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Annie Long, Director, EEO

Pat Matterna, Director, Budget

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## Commissioner's Corner

by Martha E. Stark

As we headed into last summer, I used this space to thank everyone for a very productive spring. At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I feel compelled to do the same this year, because we've accomplished some great things in the last few months.

Where to begin?

### Interest Rate Legislation

How about the incredible effort from so many people to pass our interest rate bill, which actually does much more than change the interest we charge for late payments – it makes it easier for people to pay in the first place. Just as important, it makes it much easier for ISS to program the bills we send.

The law is described later in this issue. I just want to emphasize how important this is, and thank people who pulled together to make it happen – CCS, ISS, Legal Affairs, Payment Operations, Tax Policy, and Treasury. Since I was fortunate enough to get this job 3 1/2 years ago, I've often said that if we don't like the law, we can always change it. And our effort on this bill proves that.

Many of us have thought that it wasn't fair when people who refinanced their mortgages got caught up in between banks. The bank paid late, and we would charge higher interest. Also, since it takes several months for banks to record a satisfaction when a mortgage is paid off, we didn't think it was fair to charge people higher interest after they paid off their 15- or 30-year mortgage. We changed that.

Many of us thought you needed a degree in higher mathematics to calculate how much you would save if you paid your taxes early. We changed that. And many of us have been frustrated by the fact that the law punished homeowners with interest – sometimes going back several years – when we made a mistake on their account by crediting someone else's payment to them. We changed that.

I told the City Council that these changes are not sexy, but they are very important. (I guess few things that have to do with taxes are ever sexy...)

### Statement of Account

The changes we've made to the Statement of Account also fall into the "not sexy but important" category. After a few bumps in the road since launching the SOA in December, we are about to mail out the first June Statement, which includes the annual amounts due. We've had a chance to tweak it since December, and we're seeing the benefits in fewer tax liens and fewer delinquencies. The Statements are also a real team effort, with Payment Operations and ISS leading the way.

### \$400 Rebate

I almost forgot to mention the biggest recent project of all – the \$400 rebate. Things have calmed down a bit now, but as you probably know, the rebate dominated the lives of many people for several months beginning last fall. This has been an extremely challenging project, and we should all be very proud of our efforts. To date we have mailed more than 700,000 rebate checks,



## Celebrating Women's History – March 31, 2005

### 10th Anniversary Women of Distinction Awards



#### *Did you know...?*

- March was National Women's History Month.
- Ten years ago, in 1995, the first Finance Women of Distinction Awards Ceremony was held and eleven outstanding Finance Women were honored.
- The Mayor and his elite advisory team on matters affecting the lives of Women in New York – the

Commission on Women's Issues – continue to encourage City agencies to have special programs to recognize the diverse and uplifting accomplishments of women who inspire hope and possibility.

- Assistant Commissioner Corinne Dickey-Norton, Agency Liaison to the Commission on Women's Issues, serves as Advisor to the Finance Women's History Month/Women of Distinction Awards Planning Committee.

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### Commissioner's Corner

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and almost 650,000 have been cashed. The biggest challenge has been getting checks to owners of cooperative units, since we have never billed cooperative owners directly. Also, some condominium buildings eluded us because of discrepancies between legal and mailing addresses. But for every problem, we've come up with solutions.

We continue to get checks out the door. We are analyzing the checks that have not been cashed to see whether we can figure out what went wrong. In fact, the Executive Office Staff, including the First Deputy Commissioner and her team, have overseen the production of replacement checks, which explains why there are some days when you can't see our desks! It's been a real learning experience with lots of side benefits, including significant improvement to our name and address files.

As we gear up for Round 2 of the rebate this fall, we are learning from our mistakes and feel confident that we'll have fewer bumps in October.

### City Register Office

Finally, I wanted to highlight one other achievement: Thanks to a continuously improving ACRIS, but also plain old-fashioned hard work, *Annette Hill* and her team in the City Register's Office have reduced processing time from 30 days to just a few days. Thanks to the entire team, and especially Deputies *Joanne Maya*, *Collette McCain*, *Wanda Nash*, and *Mary Scheman*.

### My Thyroid

Many of you may have heard by now that I have a third surgery battle scar to add to my collection. Earlier this month, I was in the hospital to remove half my thyroid and a mango-sized nodule that started growing there earlier this year. I am relieved to tell you that all is well, the nodule is benign and my thyroid so far seems to be functioning fairly normally. I'm hoping this will mean that I will be able to breathe again and won't feel like I'm choking all the time.

I know I feel like I have earned it, and so have you — have a great summer!

Sincerely,

*Martha E. Stark*

## Star of the Season



*Susan Cheung* was honored by the Treasury Division on April 20, 2005 as the 2005 Star of the Spring for her successful work in developing an important software application. Ms. Cheung was presented with a certificate and star-shaped plaque in recognition of her achievement.

The recognition ceremony, which was held at Ms. Cheung's work site, was attended by *Commissioner Stark*; *First Deputy Commissioner Patricof*; Assistant Commissioner for Treasury, *Robert Lee*; Assistant Commissioner for Administration, *Corinne Dickey Norton*; the QWL Employee Recognition Committee Co-Chairs *Kevin Burke* (Labor) and *Craig Woodall* (Management), and representatives from DC37. Ms. Cheung's co-workers also attended the event ceremony and celebration following the presentation of the award.

