

For Immediate Release

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**NYC EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT HOSTS VIRTUAL GRADUATION CEREMONY
FOR JOHN D. SOLOMON FELLOWSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE GRADUATES**

May 5, 2021 — New York City Emergency Management First Deputy Commissioner Andrew D’Amora and Deputy Commissioner for External Affairs Christina Farrell presided over a virtual graduation ceremony for the 10 graduate students who completed the 2020-2021 John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service. Former NYC Emergency Management commissioner and current administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Deanne Criswell, also delivered prepared video remarks to this year’s graduates. The ninth annual graduation was celebrated as a virtual ceremony to comply with COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. A recording of the graduation is available on the agency's [YouTube](#) channel.

The 10 fellows, who are graduate students from New York University, Baruch College, Columbia University, Hunter College, Rutgers University, CUNY John Jay College and the Parsons School of Design, completed a nine-month fellowship focused on emergency management at six City agencies and the American Red Cross in Greater New York.

“NYC Emergency Management is extremely proud and thankful to this year’s John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service graduates,” said **NYC Emergency Management First Deputy Commissioner Andrew D’Amora**. “Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the graduates demonstrated their commitment to New York City during the past nine months, while assisting their respective agencies and organizations. We wish them well as they continue their professional careers in public service.”

The family and friends of the late John D. Solomon, an accomplished journalist who focused on homeland security and other public policy issues, established the John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service in 2012. A devoted public servant and active member of his local NYC Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), John was a passionate advocate of emergency preparedness and resilience.

“During these past months, we have all experienced firsthand the profound impact that emergency preparedness and response has on our lives, our loved ones and on our city,” said **James D. Solomon**, the brother of John D. Solomon. “On behalf of John's family and friends, and his fellow New Yorkers, we are deeply indebted to this year's fabulous fellows, and their magnificent mentors, for sharing their immense talent, passion and humanity — most especially, at this critical time. We send you our heartfelt congratulations and gratitude.”

During the nine-month fellowship program, fellows represented their respective agencies at virtual community board and local government meetings, undertaking various individual and agency-directed projects. The 2020-2021 class of fellows went beyond the call-of-duty, assisting New Yorkers during one of their most challenging times. Sheikh Rubana Hossain, a graduate student at Columbia University, supported the City’s COVID-19 vaccine rollout. As a fellow

with the Department of Health & Mental Hygiene, Hossain supported the effort to stand up points of distribution sites throughout the city to ensure New Yorkers had access to vaccinations.

Fellows also engaged with businesses and organizations throughout the pandemic, helping to support their emergency planning. Colin Ryan, a graduate student at Hunter College, was assigned to New York City Emergency Management’s strategic partnerships unit where he developed emergency tabletop exercises to allow businesses to develop, test, and evaluate their emergency plans.

“Every fellowship class faces an emergency or two throughout their nine months which has always enhanced their public service experience. This year’s class was no different. They faced unprecedented challenges with COVID-19 and yet were able to contribute so much to their respective placements,” said **Amanda Krawczyk, deputy director of strategic partnerships at NYC Emergency Management and alumni of the John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service.** “Fellows acted as additional staff in many instances, supporting various needs to ensure New Yorkers have access to the resources and information they need.”

Alexandra Kirton, a graduate student at New York University, was assigned to New York City Emergency Management’s government relations unit where she performed various assignments and projects including co-hosting “[Prep Talk](#),” the agency’s official podcast for emergency management news and topics. The episode highlighted the careers of three female emergency managers and Peace Corps alumnae who share how their experiences, including both successes and challenges, have shaped their professional careers. During the fellowship, Kirton also received firsthand experience into all the moving parts of emergency planning, response, and recovery.

“The John D. Solomon Fellowship has taught me that mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery do not happen in isolation but take a diverse network of people and organizations to make change happen,” **Kirton** said. “Working with the government relations unit has taught me what it takes to coordinate across levels of government during an incident and what it takes to be a leader on this effort.”

The New York City Emergency Management Department administers the [John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service](#), the first student fellowship in New York City devoted specifically to emergency management. To date, the program has welcomed more than 80 fellows into 14 different New York City agencies and organizations, representing more than 32,600 service hours. Over 42 percent of fellowship alumni have moved on to careers in New York City or New York State government.

Elizabeth Schad, a graduate student at Baruch College, was also among the 10 fellows honored at the ceremony. Schad, assigned to the American Red Cross in Greater New York, talked about the importance of public service and her newly gained experience in emergency management. “The John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service is an invaluable learning experience. I was able to share and test out my ideas, and work alongside volunteers who give their time under the

most challenging circumstances,” **Schad** said. “I now have a much clearer understanding of the response phase of emergency management.”

The 2020-2021 John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service graduating class members are:

- **Sheikh Rubana Hossain**, Columbia University, Department of Health & Mental Hygiene;
- **Emma Kilkelly**, Rutgers University, NYC Emergency Management’s risk reduction & recovery bureau;
- **Alexandra Kiron**, New York University, NYC Emergency Management’s government relations unit;
- **Gina Massari**, Baruch College, NYC Department of Education;
- **James Mitchell**, John Jay College, NYPD Auxiliary Police Program;
- **Colin Ryan**, Hunter College, NYC Emergency Management’s strategic partnerships unit;
- **Daniel Sorek**, Columbia University, NYC Emergency Management’s readiness unit;
- **Elizabeth Schad**, Baruch College, American Red Cross in Greater New York;
- **Andrew Wasserman**, Hunter College, NYC Department of Environmental Protection; and
- **Miriam Young**, Parsons School of Design, NYC Fire Department.

The next fellowship for the 2021-2022 academic year will begin in September 2021. While managing their respective roles in the City’s response to COVID-19, staff from participating agencies have been interviewing prospective fellows, and NYC Emergency Management staff is in the process of matching prospective fellows with their agencies for the fall. For more information on this year’s 10 graduates, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/about/meet-fellows.page>.