



**FINANCE  
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# REVE NEWS

FINANCE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER • OCTOBER 2006 • VOLUME 3, NUMBER 6

## Divisional Corner

Pamela Parker-Cortijo, Assistant Commissioner, Collections



When I was appointed to lead the Collections Division in May 2004, it was in the midst of a reorganization. The Division's units were all organized by specific debt type - there was a unit for taxes, a unit for parking violations, and a unit for environmental control violations. Each unit had its own internal support units, and each unit was experiencing dwindling staff resources. Our debt-dunning campaigns were inconsistent and excessive. Collections did not have a

handle on the "true receivables" that it was responsible for resolving, and our individual unit revenue target was driving our collection philosophy. In many ways, the Division was not as effective as it could have been.

In reorganizing, and with the help of several key people, we acquired a telephone "Autodialer System" that connects the debtor, collector, and our computer-assisted collection systems. The Autodialer processes both inbound and outbound calls. We reorganized the Dunning Unit around the Autodialer

by consolidating the collectors from the original units and cross-training them to handle all debt types. The Autodialer allowed us to consolidate our various assigned debt collection, thereby maximizing our staff resources, collection efforts, and collection efficiency. Also, the Autodialer provides statistics by campaign, which gives us greater control over our debt-dunning efforts.

Further, we organized task-specific support units around the Dunning Unit, according to our collection flow - the Inquiry Unit for walk-in customers, the Asset Research Unit for locating assets and updated contact information, the Docketing Unit for payment processing and warrant filing, the Execution Unit for execution preparation and levy, and the Claims Resolution Unit for case research and adjustment.

We also have several ongoing special projects with other City agencies to enhance collections. We no longer base our success on how much money we collect; now, we grade ourselves on how we help people pay the right amount on time, efficiently and fairly. The overall division is still evolving. Operationally, we are not yet where we would like to be - for example, we're continuing to work with ISS to determine our true receivables - but we are a long way from where we started. The Collections Division is developing into an effective, efficient collection machine, and we take pride in our operations and our growth.

## COLLECTIVE EFFORTS

The Collections Division's mission is to help people resolve debt owed to the City as efficiently and painlessly as possible.

We collect money that people should have paid for property and business tax, parking tickets, and other fines and fees. During the past year, we have been in the process of determining what our real receivables are - in other words, how much debt is

real (the original tax or fine the debtor owed) and how much isn't (the penalties and interest that have accrued). Since we are working SMARTer, we have redefined our goal, and we now focus on the real debt to allow the debtor to pay the amount that was owed as easily as possible.

In the past, Collections concentrated on the resolution of docketed debt - that is, debt for which we have a court order. Business tax debt, for example, can be from 3 months old to 20 years old when Collections receives it. Other fines, such as parking and ECB, expire after 8 years. During the past year, our focus has also included non-docketed (shorter term) debt. By reviewing specific, high-dollar cases before they are docketed, the division has been able to resolve many cases without some of the costs of collecting debt later on.

Educating the public and working within the framework of SMART, we have helped more taxpayers resolve their debts before they were docketed.



Front Row Seated Left To Right: Yolanda Rotondo, Miguel Richardson, Assaad Moustafa, Nixon Omotayo. Standing Left To Right: Patrick Mullan, Ayad Jacob, Gracie Michail, Rosa Alfred, Shirley Harris, Regina Lopez, Delores Covington, Delise Hood, Francis Oyeibisi.

with the taxpayer. When all units concluded that a particular case was not collectible, it was placed into a specific category to be written off.

During the recently started "Pre-Docket Large Dollar Case Project," we have already had large adjustments and revenue collections. The staffs of the Docketing, Field Investigations, and Claims Resolutions Units are working with the assistance of the Audit Division and the Discrepancy & Billing Unit of the Payment Operations Division to identify predocketed tax debt that requires further review. Each case is reviewed for the accuracy of the debt and for misapplied payments. In most cases, this has been enough to determine the validity of the debt.

Read the full story on [FinanceNet](#).

## Two Major Accomplishments

In the "Taxpayer I. D. Write - Off Project," the staffs of the Claims Resolution, Asset Research, Docketing, and Field Investigations Units reviewed cases to determine the probability of collections.

When necessary, field investigators made site visits to verify that a business exists and discuss the case

## FIRST ReveNEWS READER SURVEY

**SURVEY**

**ReveNEWS** began its transformation in May 2006.

We are now publishing the newsletter on a monthly basis and distributing it with the first paycheck of the month. Now that we are in the sixth month of publication, we thought it would be a good time to hear what our readership has to say. We always welcome your feedback, suggestions and comments, but please take the opportunity now to let us know what you like and what you don't like. Take a few minutes and let us know how you feel about your **ReveNEWS**.

Take the survey on [FinanceNet.com](#)

## REMINDER HOLIDAY EDITION



**ReveNEWS** is your newsletter, and December is your chance to have some fun, make a contribution, and play an important role as part of "Team **ReveNEWS**." To publish a unique and useful holiday edition, we are looking for holiday recipes, photos, stories, and greetings. Yes, there will be prizes! Keep in mind that the deadline for submission is October 20th.

We invite you to join in and help make our 1st Holiday **ReveNEWS** - Special Edition a memorable one.

## UPDATES FROM PAYROLL, TIMEKEEPING & BENEFITS

- The 2006 Health Insurance Fall Transfer Period
- Collective Bargaining Increases/ DC37 Employees
- Collective Bargaining Increases/ Civil Service Forum

For further details see the full story in [FinanceNet](#).

**GENERAL SERVICES PROUD TO ANNOUNCE CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENT!**

The Administration Division General Services Unit is excited to announce the launch of the new Facility Management E-Mailbox. You can now e-mail any facility-related issue directly to General Services by selecting "Facility Management" from the Global Address list in Outlook.