The Star of the Season Program is a collaborative labor-management initiative, which recognizes DOF employees for extraordinary contributions to the Department and the people of the City of New York. The Star of the Season program is sponsored by the Department of Finance Quality of Work Life Employee Recognition Committee. For additional information on the Star of the Season Program, download the nomination form or please contact the Labor Relations Office at 718-403-4348.

## The "Long" & Short of EEO

ReveNEWS is pleased to "introduce" our readers to *Annie Long*, Finance's Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Officer and share some of her views on EEO at Finance. Annie may, technically, not require an introduction, having been with the agency for many years. However, in 2002, she accepted the challenging assignment of Finance EEO Officer because "it was a chance to make a difference..."

*We asked Annie about her initial goals and objectives:*

"I became EEO Officer at a time when the position had been in transition for a while," she said. "The EEO Office had changed divisions and locations two or three times in as many years. I thought that it was very important to establish a permanent home for the EEO Office, so employees would know where to come if they needed advice on discrimination or harassment." The EEO Office is located at 1 Centre Street, Room 500.

Then, Annie told us, "My second goal was to build employees' trust in me and in the EEO Office. Employees won't talk to me if they don't trust me. It is most important to me that employees feel comfortable approaching an EEO professional and discussing their issues." It also helps a lot, Annie said, "that senior management has supported the EEO Office in encouraging employees to utilize the various EEO resources." Annie is pleased to say that as that trust has been built, many employees have come to talk to her.

*When should employees, supervisors and managers come to or call the EEO Office?*

Equal Employment Opportunity laws protect employees' (including supervisors' and managers') right to freedom from workplace discrimination and harassment based on race, age, gender identity and sexual orientation, religion, national origin and ancestry, disability, citizenship status, marital status, prior record of arrest or convictions, and other characteristics that will be mentioned later in this article. Annie told us that any employee who feels that he or she is being discriminated against – in advancement, in work assignments, performance evaluations, discipline, training, and other

work-related decisions – based on any of these categories should definitely speak to her. Unfortunately, she added, she cannot help with childcare problems, time and leave needs, and plain old, everyday personality conflicts, but she listens, and often makes referrals to the City's Employee Assistance Program, Office of Administrative Trials and Hearings Mediation Program, or Finance's Labor Relations and Human Resources Units.

Also, Annie reminds us, the EEO office should not be used by employees who want to avoid doing work or prevent a manager from taking disciplinary action. Though few employees do this, it is important to remember that the EEO



Office should be used when legitimate discrimination grievances exist.

The EEO Office is also in charge of requests for two types of accommodation – one, for an employee's medical disability and the other, for religious observances. Annie said, "I wish more supervisors and managers would consult with us on accommodations instead of making their own decisions about these matters. Sometimes well-meaning accommodations turn out not to be the best solution to an employee's problem. All requests for accommodations should be referred to the EEO Office, no matter how easy they seem to be to resolve without us."

*ReveNEWS asked Annie to tell us about the Volunteer EEO Counselor Program, a Citywide effort to make EEO information and advice available to more employees.*

"Currently," Annie said, "we have twelve specially trained EEO Counselors in six Finance locations. These individuals – some of whom have been in the EEO Counselors program for many years – are dedicated and hard working." Employees can call any EEO Counselor they want to talk to or feel comfortable with, make an

appointment, and discuss whatever is on their mind related to discrimination or harassment. Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer EEO Counselor may e-mail *Annie Long*.

What's changed in the three years that Annie has been EEO Officer?

Annie was frank in saying that the number of complaints has not decreased. Mandatory EEO training is required for all Finance employees, but sexual harassment is still a problem, and some employees still do not understand that ethnic, racial, and age-related humor can offend.

"There have been some changes in the laws," she told us. "Besides the Title VII protections against discrimination based on race, religion, etc., and the protections based on disability, all American workers are now protected against discrimination based on military status. If you are called up to active duty, your employer must hold a comparable job for you.

"New York City employees – who have always had a variety of special workplace protections, for instance, against discrimination based on sexual orientation – are now also protected against discrimination based on genetic predisposition to hereditary illnesses; gender identity; and status as a victim of domestic violence, stalking, and sex offenses."

When asked about future goals, Annie spoke about three:

- She and at least two of the EEO Counselors plan on visiting all Finance locations in the summer of 2005, so that employees in the boroughs get to meet her, receive EEO information, and have an opportunity to share their ideas and concerns.
- Annie also told ReveNEWS about an EEO survey she is working on, to gauge the attitudes and issues of Finance employees.
- Third, Annie spoke of a program that is coordinated by the EEO Office – the City's Volunteer Language Bank. She told us: "The Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs and Language Services currently oversees the City's

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## QWL Diversity Day

The Quality of Work Life (QWL) Career & Personal Development Committee held the Department's second Diversity Day Exhibition at 345 Adams Street Training Center on Friday, January 21st. DOF employees are a diverse group that mirrors the diversity of New York City, and the Diversity Day Exhibition celebrated both our distinct backgrounds and our Finance unity. The Exhibition featured displays on the traditions and customs of particular groups and on professional groups and others that share common goals and interests. This year's displays and presenters were:

