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REVE NEWS

FINANCE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER • DECEMBER 2006 • VOLUME 3, NUMBER 8

2006 SPECIAL HOLIDAY EDITION

Divisional Corner – Commissioner's Special Holiday Message

Martha E. Stark, Commissioner



Dear Colleagues:

From Thanksgiving through New Year's Day, the holiday season in New York City is always a special time for me. What's not to love about New York in the winter? I mean it's cold, and I usually get sick, and the snow makes my feet wet, and my knee is constantly threatening to dislocate. But doesn't the scenery look pretty?

Many of you know how I love to go shopping (not!), and everyone knows that shopping in New York City during the holidays is

second to none. Just look at the crowds of tourists fighting over the last giggling dancing Elmo in the aisles—there's no way they could do that at home. Even if my relatives were hoping to get a different present than the one I got them and don't mind telling me, when else do I get the chance to put a tourist in a half nelson at a Toys R' Us?

Of course, having family over is a special time as well. When you're a host it's all about timing. There is nothing like cooking a turkey, and a ham, and macaroni and cheese for the relatives, and having all my

side dishes warm and ready to eat at the same time. Even if my relatives always arrive two hours later than they said they would and the food is cold when they arrive, it's still a good feeling to know that when you've done something you've done it well.

I guess everyone enjoys the holidays in their own way... unless they don't, that is.

Since this is the last **ReveNEWS** for 2006, I want to sincerely wish everyone and their families a very special holiday season no matter how you celebrate. I know one of the things I'm going to be thankful for this year, as I watch my family leave the house weighed down with *all* my leftovers, is that in 2007 I get to come back and work with 2,300 Department of Finance employees dedicated to helping people pay the right amount on time. While the holidays are fun and aggravating at the same time, they remind me of the members of my family who are not around to share them. It's at times like these when I really miss my mom, who taught me to cook; my dad, who taught me to love numbers, and last but not least my brother, who was even later coming for dinner from Brooklyn than my family who came from New Jersey. We are blessed to be among the living. Let's never forget that, even when we're getting bumped on the subway by shoppers and their humongous bags.

Happy Holidays!

CHRISTMAS IN TRINIDAD

By Carolyn Russell (Legal Affairs)

Christmas in Trinidad and Tobago is such a wonderful experience. Trinidad is a multicultural, multiethnic society that includes Muslims and Hindus and people from Africa, Lebanon and China. As a little girl growing up in the islands, the holiday season was something that everyone looked forward to, adults and children, no matter what their ancestry or religion.

The Christmas season begins October 1st and runs through January 6th. Christmas carols play on the radio. Even though we didn't experience winter in our country, we sang along to Frosty the Snowman and I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas. There is also another musical tradition, contributed by people of Spanish heritage, called the "Paranda Musica". The themes of Paranda Musica are La Anunciacion (The Annunciation) and Nacimiento (The Birth). The Paranda Musica involve excited groups of men and women dressed in colorful costumes who visit family and friends during the day and night singing Spanish music. I enjoyed these performances, because the groups came mainly in the wee

hours of the morning "paranging" in front of our door and waking up the entire neighborhood. My mother would give these singers her best drinks and food, which gave me the opportunity to eat and drink things that my mom would not have given me on a normal day.

Food is very important for the holiday season. My mom would have me grind fruits six weeks before Christmas Eve so she could bake her fruitcake (also known as black cake). The aromas of ham, bread and cake baking always made me steal a piece of cake to eat. Mom would make homemade wine, a mixture of pineapple and plum. There were also other traditional drinks like ginger beer, sorrel and mauby. She would buy grapes and apples only for the holiday.

In early October, people would start to paint the interiors and exteriors of their homes in preparation for the holidays. On Christmas Eve, people took down their old draperies, redesigned them, and sewed new ones. The fun of it was not to let your neighbors see your new and refashioned draperies until Christmas

morning. My mom would put her draperies up around 4:00 am Christmas morning so that others could not copy her style.

Santa Claus was alive and well in Trinidad and Tobago. Children had to be on their best behavior during the season to get the toy they wanted. One Christmas, I didn't help my mom with the baking, and she told me Santa would not bring me anything because I was disobedient. I told her that there was no Santa and that I knew she bought me my toy. That Christmas, I didn't get a gift. I asked her, "Why didn't I get a gift?" Her reply: "You said there was no Santa, so how could you get a gift?"