Sheila Williams, Senior Director of General Services, envisioned the E-Mailbox when thinking about how to improve communication between the unit and Finance staff. "I knew that we could not give access to the Work Order System to the entire agency, but we do want everyone to be able to reach us," she said. "We hope employees will use the E-Mailbox to let us know that there is a specific issue that needs to be addressed in their work environment, e.g., a burned out light bulb, restroom problem, temperature problem, etc. If they can be our eyes and ears, that would be great! The E-Mailbox is our way of letting employees know that their concerns are our concerns."

Employees should contact General Services directly; you do not have to tell a manager, supervisor or liaison that a problem exists and wait for them to report it.

Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

*It Can Happen To Anyone*

In 1981, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence held the first Day of Unity, an initiative to connect advocates for battered women across the country. Although the Day of Unity is still celebrated on the first Monday in October, the observance expanded in October 1987 to Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Two years later, in October 1989, the US Congress passed commemorative legislation and has continued to do so each year.

Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

**ENTER! HOLIDAY RECIPE CONTEST**



Grandma's recipe wasn't entrusted to you for nothing! Make sure to enter it in the Holiday Recipe Contest. The first ten entries will win a prize and, more importantly, will be available for the world to enjoy (well, the world of Finance anyway) in the December issue of ReveNews. So if you have a favorite Thanksgiving, Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanzaa or other holiday recipe – whether from Grandma, Grandpa, or any other relative or friend, enter now! The deadline is October 20th.

Preserve your recipe for posterity! Win a prize!

For full contest details see **FinanceNet**.

**QUICK ACTION RECEIVES AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE IN POLICE WORK**

Many of our readers know that, as the chief civil law enforcement office of the City of New York, the Sheriff's Office works with the courts to serve summonses, arrest those who have outstanding warrants, and collect on civil court judgments for private and public agencies and individuals. However, were you aware that the deputies are fully empowered law enforcement officers, able (and willing) to perform the duties of the police when necessary? Recently, Sheriff's deputies were involved in two incidents, and were cited for their quick actions. Sgt. Kyle Williams, Deputy Enrique Vega and Deputy John Torres all received the Excellence in Police Work Award.



Left to Right: 1st Deputy Sheriff Pu-Folkes, Deputy Enrique Vega, Sheriff Lindsay Eason, Sgt. Kyle Williams, Lt. Mullqueen and Under Sheriff Fucito.

Sgt. Williams and Deputy Vega were in Staten Island executing an arrest warrant for the Bronx Family Court. As they were returning to their home station in the Bronx, they were asked to assist at the scene of an accident where one vehicle rear-ended another. The driver and passengers in the vehicle that caused the accident had fled the scene, even though their vehicle had received the most damage. Sgt. Williams and Deputy Vega pursued those who had fled. After they were stopped, one individual surrendered, but the other two ran in opposite directions.

Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

**HOPE STARTS HERE...**

**2006 American Cancer Society Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk**

Since 1995, Department of Finance employees and their families and friends have actively participated in the American Cancer Society's Making Strides Against Breast Cancer events. For our eleventh year of participation, the 2006 "Hope Starts Here" Breakfast Expo was held on Tuesday, October 3, 2006 with speeches from



Left to Right: (Front) Susie Yuen, John McBride, Allison Fulford, Answorth Robinson (Back) Daphne Harris, Melinda Hamilton, Elaine Guido, Gail Gist, Denise McIntosh, Danielle Woodson, Rose Horton, Jackie Morrell, Reasa Semper, and Tina Chung, of ACS.

Commissioner Martha Stark; Sally Cooper, ACS Regional Vice President for Brooklyn; and Tina Chung, Director of Community Health Initiatives. Over 100 employees stopped by to obtain information on this year's Walk, making the kick-off a huge success.

Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

**THANK YOU CUSTOMER SERVICE PROVIDERS AND OUR 3-1-1 PARTNERS!**

Proclaimed by Congress as a nationally recognized event, Customer Service Week takes place throughout the country during the first week of October. This is a perfect time for Finance to take a minute to recognize and applaud the enormous contributions made by all the employees who provide great customer service.

This includes not just our Customer Assistance staff but also the staff of the Correspondence Unit, Business Centers, and our City Register.

As a small token of thanks, this past week the agency decorated the Business Centers and other offices with balloons and streamers, provided lunch and presented certificates of appreciation signed by Commissioner Stark.

We would also like to recognize and thank our partners in customer service, the operators at 3-1-1, who field thousands of Finance calls a year, answering routine questions so the Customer Assistance representatives can focus on the more difficult problems.

Thanks to all Finance employees who provide great customer service every week of the year.

**CONTEST WINNERS**

We are pleased to announce that we received a much larger response to this contest than to any of the earlier competitions! Thanks to all of you who took the time to enter the contest.

Special honors go to:

- Very first entrant – Commissioner Martha E. Stark and
- Eagle-eyed-Howard Gross – (Treasury), who pointed out, correctly, that former Senator D'Amato's first name is spelled "Alfonse," not the usual spelling – "Alphonse" – as shown in the contest.

Congratulations to the top ten prizewinners:

1. Tracey Glover – Audit
2. Kim L. Golson – Audit
3. Tanya Copper – Payment Operations/Queens Business Center
4. Quentin Brown – Property/Bronx
5. Edward Carter – Collections
6. Terri Nixon-Smith – Administration
7. Deborah Shoy – Payment Operations
8. Joy Bukoff – City Register/Queens
9. Loretta Woodson – Collections
10. [TIE] Alan Fenster – Refunds and Adjustments and Kamal Sharma – Audit

Read the full story on **FinanceNet**.

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