- A Celebration of Women  
– *Reasa Semper*
- African American History & Culture  
– *Daphne Harris* and *Joyce Soso*
- All About Arkansas  
– *Answorth Robinson*
- Arts & Crafts of India  
– *Vatsala Casuba*
- Asians in America – *Susie Yuen*
- EEO – *Kamal Sharma, Lorraine Linton, and Marciano Florentino*



- Hispanic Heritage Month  
– *Devon Foster*
- Jewish Laws & Customs: Daily/Sabbaths & Holidays  
– *Mitchell Marcus*
- Quality of Work Life (QWL) Programs: GED Courses & Continuing Education  
– *QWL Committee*
- Women in Law Enforcement  
– *Frederick Davis*

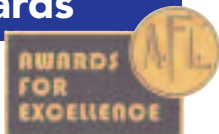
### The "Long " & Short of EEO

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Volunteer Language Bank...which assists the Mayor, City Commissioners and their agencies, and constituents with translation and interpretation by using over 3,000 volunteer City employees." Annie, as EEO Officer, is Finance's Language Liaison to the Language Bank and hopes to update Finance's language bank volunteer list and recruit new volunteers. Interested? E-mail Annie Long. Give your name, address, and the languages you speak and write.

## CCS Presents Service Awards

The first Divisional Service Awards for Excellence were presented to *Geraldine Green* and *Michael Madden* of the Communications and Customer Service Division at a Thursday, January 6, 2005 ceremony held at 59 Maiden Lane.



*Sam Miller*, Assistant Commissioner of Communications and Customer Service, and *Gerry O'Connor*, Director of Customer Assistance presented the Service Awards.

In their nominations for Service Awards, both employees are credited with going above and beyond the call of duty in their willingness to acquire new skills and additional knowledge to better respond to inquiries from taxpayers.

The Award for Excellence Program recognizes employees for accomplishing extraordinary results that support the Agency's mission. For more information on the Awards for Excellence Program, please contact the Labor Relations Unit at 718-403-4348.

## "NYC Delivery Solutions "

### Mayor to Promote Finance's Stipulated Fine Program for Commercial Vehicle Owners

*Mayor Bloomberg* is expected to promote a very exciting initiative at Finance – the Stipulated Fine Pilot Program, which is also known as NYC Delivery Solutions. This month, he will discuss the program as part of a broad package of initiatives designed to attract and retain industrial firms in New York.

NYC Delivery Solutions allows businesses that make expeditious deliveries and pick-ups to pay pre-determined amounts of certain types of parking violations in exchange for waiving their right to contest those tickets. The program has reduced administrative costs for businesses and greatly reduced the number of summonses that Finance must adjudicate. Revenue from fines, meanwhile, has not changed.

There are three levels of fines, depending

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On a personal note, Annie Long has been at Finance for 16 years, many of which were spent as the Executive Assistant to the various Assistant Commissioners of Administration, and a few years in Contracts as a Contracting Agent. While working full-time at those demanding jobs and raising her children, Annie also put herself through college, getting her Bachelor of Arts degree in 1999 through DC 37's Education Program at the College of New Rochelle. Someone else might have relaxed after that, but Annie went right on to get her Master's degree in Urban Policy from Queens College in 2003 and two certificates from Cornell University in 2004. She is currently working on a third certificate from Cornell and is considering law school.

To obtain a copy of Finance's EEO Policy, the City's EEO Policy, or information on domestic violence, sexual harassment, or a variety of EEO-related topics, please e-mail Annie Long at [longa@finance.nyc.gov](mailto:longa@finance.nyc.gov).

## Employee Recognition Ceremony – May 11, 2005

### Honoring 300 Employees

Over 300 employees were honored at the 21st annual Employee Recognition Ceremony, held on May 11, 2005 at DC37 headquarters in Manhattan. Awards were given for Career Service, Perfect Attendance, Education/Professional Achievement, and Community Service. This year's ceremony was marked by an increase in the number of Educational/Professional Achievement Award recipients.

Commissioner *Martha E. Stark* and *Lillian Roberts*, Executive Director of DC37, opened the awards presentation; Finance division heads and union officials presented the awards.

Congratulations to all the honorees!



### Celebrating Women's History

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ReveNEWS congratulates the 2005 Finance Women of Distinction: *Virginia Ching* (Payment Operations), *Maria Devila* (Sheriff's Division), *Wendy Grant* (Payment Operations), *Lisa Maluf* (Communications & Customer Service), *Barbara McBain* (Payment Operations), *Linda Reynolds* (Sheriff's Division) and the recipients of the Team Award: *Annette Hill*, *Joanne Maya*, *Colette McCain*, *Wanda Nash-Ellis*, and *Mary Scheman*, all in the City Register. Commissioner *Martha E. Stark* hosted the Awards Ceremony on March 31, 2005. Ceremonies were held at One Centre Street in the Mezzanine to recognize and celebrate honorees and commemorate the 10th Anniversary.

