

DEP's First National Diversity Day

DEP is an essential utility serving the population of New York City, which is made up of individuals of more than 140 different national origins who speak more than 200 different languages. Our population of nearly 6,000 employees reflects this diversity, with employees hailing from many different regions of the world. A demonstration of our multi-cultural workforce was seen at DEP's first National Diversity Day, which was celebrated at Lefrak and our upstate facilities on October 4, 2013.

DEP's first National Diversity Day was a great success, with almost 500 guests participating in the festivities. Commissioner Carter Strickland and Organizational Development Deputy Commissioner Diana Ritter, who in the spirit of Diversity Day wore a gorgeous yellow and black dress from Kenya, introduced the program.

Guests were welcomed by beautiful cultural table displays that were created using items kindly lent to the Diversity Committee by fellow DEP employees. Displays included a collection of international dolls, a Diwali Committee table, a Dragon Boat Committee table, various books and literature on Hinduism, as well as a many other cultural items and artifacts. An origami demonstration—the ancient art of folding paper to create remarkable forms of artwork—was a popular destination for attendees. Instructions on how to fold an origami lotus flower were given, and guests were provided the necessary materials for a hands-on experience in trying to create a flower of their own. One table showcased items from the Ukraine, including wood carvings of cultural and political leaders, ornately decorated eggs called pisanki, photos of a young boy and girl in traditional costumes, and dolls in traditional Ukrainian dresses. Also exhibited was a collection of international dolls from different countries all dressed in their colorful, traditional costumes, and cook books from various parts of Europe. A display of items from



Latin America and the Caribbean, including wooden sculptures, pottery, masks, figurines, musical instruments, cooking implements, and a machete case, prompted many to stop and happily convey the sentiments and memories from their past that these items elicited.

Numerous, brightly colored and detailed pictures of African kings and queens were displayed in chronological order, each with a brief history of their reign. The "DEP Water Dragons" presented images from the Dragon Boat Festival that took place this past summer at Flushing Meadows Park, with several photos of the team competing during the race, and the actual oars used during the Dragon Boat Races. A table display designed by the Diwali Committee exhibited a wonderful array of items ranging from a chess board created using traditional stone carving techniques, to jewelry, and sculptures of Hindu deities including Ganesh—the elephant headed god of wisdom and learning. A display of clothing and fabrics including an Egyptian dress and table covering, a lovely blue silk scarf from India, and traditional men's and women's Indian attire, gave participants insight into the meticulous craftsmanship needed to create these delicate and beautifully beaded and embroidered garments.

National Diversity Day was also celebrated upstate in our Valhalla, Shokan, Grahamsville, Kingston, and Kensico Lab locations. Almost 120 guests, some donning ethnic costumes from Bulgaria and the German Alps, enjoyed a potluck lunch of more than 20 dishes from Africa, the Middle East, Russia, India, and the Caribbean, as well as different types of desserts, while traditional music (including a Polka) played in the background creating an inviting atmosphere. These dishes and music sparked conversations about family traditions, how individuals and their families immigrated to the United States, and how they have incorporated their traditions into their American lifestyles. Other international items, including a real Persian rug and a musical instrument called a Santoor (Dulcimer), were prominently displayed against a backdrop of decorations, with flags and balloons adding to the many colors, sounds, and scents this celebration provided. The event was very well received and the festive mood carried on even



At DEP it is our mission to protect public health and the environment by supplying clean drinking water, collecting and treating wastewater, and reducing air, noise, and hazardous materials pollution.

after people returned to their desks. Video conferencing allowed guests at both Lefrak and Sutton Park to view the celebratory activities at each location and to jointly share in the experience of National Diversity Day.