We didn't have a Christmas tree, so we got our toys under our pillows. On Christmas morning, we woke up to my mother singing her favorite song: Happy Birthday to Me and You, Jesus Christ. (My mom's birthday is on Christmas day.) Most people attended church on Christmas day. After church, we returned home to get ready for all the festivities with the family coming by and sharing the native foods, drinks, singing and dancing.

A HOLIDAY WITH GRANDMA AND GRANDPA NILES

By Denise McIntosh (Payment Operations)

As originally reported in the December 1986 issue of **Newsday**

For Mr. and Mrs. Anton Niles Sr., it was the usual family Christmas dinner: a feast.

It began about 3:30 PM, when their seven daughters and I, the sons-in-law and six of their seven sons and the daughters-in-law, began to arrive, bringing with them 30 grandchildren. One daughter, Mrs. Blanche Smith, had volunteered her nine-room house at 24 Cortland St. for this get-together of 58 family members.

At 4:30 PM, they addressed themselves to the food: two 20-pound turkeys, a 16-pound pot roast, two eight-pound hams, 12 pounds of collard greens, 20 pounds of onions, 8 pounds of turkey stuffing, salad, 15 pounds of sweet potatoes, 10 pounds of string beans and corn, 10 pounds of turnips, as well as 8 sweet potato pies, 4 fruit cakes and so much more.

"I've been cooking since Thursday—steady," Mrs. Smith said. "I cooked all night last night [Monday] and the oven is still

going." Mrs. Smith said the food she bought in preparation, filled about 22 shopping bags.

For the past six years, the family has tried to get everyone together at Christmas. This year, they missed by only two. "My brother, Anton Jr., is in Thailand [with the Air Force] with his wife," Mrs. Smith said. "We almost had a winner."

Niles' 14 children range in age from 21 to 43 and their grandchildren from 20 months to 20 years. They sang carols, played records and pool and marveled at new additions to the family. Mr. Niles, 74, could not have been happier. "It's a lovely thing. I wish it could be like this every day," he said.

Granddaughter Denise McIntosh, 11, summed up the feelings at 8 PM yesterday: "It's good. I had turkey and ham and roast



Some of the fifty-eight members of the Niles Family in 1986

beef and stuffing and onions and turnips...and, no, I'm not full yet."

Although the Niles family now lives in different states, they continue the tradition. "Over the last ten years, it has become my duty to host the holiday dinners, and the numbers keep growing. This year, I'm expecting 25-30 family members. After dinner, we reach out to family members out-of-state," Denise said. The tradition continues.

Remembering the Holidays 2002 Through 2005

A FESTIVE FAMILY OCCASION – CHANUKAH

By Jayne Lindberg (Customer Relations)

Although spelled several different ways in English, the word Chanukah or Hanukkah, translates to “dedication” in Hebrew. (Whatever spelling you prefer, the first letters are still pronounced like the sound you make when you clear your throat.) It is a festive family occasion celebrated by Jewish people around the world. Lasting for eight days, it is also known as the Festival of Lights, Feast of Dedication, and the Feast of the Maccabees.

This holiday focuses on the liberation and rededication of the Temple of Jerusalem in 165 BCE and what has become known as “The Miracle of the Oil.” Chanukah is marked by the burning of candles every night for eight

nights on a special candelabrum known as a menorah. This tradition marks the rededication of the Temple, when – the story goes – there was only a small amount of oil available for the eternal light that burns on the altar at every synagogue.

The oil was enough for only one day, but that small amount miraculously lasted for eight days – the time needed to press and prepare more consecrated oil that was needed for the temple.

In addition to lighting candles, celebrants commemorate the oil by preparing and

enjoying food fried in oil, such as latkes (potato pancakes). Another tradition is to give children small gifts or money each evening after the candles are lit – symbolized in America by chocolate money that looks like coins. Children also play a betting game with their coins using a spinning top called a dreidel.

Chanukah is not a major holiday in Judaism, but, because it falls during the Christmas season, it has become “the Jewish Christmas,” involving major gifts in place of the few coins or wooden tops children traditionally receive.



FORTY YEARS OF CELEBRATING KWANZAA

By Denise McIntosh (Payment Operations)



KWANZAA is the African American cultural holiday conceived and developed by Dr. Maulana Ron Karenga. It was first celebrated on December 26, 1966. Kwanzaa is traditionally celebrated from December 26th through January 1st, with each day focused on “Nguzo Saba,” or the seven principles. Derived from the Swahili phrase “matunda ya kwanza” which means “first fruits,” Kwanzaa is rooted in the first harvest celebrations practiced in various cultures in Africa. Kwanzaa seeks to enforce a connectedness to African cultural identity for Americans of African heritage, provide a focal point for the gathering of African peoples, and reflect upon the Nguzo Saba, the seven principles, that have sustained Africans. Africans and African-Americans of all religious faiths and backgrounds practice Kwanzaa.

