Yorkers regardless of ability to pay. As a public benefit corporation, HHC extends medical, mental health and substance abuse services to over 1.4 million New Yorkers annually through its 11 acute care hospitals, four skilled nursing facilities, six diagnostic and treatment centers, more than 80 community-based clinics, and their Health and Home Care division.

HHC currently faces the daunting challenge of closing a 1.2 billion dollar budget gap by fiscal year 2011. The budget gap is from HHC straining to provide access to an increasingly uninsured and undocumented population, combined with large reductions to state and federal funding, and growth in pension costs.

To proactively begin to address these challenges, the HHC senior leadership team decided to engage Deloitte Consulting to develop a portfolio of restructuring options. Under the leadership of Frank Cirillo, SVP and Chief Restructuring Officer, and Frances Pandolfi, Restructuring Project Director, the Restructuring Project Management Office was formed to manage and track the progress of the project. I currently work as the Assistant Project Director. The majority of my time is spent managing, coordinating, and gathering financial and operational data from HHC facilities and central office for Deloitte to analyze.

Two key workstream areas I serve on are the Communications Workgroup and the Shared Services Workgroup. The Communications Workgroup has produced two employee surveys, a corporate wide newsletter on restructuring, and launched a restructuring intranet site. The dynamic team is composed of senior HHC leadership and communication specialists from Deloitte. The Shared Services Workgroup investigated strategies to enhance HHC operations by adopting a shared services model to perform a variety of business support activities on behalf of multiple facilities. Additionally, the workgroup identified areas with potential opportunities to reduce spending by comparing HHC to leading national benchmarks.

The Restructuring Project has greatly expanded my breadth of knowledge on how important cost containment is against the broader backdrop of national health reform, patient safety, an integrated delivery system, and becoming a provider of choice. This project has exponentially increased my management skill set, and my understanding of organizational effectiveness, operations, and finance. I'm truly fortunate to witness HHC take steps to become a more effective, efficient and competitive organization within the broader context of health reform.

The Mayor has made no secret of his belief that the old Education Department was broken. This administration has worked closely with the Chancellor to develop a portfolio of great schools from which all New York students and families can choose: hence the Office of Portfolio Planning, in which I am placed. In the course of my Fellowship placement, I analyzed failing schools to determine their ability to turn around, reviewed the data on neighborhoods and boroughs with failing schools to determine the seats needed in new schools, and staffed public hearings about school closures.

The Panel for Educational Policy meets monthly to vote on Department proposals. I served as "runner" for those meetings. When the senior leadership of the department onstage needed something, I would run to get it. These meetings are open to the public and any New Yorker is entitled comment on any proposal or issue. Members of the public comment: how our strategy has worked, that they feel a school needs an additional

*(continued on page 16)*

**O**n April 7, the New York City Urban Fellows visited the state capital to gain a deeper understanding of the interaction between City and state government. Boarding the bus before daybreak, many Fellows lamented the slow and often dysfunctional nature of state policymaking. However, after rich conversations with lobbyists and lawmakers, most Fellows wished to have spent more time ‘upstate.’

Within minutes of shaking bus-induced stupor, the fellows plunged into an impromptu meeting with Dennis Walcott, Deputy Mayor for Education and Community at the Mayor’s Office of State Legislative Affairs. Deputy Mayor Walcott has clocked many miles between New York City and Albany to lobby for education issues. One such issue is the federal Race to the Top fund, which encourages states to create opportunities for true education innovation and reform. The Deputy Mayor’s lobbying efforts promote accessibility and blend messaging with legislators’ local issues. A product of the New York City public school system, Deputy Mayor Walcott concluded that his job is still exciting after eight years.

The Fellows then spoke with former Urban Fellow Tim Mulligan, who now serves as Fiscal Director of the Mayor’s Office of Legislative Affairs, and Micah Lasher, Director of State Legislative Affairs. Both used the Race to the Top negotiations to discuss issue positioning and lobbying strategy. The two then debated the effectiveness of the state legislative process.

Following an entertaining tour of the state capitol building and lunch on the underground concourse, the Fellows met with Mike Murphy from the New York State Division of the Budget. Arranged by Tim Mulligan to answer budgetary questions, Mr. Murphy discussed revenue projections, performance-based cuts, and changes across administrations. Proposed budget reforms, including adjusting the fiscal year and allotting more time for legislative review, were also explored.

Finally, the Fellows met with two legislators: former Urban Fellow and current New York State Senator Kevin Parker, and New York State Assemblyman Brian Kavanagh. After the group formed a circle, Senator Parker stressed the importance of networks and personality. He also shared campaign advice: run for an open seat and focus on the future. He described elected office as half legislation and half leadership, and highlighted issues that resonate with the public.

