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Welcome to the first quarter 2012 edition of the OEM newsletter.

While 2012 may be off to a quiet start, check out what your coworkers have been up to over the past few months. And when you finish reading the Sit Rep, stay tuned for the release of OEM's all-digital 2011 Biennial Report that was previewed at February's all-hands meeting.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition of the Sit Rep, including Cynthia Barton. As always, your story ideas and feedback are welcome and greatly appreciated. Please send all comments to Nancy Greco at: NGreco@oem.nyc.gov.

Walt Whitman Park Reopens as 'Urban Oasis'



After a construction period spanning two tornadoes, a particularly active winter 2011 season, an earthquake, and a hurricane, Walt Whitman Park reopened in December 2011 as a transformed space for respite sandwiched between two office buildings. Although the City's Parks Department touts the revamped Walt Whitman Park as "a green urban oasis in the heart of the Brooklyn Civic Center," the greenery is not likely to return to the park until the spring season. On a brighter note, spring is likely to arrive early this year (at least according to Staten Island Chuck).

The defining feature of the new park is a planted oval plaza showcasing a central fountain surrounded by four Walt Whitman quotations engraved in granite. Park users will have the ability to turn on the fountain, which doubles as a children's sprinkler. OEMers can look forward to spending warm spring lunch hours enjoying the new outdoor tables dotting the landscape. Additional park enhancements include flowering trees and shrubs, new benches, fencing, and an improved drainage system that allows water to nourish the landscape.

Perhaps the greatest benefit of the reopening for OEM staff comes not in the improved aesthetics of the adjacent park, but rather in the increased access to the A and C trains from OEM's front entrance. Morning commute times via these trains are now one minute shorter.

The City acquired the 2.9-acre park in 1954 and named it for Walt Whitman in honor of the centennial publication of *Leave of Grass*, a collection of Whitman's poems. Several years ago, the City gave the park to the federal government to use as a parking lot while the federal courthouse was being built. In 2007, federal officials gave the City more than \$2 million to redevelop the park.

Bird Sighting in the Park

The newly renovated Walt Whitman Park has become New York City's hottest real estate market, at least according to a certain feathered friend. For weeks, a majestic hawk affectionately named Walt has become a fixture in the park's now barren trees.

Walt was often spotted from the windows surrounding the sea of OEM cubicles and offices on the second floor. The third floor lounge during lunch hours is also ideal for bird spotting, offering a panoramic view of the park.



Walt, as photographed by Amanda Hayde. Special thanks to all who submitted photos!

Artist -in- Residence

Q & A

OEM Human Services Unit member Cynthia Barton spent the month of November as a fellow at The MacDowell Colony in Peterborough, New Hampshire. She was interviewed for this issue of the Sit Rep. More about MacDowell can be found here: <http://www.macdowellcolony.org/>.

Q: *What were you doing at the MacDowell Colony, and how did you get the fellowship?*

A: I was working on a novel that I started about two years ago. To apply as a fiction writer, you have to send a 25-page writing sample but there is not a lot of other information they ask for. I sent excerpts from the novel I wanted to go there to work on, and I was lucky enough to have them offer me a fellowship.

Q: *What is The MacDowell Colony, and what does it mean to have a fellowship there?*

A: MacDowell is the oldest artists' colony in the U.S., and it was founded in 1907 to give artists of all kinds space and time to work without distraction. It has an amazing history, and some of the most important artists and work of the 20th century are connected to the colony.

To name a few, Donald Antrim, James Baldwin, Leonard Bernstein,

Willa Cather, Michael Chabon, and E.L. Doctorow have all been fellows.

Fellows are assigned to a studio that's theirs alone for the time they are there. There are about 25 studios on 450 acres. All of them are beautiful. Mine was a live-in studio that had a fireplace, three huge desks, a screened-in porch, and a bathtub with a view of the woods. Work and company of other fellows is meant to be inspiring as well, and there is a big hall with a fireplace where there are communal meals twice a day. There is a big library that has only works produced by the fellows themselves.