*To Keep the Torch Lit...* If you would like to volunteer for the 2006 Planning Committee, send an e-mail to any Planning Committee member: *Reasa Semper*, *Susie Yuen*, *Annie Long*, *Daphne Harris*, *J. Delise Hood*, *Joyce Lippman*, *Miryam Perez*, *L. E. Tina Barnes*, *Peggy Codrington*, *Deloris Buffaloe*. Thanks are due to these employees for their excellent work planning and coordinating the 2005 awards.

**Make sure you are "in the K.N.O.W."**

Keep in mind NYC Department of Finance's **Outstanding Women of Distinction**.

## Soldiers of Finance

### A Tribute to Finance's Heroes & Staff Who Serve Our Country

It would be impossible to acknowledge those who serve our country in the manner they truly deserve, especially in these turbulent times. What we can do is express the sentiments that the entire



Finance staff surely wishes to convey to our dedicated colleagues who are not only serving our country but also representing and defending us.

Although we are not surprised by their sense of patriotism, we would like to take the opportunity to recognize those who are currently on active duty, those who have recently returned from active duty, and those who are presently in the reserves. As a result of personal interviews and e-mails, some directly from Baghdad, we are proud to demonstrate our appreciation to these Finance heroes and introduce several of them to you. We encourage everyone to keep these fine colleagues in your thoughts and whenever possible, extend your own personal salutations and best wishes. An e-mail address, when provided, follows the article.

The United States Department of Defense presented Finance with a certificate thanking the agency for their support of employee soldiers during the war.

#### Staff Currently on Active Duty

##### Frank R. Dukes

Collections Division  
Associate Investigator, Level 2

Frank has worked for the City since 1973 and has been with Finance since 1975.

In February, Frank will have completed thirty-three years in the Army Reserves, Quartermaster Corps. He is

a Lieutenant Colonel serving as a Mortuary Affairs Officer. In this capacity, he supports a multinational Corps consisting of over 150,000 soldiers from over thirty nations assisting them by planning, directing, coordinating, supervising, and managing, for Operation Iraqi Freedom, Mortuary Affairs Operations in both Iraq and Kuwait.

Frank will be in Baghdad for the next year and will rotate back to the United States sometime in January 2006. He anticipates being released by the Army in March 2006, at which time he will revert back to his Reserve status.

"We need all the help and support we can get from the people back home. I very much would like to receive e-mails. You can e-mail me at Frank.r.dukes@us.army.mil"

##### Peter Sammarco

Adjudication Division  
Director of Special Units



Peter has been a City employee for twenty years and has been working at Finance since 1994, when Parking Violations was transferred from the Department of Transportation to Finance. Prior to working at DOT, he was with the Mayor's Office from 1984 to 1986.

After serving four years of active duty, Peter joined the Army National Guard in 1983 and has been in the Guard for twenty-one years, for a total military service of twenty-six years. His present rank is colonel, and he is cur-

rently serving as the chief of an Army Liaison Team whose mission is to provide liaison support to the Army Service Component Commander. The Liaison Team works closely with sister services, such as the Navy or coalition forces and the British troops, providing information such as field and mobilization evaluations to the Army Commander.

Having completed mobilization training, Peter was deployed to Camp Victory South, Iraq in mid-January 2005. He is excited by this new concept in the Army of Team Liaisons and is proud to be part of developing the 'doctrine and utilization' of this concept. "It's not often that a soldier has this type of unique opportunity. My team and I are looking forward to performing it."

Peter joined the Army and decided to serve because: "I believe in the statement, 'Freedom isn't free.' The rights we enjoy as Americans can only be secured when its citizens are willing and able to defend the freedoms that were written in the Constitution. Otherwise, they are just words on a piece of paper." He would enjoy receiving mail, hearing what is happening in New York and at Finance. E-mail Peter at peter.sammarco@us.army.mil or write to Peter J. Sammarco, Colonel, 53rd Army Liaison Team, APO AE 09342.

#### Staff Who Recently Returned From Active Duty

##### Steve Henriquez

Administration Division  
Clerical Aide, Accounts Payable

Steve has been with Finance for a little over two years, before which he worked for Goldman Sachs and Lehman Brothers.

Steve has served in the Army National Guard since 1992 and currently serves as a Military Police Officer. Many soldiers in Steve's battalion were deployed to Iraq in February 2003, while some, including Steve, were kept Stateside and deployed to Fort Drum, New York, where he served until February 2004.

Steve is grateful that no one in his Company was killed. "However, " he shared, "the war hit close to home for

## Soldiers of Finance

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me in many ways, especially when I learned that, unfortunately, two soldiers from my battalion lost their lives overseas." He is currently attached to the Det 1 107th Military Police Company and is back to serving "one weekend a month, two weeks a year." "I became a reservist because of the discipline that the military provided, the college tuition and the opportunity to give back something positive to my community that my family and I would be proud of. As far as the possibility of being redeployed, we are always apprehensive about that, but I am prepared if the call comes. Hey, that's my job." For now, he is happy, as we all are, that he is back with Accounts Payable at Finance.

"I thank the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner for their support and encouragement while I was away. I think the focus here is Finance's commitment to its employee soldiers. Without that dedication and patience it would have made my deployment, as well as that of other City employees that I know, very difficult indeed." We thank Steve for forwarding the Department of Defense Certificate, which thanks Finance for their support of their employee soldiers.