See the seven principles and their definitions listed below:

I. UMOJA (UNITY) (oo-MOE-jah) - To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation and race.

II. KUJICHAGULIA (SELF DETERMINATION) (koo-jee-cha-goo-LEE-ah) - To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves and speak for ourselves.

III. UJIMA (COLLECTIVE WORK AND RESPONSIBILITY) (oo-JEE-mah) - To build and maintain our community together and to make our brothers’ and sisters’ problems our problems and to solve them together.

IV. UJAMAA (COOPERATIVE ECONOMICS) (oo-JAH-mah) - To build and maintain our own stores, shops and other businesses and to profit together from them.

V. NIA (PURPOSE) (nee-AH) - To make as our collective vocation the building and developing of our community in order to restore our people to their traditional greatness.

VI. KUUMBA (CREATIVITY) (koo-OOM-bah) - To do always as much as we can, in the way that we can, in order to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial than when we inherited it.

VII. IMANI (FAITH) (ee-MAH-nee) - To believe with all our hearts in our parents, our teachers, our leaders, our people and the righteousness and victory of our struggle.

ENTER! Quality of Work Life Contest

Guess Who? Have some fun and win a prize! The Quality of Work Life Employee Recognition Committee is sponsoring an Employee Photo Match Contest called “GUESS WHO?” that will ask you to identify Finance employees from their baby photos. If you would like to include your own photo, it must be submitted by Friday, January 12, 2007.

See **FinanceNet** for details.

WINNING HOLIDAY RECIPES!

Congratulations to the three winners of our Holiday Recipe Contest – Kevin Burke (Payment Operations), Anthony Cicale (Audit), and Michael Relyea (Collections)!

BAKED APPLE CUSTARD CUPS

Submitted by Kevin Burke

(Serves 2)

2 vanilla wafers or other type of plain butter cookie
1/3 cup finely shredded apples
1 tbsp. pecan pieces
2 tbsp. cream cheese, softened
1 tbsp. sour cream
1 tbsp. sugar
1 egg
1/4 cup milk
1 tsp. ground cinnamon

Real whipped cream or defrosted whipped topping

Preheat oven to 325°. Spray two 6-oz. custard cups with cooking spray. Place 1 wafer/cookie in each cup. Combine apples and pecans. Spoon evenly over the wafer in the cups and set aside.

Beat together the cream cheese, sour cream, and sugar in a small bowl. Add the egg, milk, and cinnamon, and mix well. Pour this mixture evenly over the apple mixture in the cups, and place cups on a baking sheet.

Bake 20-25 minutes, or until the center of each dessert is set. Cool to room temperature. Top each dessert with whipped cream or whipped topping just before serving.

GRANDMA’S POTATO PIE

Submitted by Anthony Cicale

Potato Mixture:

5 lbs. of potatoes – salt and pepper to taste
Milk – just enough to mash the potatoes
3 eggs – lightly beaten
Beef Mixture:
3 lbs. of beef (or pork)
2 large onions – diced
16 oz. tomato sauce
6 cloves of garlic – cut fine
Olive oil – just enough to sauté the beef
Butter – to coat the baking pan

Cheeses:

3 lbs. ricotta cheese, thinned with 3 eggs, beaten
8 oz. mozzarella, diced

Preheat oven to 350°. Boil the potatoes so they are cooked but firm. Rice or mash them, mixing with salt and pepper, beaten eggs and milk until you have a loose paste. Sauté the beef (or pork) with the onions, garlic, and tomato sauce in the olive oil, to the consistency of sloppy joes.

In a buttered 12” x 9” x 4” glass pan, spread a layer of the potato mixture, then a layer of the thinned ricotta and the diced mozzarella. Then add another layer of the meat mixture, and a final layer of the potato mixture. Score the top with a fork to make a nice design.

Bake for 30-45 minutes, until firm (test with a knife!).