As food is a cultural experience enjoyed by many, the Diversity Day menu included a wide variety of dishes including fruits, pastries which included: pine tarts, cheese rolls, Chinese cake, paklava, and Kaia mixture. Jamaican jerk chicken, and pholourie—which is a popular Guyanese appetizer made from split peas—were also on the menu. Each guest received a cookbook featuring scrumptious recipes from around the world that were generously contributed by many employees. Jah Jah Fruit Creations prepared the exquisite fruit displays for the event and additional cultural dishes were provided by fellow DEP employees. For those who were unable to attend, a copy of the cookbook can be found on [The Source](#).

The day would not have been complete without performances—which not only entertained but provided educational information. Performances at Lefrak included a Caribbean Steel Pan solo by Iman Pascal; a traditional Chinese Tea Ceremony by Shen Yun Promotions International that featured participants dressed in beautiful, traditional Chinese dresses; a series of traditional African stories were told by Storyteller Amadoma Bediako who encouraged the audience to participate with imaginative, prompted responses, and Stephanie Budhu dazzled the crowd with two styles of classical Indian dancing and gorgeous costumes.

Congratulations to our raffle winners Patricia Turner of Facilities Management, and Bureau of Water Supply employees Anne Seeley and Robyn Little. When asked about suggestions for future Diversity Day events they had none stating it was already a wonderful event; a sentiment echoed by many other employees.



Career Counseling for DEP Employees

Career Counseling is a human resource service provided by DEP to its employees. It incorporates direction on civil service career opportunities and paths as well as recommendations on how to navigate through existing systems and challenges to help employees reach their fullest potential.

Specifically, by offering this service, DEP's goal is to prepare our valued employees to meet current and future Agency needs while at the same time providing them with the career growth and advancement tools they need to succeed in a civil service environment. As the Agency's Career Counselor, Herb Roth, identifies growth opportunities within the Agency and provides information on civil service titles, salaries, upcoming examinations, current vacancies, job specifications and requirements, and available internal and external training.

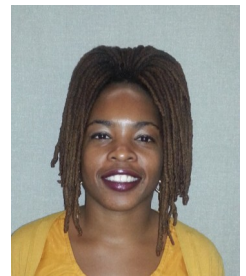
Work and careers are important aspects of our employees' lives. Career Counseling helps employees to make appropriate and realistic career choices and may be particularly useful if they are having difficulty deciding what they want in a career and need direction on their current job activities or deciding on a course of study that will strengthen the employees' work portfolio. In addition, Career Counseling helps employees realize the importance of developing a career plan, realistically evaluate their skill sets, review their work experiences and education, research future workforce needs, and set career goals.

DEP recognizes that our human capital is our best and most important asset and acknowledges that many employees seek to gain a greater understanding of their individual talents and strengths and weaknesses, which ultimately will help them meet their career development goals and short and long term career objectives.

For further information, employees seeking career counseling are encouraged to contact the Agency's representative, Herb Roth, at (718) 595-3377 or HRoth@dep.nyc.gov.

Newly Appointed Disability Rights Coordinator

In compliance with the City's Reasonable Accommodation Policy, Tanika Thomas, EEO Investigator and formerly the Assistant Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator, has been appointed as the Agency's Disability Rights Coordinator. Tanika will be responsible for the timely review and processing of requests for accommodations under the guidance of the Director of EEO, Martha Osenni.



A copy of the Reasonable Accommodation policy, along with the forms necessary to file for an accommodation can be located by visiting the EEO subsection of [The Source](#), or by contacting the EEO Office or Ms. Thomas directly. Ms. Thomas may be reached at (718) 595-5742 or via email at tathomas@dep.nyc.gov.

Diversity Corner

November is National American Indian Heritage Month. Native American Heritage recognition began as early as 1915 when Dr. Arthur C. Parker, a Seneca Indian, persuaded the Boy Scouts of America to set aside a day for the "first Americans." American Indian Day was later recognized by the annual Congress of the American Indian Association. The second Saturday of May was set aside for this celebration. Even though there was a small movement promoting national recognition, it was not until 1990 that President George H. W. Bush issued a proclamation declaring November to be National American Indian Heritage Month. To learn more about National American Indian Heritage Month [click here](#).