### Victor Leguillo

Sheriff's Division  
Deputy Sheriff, Kendra's Unit

Victor has been with the City & Finance since March 1991. He is currently working in the Sheriff's Division with the Kendra Unit, which works closely with the Department of Mental Health.

Victor enlisted in the U.S. Air Force in October 1980 when he was nineteen years old, and he completed his basic training in San Antonio, Texas. After serving at three active duty bases he separated from active duty in December 1989 and then joined the US Air Force Reserves in 1999. Approximately seven years ago, he crossed-trained into the Aero-Medical unit as a medical supply specialist. In 2000, Victor spent some time in Saudi Arabia, and last year, he was re-activated and deployed to Ramstein Air Base, Germany. He and his unit set up a 150-bed contingency hospital in a military base-gymnasium where thousands of wounded troops were treated. "It was an experience I will never forget," Victor recalled.



As a member of the medical unit, he is involved in many humanitarian missions worldwide. "I enjoy the military and the satisfaction of helping people keeps me going." Now, Victor reports to McGuire Air Force Base, one weekend a month and will attend two weeks of annual training a year.

## Staff Presently in the Reserves

### Luis Diaz

Sheriff's Division  
Deputy Sheriff, Auto Theft Unit

Luis has worked for the City of New York for twenty years, ten of those with Finance. Currently, he works in the Sheriff's Office Auto Theft Unit.



Luis has served in the Naval Reserves since 1986 and is currently a Master-At-Arms in the Military Police. He is a Petty Officer 2nd class.

Luis joined the reserves in August 1996, in order to become "twice a citizen." "I wanted to enhance my police career, as well as obtaining the enjoyment of camaraderie, responsibility, honor, courage, and commitment. I have just re-enlisted for another 6 years, hoping to attain the rank of Warrant Officer."

After the tragedy of 9-11, Luis, an Enduring Freedom/Noble Eagle Veteran, served two years of active duty in Europe. He was recently deactivated and presently reports for reserve duties to Ft. Schuyler in the Bronx.

### Barbara Esquivel

Property Division  
City Assessor

Barbara has been a City employee for twenty-one years. She is presently working in the Valuation, Policy & Quality Control Unit where she reviews property values.

Barbara joined the U.S. Army Reserves in 1996, serving until October 2004. "I became a reservist so that I could better myself in some capacity and to serve my country." During her tour she worked as an Imagery Analyst with the 331st MI Co. and was stationed in Fort Wadsworth, Staten Island. Most members of her unit were deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq shortly after Sept 11th. "I like what I am currently doing with my career and hopefully will be

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**Soldiers of Finance**

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able to advance in my field.” You can e-mail Barbara at [EsquivelB@finance.nyc.gov](mailto:EsquivelB@finance.nyc.gov).

**Devon Foster**  
 Audit Division  
 City Tax Auditor II

Devon has been with Finance for a little over nine years. He joined the United State Navy Reserves in 1990 and is currently ranked O-1.

Devon was recently appointed a Chaplain Candidate Officer. Prior to this commission, he served with Military Sealift Command Atlantic (MSC). From April 2003, he served with Military Sealift Command Office North Persian Gulf (MSCO Nor Per Gulf) Det.102. In October of 2004, he joined the Mobile Inshore Undersea Warfare Unit (MIUWU) 203, as a member of the Operation Department.

Devon is scheduled to attend the Navy Chaplain School in Rhode Island, where he will attend classes and receive on the job training with the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard. “I became a reservist to complete my obligation on my first enlistment to active duty. I like the comradeship and the ability to be a part-timer. The Reserves provides the opportunity to continue to learn, travel and to serve. Secondly, I am a reservist because, like many young men and women who came before and those who are currently serving, we serve out of our commitment to God and the USA, and not politics. All of us who have answered this call to duty do so with confidence in our training and recognize this ultimate sacrifice in the name of citizenship. Many of us truly believe that as

Americans we can make a difference in the world, and we serve willingly with our comrades in this noble ideal, whether it is Iraq or assisting with the tsunami relief. “

Currently, Devon’s military responsibility is to provide spiritual aid, pastoral care and counsel to the members of the Navy, Marines and Coast Guard.



**Cora Olevia Williams-Flores**  
 Executive Office  
 Principal Administrative Associate,  
 Correspondence Unit

Cora began her career at Finance in 1998, when she was employed as a temporary worker. She became a per-diem Clerical Aide in 1999, a Clerical Associate 1b in 2002 and most recently, a PAA.

Cora joined the U.S. Army Reserves in August 1994. She is a Staff Sergeant, Personnel Administrative-E-6, SSG. Recalling what motivated her to join the reserves, Cora said, “The summer after my father passed away, I inquired about joining the military. I was sixteen, he was seventy-five. He was everything to me.” Cora wanted to follow in her father’s footsteps and yearned to be a soldier. Her first assignment was with the 146th Quartermaster Co. located in Fort Totten, Queens. She was the youngest in the group, and recalls being inspired by her supervisor Sgt. Puilliah. “She admired my skills and ability and often suggested that I join the regular army. I was gung-ho, but not that gung-ho, so I remained in the Reserves.”