WILD RICE MINNESOTA STYLE

Submitted by Michael Relyea

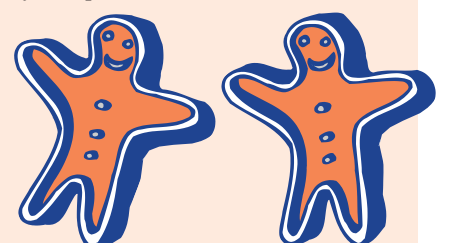
(Serves 6)

1 1/2 cups of washed wild rice
6 cups chicken broth
1 1/2 cups shredded celery
3/4 cup chopped onion
1 three-oz. can of mushroom stems & pieces
Salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 375°. Place all ingredients except one cup of the chicken broth in a 6-cup, greased casserole. Cover tightly, and bake 1 – 1 1/2 hours, adding the remaining cup of broth as needed to keep the rice moist. (Be careful to not let rice dry out.)

Can be used to stuff the turkey or as a side dish (with gravy poured over!).

See **FinanceNet** for more delicious Holiday Recipes.





2006 SPECIAL HOLIDAY EDITION



WINTERTIME CHINESE CELEBRATIONS

By Grace Chu (Refunds)

Two of the most important winter holidays for Chinese are the Lunar New Year and the Winter Solstice Festival. The Lunar New Year is the most significant and longest of all Chinese holidays. It starts on the first day of the lunar calendar and lasts for two weeks. On the Gregorian calendar - which is what we use in the US - the Lunar New Year falls on a different date each year, but usually January 21st and February 20th. In 2007, the Lunar New Year will be observed on February 18th. According to the Chinese, each lunar year is represented by one of 12 animals. In 2007, it will be the Year of the Pig.

According to history, the Chinese started to celebrate the Lunar New Year around 2000 B.C. Legend says that the celebration



of the Lunar New Year may be related to a beast known as "Nian," who came out and ate people on New Year's Day, until an old man found a way to conquer it. To commemorate the end of Nian, people started to observe and celebrate the Lunar New Year. As a matter of fact, the Chinese often use the term "Guo Nian," which means passed or survived the Nian, to refer to the Lunar New Year.

Preparation for the Lunar New Year begins a month before. Families thoroughly clean their homes, because they believe that by doing this, they will "sweep" away the bad luck and prepare for good luck to enter. Houses are also decorated with flowers and scrolls that have auspicious phrases, such as happiness, wealth, and longevity. Food offerings are made at the alters of the ancestors. All brooms, knives, and any sharp objects are put away on New Year's Eve, since it is believed that their use on New Year's Day will bring bad luck.

Families gather on New Year's Eve for a huge feast. For the Chinese, this is the biggest and most important dinner of the year, much like Thanksgiving dinner for Americans. Each dish that is served has a symbolic meaning, and most of these meanings relate to good luck and prosperity.

The first day of the New Year is a time for socializing. Individuals usually put on new clothes and visit families and friends, giving candies, fruits, and other sweet treats to those they visit. Individuals greet each other with auspicious words and phrases to ensure good luck for the entire year. Many adults give small red packets of money to children and unmarried adults.

Over the next two weeks, extravagant festivities, such as firework displays, dragon dances, and lion dances, take place in neighborhoods to celebrate the New Year. Here in NYC, events such as these take place in Chinatown and in Flushing, Queens.

The Winter Solstice Festival is also an important day for the Chinese. This holiday is observed in late December, when sunshine is weakest and daylight shortest. After the Winter Solstice, days will become longer and longer. As the ancient Chinese believed, the yang, or positive energy, will become stronger and stronger after this day, so this day should be celebrated.

See **FinanceNet** to learn more about Nian.



During this holiday season, the Sheriff's Division and I would like to extend my best wishes and appreciation to everyone at the Department of Finance for everything they do for the Department and for the citizens of New York. We wish the happiest of holidays to all, and a special remembrance to those who cannot be with us, because of their service to the nation.

This is the season to spend with family and friends, to enjoy each other, to share memories, and, most of all, to remember the significance of the season. May we yet achieve peace on earth and goodwill to all. Happy and Healthy New Year! Sheriff Lindsay Eason, Deputy Commissioner.



CHRISTMAS IN GHANA

As told to Jayne Lindberg (by a friend)

Among Ghana's many tribal and ethnic populations, groups to the south, closer to the Atlantic coast, are more likely to be Christian (as opposed to those in the north, who are more likely to be Muslim). Ghana's Christians, like Christians all over the world, celebrate Christmas - with some customs not likely to be found elsewhere.

American children would not be happy about the most common Christmas gift in Ghanaian families - new clothes. Even the poorest children get a new outfit for Christmas. Families traditionally eat chicken on Christmas day; for many, it may be the only chicken they eat all year. There are also special

dishes, prepared by each family. Fish stew is one of the favorites.