Q: *What was a typical day like?*

A: There's no set schedule, and everyone's day is a little different. For breakfast there are always fresh baked goods and eggs any way you like them, so I always made it up to the main hall for that, and then walked back to my studio and worked until lunch. The idea is that artists should work completely undisturbed, so there is no internet in the studios and they leave lunch on your doorstep in a picnic basket. In the basket there is always a thermos of coffee, soup, a sandwich and a cookie. I would eat lunch and watch the deer in the meadow and either write or read or walk in the woods for the afternoon. At 6:30 PM the dinner bell rings and everyone comes into the main hall for a delicious family-style dinner. After dinner some writers may read from their work, or the visual artists show

their work or films, or the composers play music they've been working on. Then there's either more work, playing pool or ping-pong, and the option of a whiskey.

Q: *What is the book about, and when is it going to be available?*

A: On the surface it's about a plot to control the weather, but it's mainly a love story that's like a spy thriller. I got a lot of work done while I was there, and I would say I've got about 80 percent done. There are about 350 pages in the manuscript, but I want the book to be much shorter, so there's a little writing and a lot of editing left. I will let you know when it's coming out!

Q: *What does your novel have in common with your work at OEM?*

A: Well, the weather plays a big part in both, but in very different ways. Most of the book takes place in Alaska, at a research facility that is at the center of a lot of conspiracy theories. Amazingly enough, one of the other fellows was Sheri Fink, who won the Pulitzer for her coverage of Katrina and who was in the press room at OEM for some of the Irene activation.

And of course the other thing they have in common is that I like both- I feel very lucky to have had the time up there, and also the support of my co-workers here that made it possible.

Exploring the Underground: OEM Tours New Subway Projects



OEM's Transportation and Infrastructure ESF tours the 2nd Avenue subway construction site near 96th Street.

In December, Transportation and Infrastructure ESF members toured two of the MTA's current infrastructure projects to better understand how to assist colleagues at the MTA during an emergency. The group first traveled 120 feet below the streets of Manhattan to the East Side Access project that will one day connect the Long Island Rail Road to a new terminal beneath Grand Central Station. Several days later, they toured a construction site of the 2nd Avenue subway tunnels.

The trips helped OEM staff to become familiar with the MTA system, determine potential resources the sites may need in an emergency, and to understand the site make-up and potential vulnerabilities.



OEM's Transportation and Infrastructure ESF tours the MTA's East Side Access project.

Jake Cooper Finishes Marathon, Continues Running

When you're running a marathon, reaching the finish line is an important goal. But as Jake Cooper can attest, the finish line isn't always the end of the race. While running a marathon in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, in December,

Jake wore a watch equipped with GPS technology that accurately measures a runner's distance, speed, and pace. After a solid start to the race, Jake approached the three-mile marker unusually early and felt that something was off. A look at his GPS

watch confirmed his suspicion: the course was .2 miles short.

Jake expected the course to correct itself as he continued running, (*continued on p. 4*)

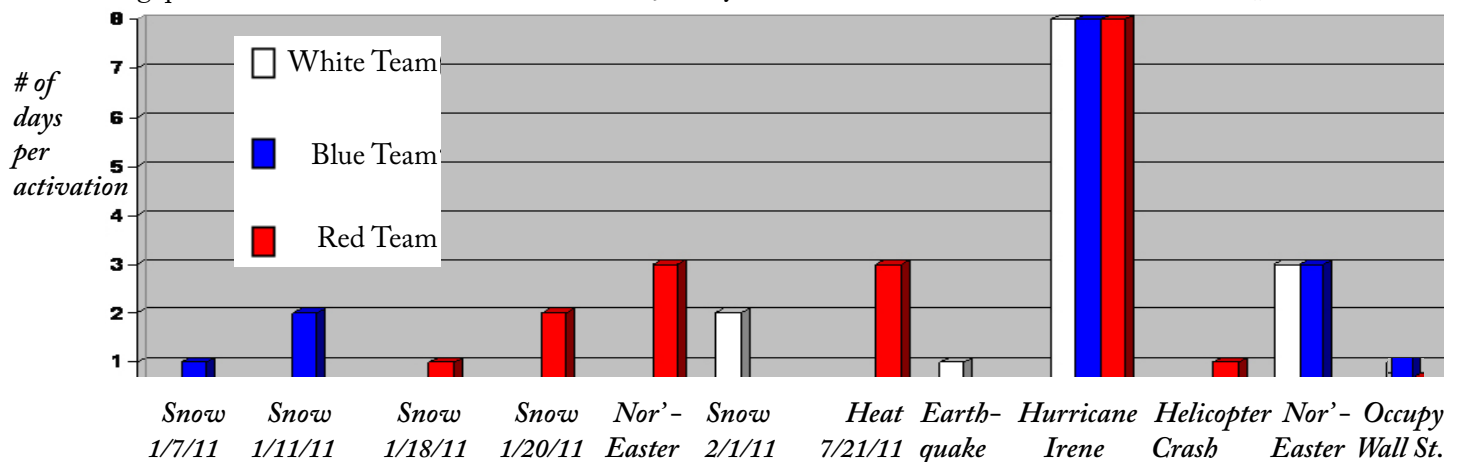
Red, White, and Blue in Review: 2011 Team Highlights