Cora made many friends in her unit, including the man who became her hus-

band. Their unit was stationed in Germany, but the romance developed after their Commander sent the unit to Paris. Tony and Cora have been married for five years now and have three children.

Currently, Cora is assigned to the 1179th Transportation Brigade based at Fort Hamilton, New York, where she serves as the Unit’s Personnel Administrative Sergeant and the Commander’s Secretary. “It is quite gratifying to work with the military, because I enjoy and take pride in following the formality and the attention to detail. My job entails maintaining all soldiers’ personal, medical and dental records, verifying that each soldier’s contact information is accurate and current; providing support and family readiness training sessions, developing and processing, in a timely manner, Non-Commissioned Officers’ evaluation reports.”

Cora is also pursuing her academic career and is enrolled in the University of Maryland’s “Distance Education Program.” She plans to focus on Business Administration and Human Resources. “My goal is to become a role model to my children and to all I encounter. Many young teenagers are inspired by my current lifestyle. I want them to understand that working hard to pursue their dream is worth the challenge. I’m happy to be a part of this feature on the Soldiers of Finance.” Email Cora at: [cora.o.williams@us.army.mil](mailto:cora.o.williams@us.army.mil).



If you serve in the Reserves, will be reporting for duty, or have recently returned from active duty, let us know, as this feature will be a continuing one. E-mail Lisa Maluf at [malufl@finance.nyc.gov](mailto:malufl@finance.nyc.gov).



## Black History Month – February 2005



Thanks to all Finance employees who participated in the African American History and Culture Committee's 5th Annual Celebration of Black History Month during February. This year's events were exciting and informative, beginning with the rousing beat of The History of Modern Jamaican Music on February 3rd. Later in the month, we kept the music flowing by listening to and learning about the stirring sound of jazz. Then we explored the extraordinary History of Caribbean Americans. There were two lunchtime films during the month, one shown at 59 Maiden Lane, one at 345 Adams: *A Fragile Freedom: African American Historic Sites* and *The Road to Brown*. Our Black History Month celebration ended on Friday, February 25th at a Heritage Day Celebration, which gave all employees an opportunity to come together to celebrate the rich history of African Americans.

Particular thanks are due to the members of the Planning Committee: *Paul Brown*, ISS; *Richard Donovan*, ISS; *David Elam*, Enforcement; *Anthony Fung-Quee*, OTS; *Callie Harris*, ISS; *James McFarland*, ISS; *Elaine McNeil*, ISS; *Terri Nixon-Smith*, Administration; *Answorth Robinson*, Administration; *Joyce Soso*, ISS; *Cassandra Stevens*, ISS; and *Sheryl Williams*, Payment Operations.

## EFT Property Tax Requirement

### Property Taxpayers Who Owe \$300,000 or More Now Required by Law to Pay By Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)

Due to a new law, effective July 1, 2005, NYC property taxpayers with an annual total property tax liability of \$300,000 or more are required to pay property tax by electronic funds transfer (EFT), instead of check or other means. This new law will affect individual property owners who own several properties and, mainly, the banks and mortgage companies who pay property taxes for many different property owners. Other taxpayers, with tax liabilities lower than \$300,000, may also pay by EFT but are not required to do so.

Taxpayers who are affected by this new law have two payment options: (1) They can initiate their own payments or (2) They can set up an automatic debit account so the Department can transfer the tax payments directly from the taxpayer's bank account. The automatic debit feature makes quarterly or semi-annual payments effortless for the taxpayer once he or she sets it up on NYCeFile for the first payment.

There are a number of advantages to EFT for the agency. First, the money that is electronically transferred is immediately "cleared" for our use. EFT eliminates the need to wait until the payer's check clears. Second, EFT will reduce the amount of work required to process these large tax payments and the number of misapplied payments. Third, EFT should also reduce the number of large payments walked-into the Borough Business Centers by mortgage companies who have not wanted to put multimillion dollar checks in the mail.

## Gridlock-Buster of the Year

### Director of Special Units Wins Coveted Award

Every year, *Daily News* columnist *Gridlock Sam* receives thousands of letters. Some are positive, but most are filled with complaints about parking and potholes and traffic regulations. Sam Schwartz, former Commissioner of Transportation, the author of this very popular *Daily News* feature, answers inquiries and provides timely transportation information for the residents of New York City and those who commute into the five boroughs.

Where does Gridlock Sam go to find the real scoop on the traffic rules? He seeks out Finance's parking guru, our very own Peter Sammarco, Director of Special Units, Adjudications Division, who is currently serving in Iraq since January '05. (See *Soldiers of Finance – A Tribute to Finance's Heroes*)

As recognized in a December 2004 issue of the *Daily News*, Peter was commended as an "...indispensable resource for Gridlock Sam, and, by extension, to the many citizens of New York. Sammarco's knowledge of parking regulations is as intricate and complex as the rules themselves; he has proven to be a balanced and objective representative of the system. New Yorkers should be proud and relieved that they have such an impartial representative in City government."

Pretty impressive! Congratulations, Peter!

## NYC Delivery Solutions

Continued from page 4

on the severity of the infraction. Some violations are considered to be amenable to dismissal; others are partially amenable and non-amenable. Amenable violations are automatically dismissed for vehicles enrolled in the program.