On Christmas morning, children visit the houses of their neighbors - much as we do on Halloween - to collect candies or cookies, maybe a few coins. They wish everyone "Merry Christmas" and extend good wishes for the coming year. Tents are also set up and then covered with palm leaves. The children in each neighborhood use these for Christmas stories, songs, and celebration.

Don't try to do any business in Ghana during Christmas week. Everything is closed from Christmas to New Year's!

DONATE TO THE FINANCE TOY DRIVE

Let's Make Our 20th Year of Giving a Special One

By the Toy Drive Committee

November 17-December 15

The holidays are just around the corner. In past years, Department of Finance employees helped to make a child's holiday a little brighter by generously donating gifts to the Annual Toy Drive. Please take this opportunity to bring a smile to the face of a child as we mark our 20th year of donating toys to children.

The toys we collected last year were distributed to the following organizations:

Women In Need, Inc. • Angel Tree Project

• Little Flower Children's Services of New York • Aspire Program Queens Hospital Center • Asian American Youth Center • Discover Room for Children • Administration for Children Services • Upclose and Personal Family Ministries • Islamic Leadership School • Brooklyn Tabernacle Deliverance Center • 47th Percent.

All donations should be new and unwrapped. Gloves, scarves, and hats are also welcome. Thank you for your generosity during this holiday season.



MANAGING HOLIDAY STRESS

By Rodney Simmons (Collections)

Stress is defined as "mental, emotional, or physical tension, strain, or distress." Stress is the nonspecific response of the body to any demand. Everyone has some stress in his/her life, but during the holiday season, people will be under unusual stress, more than any other time of the year.

Think about stress this way: For a violinist to make music, the strings on the violin must be taut. But if they are too tight (tense), they will snap, and if they are too loose (relaxed), they will produce no sound. The proper amount of tension required for optimum sound - and a productive, healthy life - lies somewhere between the two extremes.

Too much stress can be harmful, but what about no stress at all? While the prospect might sound inviting, the fact is: We need some degree of stress in our lives. Imagine that you are crossing a street and you suddenly notice that a car is speeding toward you. It is stress that enables you to run to the curb to get out of harm's way. You also need stress to accomplish everyday tasks - to balance the demands of job and family and get everything done that is expected of us. Add holiday parties, extra cooking, decorating, and entertaining, and for many, the stress of the holidays goes past "good" stress and into a level of tension that causes headaches, muscle aches, and other physical symptoms.

There are some things we can all do to manage stress more effectively:

1. EAT WELL: A healthy diet includes



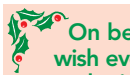
proteins, fruits, vegetables, cereals and other grains. Have one Christmas cookie and eat more of the carrots and celery sticks at parties. Eat a good breakfast - You will be less likely to overeat at parties.

2. EXERCISE DAILY: A daily routine of walking or an exercise program will promote a sense of well-being and relaxation.

3. GET ENOUGH SLEEP: It is easy at the holiday season to stay up too late and get by with 4-6 hours of sleep. However, adults need 8 hours of sleep each night. While you can "cheat" a little, continual lack of sleep leads to exhaustion and decreases your ability to manage stress.

4. GET ORGANIZED: To manage stress, you first have to manage your time. To get organized, determine which responsibilities deserve priority. Next, make a written schedule of what has to be done. You are more likely to be organized if you write things down, and you will be less likely to rush at the last minute.

5. BE REASONABLE: Balance your daily responsibilities. If necessary, say "No" to some invitations or requests for your assistance - baking, decorating, singing, attending events, etc. Make time every day for relaxation - even if only a half-hour when you listen to your favorite music with your feet up, watch your favorite show on television, or take a bath. Your body needs balance to refresh itself.



On behalf of the Customer Relations and Communications Division, I would like to wish everyone at the Department of Finance and your families "Happy Holidays!" and a joyous, healthy 2007. - Sam Miller, Assistant Commissioner



A special thank you to our contributing writers, photographers, our Webmaster and the Ad Hoc committee all of whom dedicated their time and passion, shared their special holiday traditions, and made this a very Special Holiday Edition of ReveNEWS: Grace Chu (Refunds), Adyna Gamboa (Administration), Alima Jones (City Register), Ted LaBarbera (Customer Relations), Jayne Lindberg (Customer Relations), Denise McIntosh (Correspondence), John Mulligan (Legal Affairs), Carolyn Russell (Legal Affairs), Peter Sammarco (Sheriff), Rodney Simmons (Collections), Debra Targhi (Correspondence), and Susie Yuen (ISS)

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