Have you ever wondered which OEM team is activated most often? Thanks to a wealth of data collected by the Training and Exercises Unit (and a quiet start to 2012), the Sit Rep can answer your most burning question.

Teams were activated for 12 events throughout 2011, including five snow activations. The red team led in activations over the last year, topping the list with six events. The red team's year-end portfolio included three January 2011 snow events,

a July heat wave, Hurricane Irene in August, and an October helicopter crash.

Thanks to a brief Occupy Wall Street activation in November, the blue team edged the white team for second place honors.



(9) NINE - FIVE (5) And Beyond: Agency Highlights



Hottest Holiday Item: The Joe Bruno Pillow

During Mayor Bloomberg's Holiday Press Corps Reception, a lucky New York Post reporter received a one-of-a-kind gift for her work during Hurricane Irene: a Joe Bruno pillow. Sally Goldenberger reported on the storm from OEM headquarters, sleeping on a cot in the basement overnight. The Mayor presented Sally with the unique gift as a constant reminder of her extended stay at OEM.



OEM Band Impresses Guests at Holiday Party

The agency's annual holiday party was held on December 13th at the Galapagos Art Space in DUMBO. Total Disaster, the OEM band, performed a diverse musical selection spanning decades and genres. Highlights included a soulful rendition of Adele's "Rolling in the Deep" and a playful performance of B-52s' "Love Shack." The band's talented musicians include Mariel Diaz, Terence Forsythe, Mark Frankel, Kirk Johnson, Natan Mandlebaum, and Chris Varley.



Herman Schaffer: Champion of Change

Herman Schaffer was selected by the White House as a 2012 Champion of Change for his work preparing New York City for the unexpected. Herman traveled to Washington, D.C. with Justin Land on January 19th for a Champions of Change ceremony and a panel discussion on community engagement and emergency preparedness. Herman is pictured above at the White House during the ceremony with Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano.

Marriages & Milestones

Congratulations to Keisha Husbands and Paul Hoftzyer, who were married on 11/11/11 at the Brooklyn Museum of Art. Keisha's "Alice in Wonderland"-inspired wedding featured special touches like boxed invitations with pocket watches. All desserts for the evening, including the cake, were made by her sister and mother.



Happy engagement to Mark Frankel, who proposed to his fiancée Kerry O'Connor at midnight on New Year's Eve. Mark surprised Kerry in California, where she was on vacation visiting family for the holidays. Mark and Kerry spent the day in Disneyland before he proposed as fireworks lit the sky at the stroke of midnight.



Congratulations to Mahamane Hassane and Falila Kassoum, who were married in Niger during the holidays. The traditional ceremony took place on December 24th; the civilian ceremony followed on Christmas Day.

Running the Distance (con't)

(continued) but it remained flawed as he neared the end, with the finish line slightly shorter than the 26-mile mark. So as he reached the line, Jake continued running to complete the actual marathon distance.

"If you run that far and you've been training the whole time, it's like nearing the peak of a mountain and turning back a few feet from the top," Jake said.

Though he officially finished in third place, Jake was not disappointed by his performance. He was beaten, as he describes it, by "two younger guys in their 20s."