Companies such as FedEx, Verizon and Coca Cola no longer have to waste money contesting their tickets, which would often be dismissed or reduced. Verizon alone says it has saved \$500,000 since last July. Meanwhile, the Adjudication Division has been able to process 750,000 fewer summonses, out of 2 million total commercial summonses contested. As a result, Chief Judge Laura Held has been able to assign more judges to work on hearings by mail and other cases, helping to reduce the backlog.

## Saying "Good-Bye " to Old Friends



Following are the names of those employees who have retired in the months since the last issue of ReveNEWS. This is a new feature, added at the suggestions of our readers. While you know when someone in your unit retires, this column will keep you up to date on folks who may be coworkers who you only know over the phone or who you've worked with in the past. We're sure, they'll be greatly missed:

### Adjudication

*Joyce Dudley, 40 years*  
*Judy Young, 40 years*

### Administration

*Jeannette Holmes, 35 years*

### Audit

*Abraham Joseph, 30 years*  
*Joseph Moy, 32 years*  
*Samir Salib, 26 years*  
*Gabir Sharif, 16 years*  
*Barbara Slythe, 17 years*

### Collections

*Zaher Ewais, 30 years*  
*Pauline Hayes, 20 years*  
*Earl Johnson, 20 years*  
*Bernice Lima, 25 years*  
*Joseph Miller, 16 years*  
*Molly Smith, 24 years*

### Enforcement

*Thelma Abrams, 28 years*  
*Gloria Mahabir, 30 years*

### ISS

*Alphonse Amandola, 5 years*

### Payment Operations

*Frank Benedetti, 38 years*  
*Hector Carrington, 28 years*  
*Eleanor Golubow, 7 years*  
*Lillie Levy, 38 years*  
*Olivia Parker, 23 years*

### Sheriff

*Steve Adams, 31 years*  
*Leonard DeRosa, 25 years*  
*Joe DiFranco, 14 years*  
*Richard Flood, 33 years*

### Legal

*Dev Cohn, 30 years*  
*Carol Tierney, 33 years*

### Property

*Jack Eichenbaum, 23 years*  
*Efrain Mojica, 16 years*  
*Robert Ozga, 23 years*  
*John Venezia, 25 years*

## Is Morning Coffee a Penny Less?

### New York State and New York City Lower Sales Tax

Effective Wednesday, June 1st, the State gave shoppers a break by lowering the sales tax, from 4.25% to 4%. At the same time, New York City also reduced the City sales tax an eighth of a percentage point, from 4.125% to 4%.

However, at the same time, the MTA authorized a separate increase in sales tax of an eighth of a percentage point for those who live in the five boroughs of New York City and seven surrounding counties, from .25% to .375%.

Overall, the combined sales tax rate paid by City residents dropped a quarter of a percentage point, from 8.625% to the new 8.375%.

The net result for most New York shoppers: Your morning cup of coffee that used to cost \$1.36 now costs \$1.35. Start saving those pennies!

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## In Memory of Howard Polen

### Clerical Associate – One Centre Street Mailroom

It seems that everyone who recalls their personal interactions with *Howard Polen* invariably has the same fond memories. Howie began working at the Department of Finance in 1970, and he spent his entire working career in the One Centre Street Mailroom. He loved his job and enjoyed the opportunity to meet and interrelate with people, developing long-standing relationships. He was a friend to all.

His mailroom colleagues were quick to respond when he first became ill. "He was out for three or four weeks, and every time I called him, even though he knew he was ill, he told me he would be back to work next week. He loved to come to work," remembered *Leslie Hill*, Howie's supervisor. "I met Howie in 1987, on the first day I started my job with Finance. He not only welcomed me, he took me under his wing and trained me. He showed me everything I needed to know about mailroom procedures for mail deliver-

ies and messenger services, as well as how to handle special deliveries for the Executive Office. Throughout his career, he was not only helpful to me but to everyone who worked with him."



*Andre Robinson* also remembers his coworker, Howie, as a humble man and a special, caring person: "I remember how much he helped me when I started in the mailroom. He was very knowledgeable about the City and willingly shared his experiences and offered his advice in a very friendly way. I will miss him." *Phillip Shiffman*, another co-

worker, wished Howie peace. "He was such a nice, patient man, with nothing but good things to say about everyone."

Every memory shared with ReveNEWS about Howie Polen is similar. *Enrico Maddaleni* remembers meeting Howie twenty-three years ago: "I started my job, and we were instant friends. He helped me learn my responsibilities and took a sincere interest in me. Sometimes, we would share a lunch hour together. I will miss him."

"Howie was the perfect person to work in the Centre Street Mailroom," recalled *Sheila Williams*, Senior Director of General Services for Administration, "because he valued the needs of the Department. He was often praised for his attention to detail and dedication to his job responsibilities. Finance was his life, and we were his family," Sheila shared. "I met Howie during my first stint at Finance. I remembered him because he was

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## 2004 Holiday Food Drive

For many New Yorkers, an abundant meal not only eludes them during the holidays but year round. Thousands of New Yorkers do not know where their next meals are coming from and are forced to seek emergency food from soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters. For the eleventh consecutive year, the Department of Finance employees generously donated over 4,000 pounds of canned and non-perishable food items to City Harvest and the NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) during the fall Food Drive.