Senator Parker and Assemblyman Kavanagh brought the day full circle by sharing their perspectives on the inherent tension between the will of legislators and the collective action of the legislature. Assemblyman Kavanagh asserted that strong leadership can mitigate dysfunction but that legislative bodies represent something greater than their leadership alone. In the same vein, Senator Parker noted that while the New York State Senate at large is criticized, individual Senators have strong support. Deliberate and responsive government, with the opportunity to push through seemingly small but effective bills, may well be Albany’s mantra for sessions to come.

## NEW YORK CITY URBAN FELLOWS DO ALBANY

*Catherine Zinnel*



*Fellows visited the historic State Capitol in Albany.*

*The Urban Chronicle* is published twice a year.

The Urban Fellows Program is administered under the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services.  
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## *Fellows Volunteer for IMPACT Coalition (Continued from page 13)*

while answering student questions about continuing their education. The College Fair was an amazing event to be a part of, not only because we got to relive our glory days as undergrads, but also because we were truly serving as a unique resource for the debaters. Many of these students don't have resources at school or at home to research schools and access college information. We not only helped answered questions and gave advice, but we empowered students to chase after their dreams of higher education.

Working with IMPACT has been incredibly rewarding. It's a truly phenomenal organization that is making an amazing difference in New York City schools. Since the first event, it has been very clear that the connection and resulting partnership between our two organizations were a perfect fit. IMPACT aims to give a voice to underserved communities by molding their young people, and we as public servants aim to accommodate and provide services to meet the needs of those communities. As Fellows, we are actively working in the policy world and dealing directly with a lot of the topics that these kids debate in their rounds. Furthermore, many of us are actively working on initiatives to reduce the achievement gap and increase opportunities for NYC students. I can't wait to continue working with IMPACT, and hope other Fellows who stay in the area will join me. And next time I judge, I'm taking notes to inform my style for the next time the Fellows start debating about charter schools.

## *Fellows as Future Leaders (Continued from page 1)*

After our final seminar, five Fellows sat down to lunch at Jimmy's Diner. Conversation turned to the topic of the future, something that many of us have been thinking about a whole lot lately as our Fellowship "graduation" nears. Someone suggested that we take a moment to think about the long-term, and we began to envision an Urban Fellows reunion, 20 years later.

There was agreement that a certain Fellow would be the NYC Deputy Mayor of Health and Human Services. Another would become a renowned Sociology professor. Some would launch international urban planning firms; a few would end up as Senators and Congressmen and women. Some Fellows would not pursue a lifelong career in government, but at least would engage in another sort of public service, as problem-solvers, educators, and non-profit leaders.

In truth, our paths will likely surprise us. We may not have a future Deputy Mayor within our ranks, or a Congresswoman, or those urban planning entrepreneurs. We may instead choose other types of work, which no doubt will be equally interesting and valuable. The point is that after spending nine months with these 22 incredible people, I am convinced that they are each singularly capable of achieving such things. More than anything, I am grateful and quite frankly, baffled that I have had the opportunity to participate in this community. The Fellows exhibit a very particular type of leadership: collaborative, supportive, humble, and open-minded. They are equally comfortable leading an inter-agency meeting with crucial stakeholders and letting loose after work and cart wheeling across Elevated Acre, the tiny rooftop park in lower Manhattan. If these are the types of leaders that will be running this City in a few years then the Urban Fellows program did very well to rein them in early.

## *Agency Spotlight: Department of Education (Continued from page 14)*

special education class, and so on until midnight, 2 AM, or 4 in the morning. The last vote would release me to the train, I would head home to sleep, and the morning would find me back at 1 Centre Street for an Urban Fellows seminar.

New York City leads the nation in strategies to reform public urban education. But my year has taught me more than managing a system of great schools. I have also learned about New York and her people by attending the Public School Athletic League basketball championship at Madison Square Garden and a conference about cooperation between education reformers and communities of faith in Harlem. I heard the Chancellor inspire his staff about the work that still needs to be done. During "Poem in Your Pocket Day," I also heard him inspire students at his alma matter, William C. Bryant, with a sonnet about teachers that summarizes his beliefs and mine:

*Our teachers! They who let no child fall!  
To teach their students, they would never balk.  
On them, our system of great schools rests all,  
From life advice to social studies talk.*

*We have museums old, and buildings high,  
But do our boroughs know a better prize*

*Than teachers, learned words in vast supply,  
Who light the fire of knowledge in our eyes?*

*Their wisdom's scope cannot be fully versed:  
Their own cares next, and always Children First!*