Thanks are due to the 2004 Holiday Food Drive Coordinators:

- Manhattan: *Renee Frazier, Anita Mullin, Debbie Wright, Laura Schoolfield, Eva Gambino, Shirley Harris, Renee Walker, Jackie Morrell, Maria McGhee, and Karen Schlain*
- Brooklyn: *Joan Best, Della Stillely, Leticia Martinez, Callie Harris, Elaine McNeil, Daphne Harris, Lillie Foy, Rose Horton, Yolanda Taylor, Portia Perkins, and Arlene George*
- Bronx: *Sharon Danmer, Zena Spence and Joseph Fucito*
- Queens: *Vatsala Casuba and John Venezia*
- Staten Island: *Marian DeCandia*
- Agencywide Coordinator: *Answer Robinson*

## In Memory of Howard Polen

Continued from page 10

a nice, regular guy," *Commissioner Stark* said, on the occasion of Howie's passing in her February 14th e-mail. "When I came back to Finance as Commissioner, I greeted him warmly, and he asked me how I remembered his name. I reminded him that my brother's name is Howard, and so I would always remember his name."

ReveNEWS joins in sending condolences to his mailroom colleagues. Howard Polen died on February 3, 2005. Donations to the American Cancer Society in his memory can be sent to Dahlia Grant, Miryam Perez, or Ed Seguire in Administration.

## 2005 Lien Sale is Smallest Ever!

We're very proud to report that New York City's annual Lien Sale was the smallest since the program began in 1996, with just 1,010 liens sold, and the City's delinquency rate for a prior-year charge plummeted to 1.14 percent, a five-year low. Only 28,000 homeowners have a past-due charge.

"These terrific statistics reflect the terrific work done by Payment Operations, ISS and CCS to improve our Statements of Account, which have clearly made it easier for people to pay their bills," *Commissioner Stark* said. "We're making it easier to pay, we're cleaning up our databases, and we're improving outreach, and it's paying off for New Yorkers."

Every year, by law, the City sells long-standing property tax debt to an authorized third party. This third party – called "the new lien holder" – is entitled to collect this debt from the property owners along with a surcharge, interest, and fees.

Sixty days prior to the lien sale on May 23rd, Finance notified over 9,000 taxpayers that a lien was going to be sold on their property. This year's sale of liens on properties whose owners owed long-standing property tax debt resulted in over 5,000 property owners making full payments of their delinquencies or entering into a payment agreement – a big success for the Department of Finance and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Owners of 2,688 properties who only owed water charges paid their debts in order to be removed from the sale.

Special kudos to Finance's Tax Lien Ombudsperson, *Margaret Donadio*, and her entire team: *Richard Robertson, Sharon Hatcher, Patricia Dunk, Robert Schott, Eli Slavin, and Keith McManus*.

## Importance of Blood Donation

### A memo from Assistant Commissioner of Administration, Corinne Dickey Norton

The spring and summer months are traditionally associated with good weather and anticipated vacations. However, these are also the months where the need for blood donations seriously increases. Finance employees generously donate blood throughout the year, but there is still a critical blood shortage in New York City.

All employees who donate blood at these drives will receive three hours of compensatory time, in addition to the time actually needed to make the donation. Until the next Finance blood drive, however, I sincerely urge all employees to make a blood donation to help increase the blood supply in the New York City area.

Employees must have a photo ID to donate blood at all Blood Drive locations. There will be absolutely no exceptions; it is the law.

Once employees are scheduled to donate blood, they must adhere to their scheduled time. If you are uncertain about your ability to donate blood, contact your Blood Captains for further info or call 212-361-1804. A free medical exam will be available to all prospective donors. Thank you for your concern and participation.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

— August 20 Finance Picnic	— October 10 Columbus Day Observed	— November 8 Election Day
— September 5 Labor Day	— October 13 Yom Kippur	— December 9 Finance Holiday Party
— September 11 Patriot Day	— October 27 TaxRAPP	— December 21 First Day of Winter
— September 22 First Day of Autumn	— October 30 Daylight Savings Time Ends	— December 25 Christmas
— October 4 Rosh Hashanah	— October 31 Halloween	— December 26 First Day of Hanukkah
		— December 29 First Day of Kwanzaa

# COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

-  **New Finance Strategic Management Initiative**
-  **2005 Legislative Update**
-  **ACRIS 3.0 Release**
-  **Sales Tax Exemption**
-  **More On Finance Operations, Employees & Events!**

## [nyc.gov/dofstaff](http://nyc.gov/dofstaff)

### Reminder — Our Emergency Employee Notification Webpage

Did you know that the Department of Finance has an Emergency Employee Notification web page on the Internet? In the event of a weather or other emergency, Finance will post important information or other instructions for employees on this page, so remember **[nyc.gov/dofstaff](http://nyc.gov/dofstaff)**. In a true emergency, Finance would also use the traditional methods to communicate important information to those employees without Internet access.

### 2005 e-NEWS Deadlines:

- Fall Issue 9/1/05
- Winter Issue 12/1/05
- Spring Issue 3/1/06
- Summer Issue 6/1/06

E-mail comments & suggestions  
for future issues of ReveNEWS  
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# REVE NEWS

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