



First Responders Make a Unique Contribution to “Inclusion”

Studies on diversity and inclusion seldom address the concerns of first responders. Most studies examine profit margin, which shows that innovation, productivity and performance are improved by diversity. For example, in a *Diversity Matters* report (2015), McKinsey & Company found that companies in the top quartile for racial and ethnic diversity are 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their respective national industry medians. The more complicated issue, however, is not how to be diverse but how to sustain diversity by being inclusive. It is easier to hire someone than it is to welcome, support, train, mentor, and sponsor them and provide a positive work environment in order to help them succeed.

The advantage that FDNY has over many organizations in ascertaining how to be more inclusive is the benefit of over 150 years of providing excellent service. The fact that we are the best when it comes to responding to emergencies stems from our expertise in building and maintaining suc-



CDIO Cecilia Loving, Lt. Nelson Roman, EMT Ramla Evans, and the CDIO Team discuss strategic plan for diversity and inclusion initiatives.

cessful teams. Our goal is to harness the skills that have contributed to our general success in Operations so that we increase their value in establishing best practices for inclusion. Hundreds of Fire and EMS Officers shared with us the skills that they use to encourage successful teams. They emphasized several ways to create and sustain

a more inclusive work environment, which are not only applicable to leadership in operations but also to what every employee does regardless of whether we are responding to an emergency.

First, we must accept people as they are. Authenticity is key in es-

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FDNY'S LGBTQ PRIDE IS A VICTORY FOR US ALL

On June 29, 2017, Fire Commissioner Daniel A. Nigro hosted the second annual FDNY LGBTQ Pride Celebration at the New York City Fire Museum. Commissioner Nigro emphasized the organization's commitment to diversity and the importance of ensuring that everyone feels included, appreciated, and respected regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity and/or expression.

Leading up to the event was Firefighter Georgia “Brooke” Guinan’s service as Grand Marshal in this year’s PRIDE Parade in New York City. Not

only is Brooke the first trans woman firefighter, but she is also the first LGBTQ Outreach Coordinator for FDNY.

Brooke, who has been featured in multiple campaigns to raise awareness for LGBTQ rights, including a documentary called “Woman on Fire,” which provides an in-depth look into her experience as a transgender firefighter, also served as the Mistress of Ceremony for the Fire Museum celebration. Reverend Ann Kansfield, FDNY’s first openly lesbian Chaplain, performed the invocation and the benediction.

Among the awardees were Jared Fox, LGBTQ Community Liaison for the NYC Department of Education; and Tommy Ryan, retired FDNY



Firefighter Georgia “Brooke” Guinan received FDNY’s first Diversity and Inclusion Award from Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro (right), Chief of Department James Leonard (left) and CDIO Cecilia Loving.

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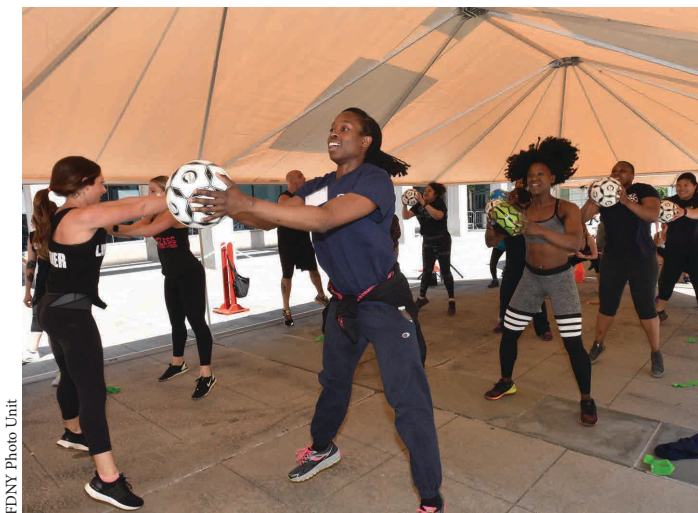
“Women to Women: Bringing, Building and Being Our Best” Triumphs



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“Being Our Best” Panel featured women in Uniform, including EMS Chief Lillian Bonsignore, Firefighter Nia Terrelonge, and officers from NYPD, NYC Parks, and NYC Sanitation.

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion held the first city-wide summit celebrating women throughout the city in “WOMEN TO WOMEN: Bringing, Building and Being Our Best” in May. New York City Councilwoman Elizabeth S. Crowley praised WOMEN TO WOMEN and gave credit to FDNY for this amazing event. Female firefighters organized by the United Women Firefighters led indoor and outdoor workouts. Three powerful panels of women shared how to bring, build and be our best, which included Deputy Commissioner Laura Kavanagh, Chief Lillian Bonsignore, and Firefighter Nia Terrelonge. There were also two video presentations from men and women at FDNY who uplifted the contributions of women. A life coach was on hand to speak with participants who wished to engage. In addition to those from FDNY, uniformed women from organizations throughout the City were represented, including those from the NYC Police Department, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation, NYC Department of Sanitation, NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services, NYC Department of Buildings, NYC Economic Development Corporation, NYC Comptroller’s Office, the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce, and many others. The NYC Department of Records provided insight on a project that they are working on to celebrate women throughout the city. The most important lesson shared is that when women come together and uplift their stories, wisdom and vision, all women succeed, move forward, and are better able to change the lives of others.



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FDNY firefighters and civilians from all city agencies have a blast during UWF-led workouts.



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FDNY Islamic Society Re-Emerges Under the Leadership of Lt. Abdelrahman Abdelaziz

Among the many affinity groups comprised of members of the FDNY is the Islamic Society, which celebrates Muslim faith and culture. The group began in the 1990s but became dormant for several years. Lieutenant Abdelrahman Abdelaziz, known as “Abdel,” is revitalizing the group by performing outreach so that both Muslims and allies of the Muslim faith can join. As President of the group, Abdel is getting the word out, starting a group chat, organizing a dinner, and reaching

out to community centers to provide support and spread the news of the services offered by the Department.

Building an Islamic community, however, is difficult because many Muslims are reluctant to discuss their faith. Abdel said, “It isn’t always necessary to explicitly discuss their differences in faith in order to promote the group or the Department. Showing a young man or woman that not all firefighters look the same—and that some even look like them—is enough to make them inter-

ested. They see that ‘a Palestinian from Brooklyn’ can be just as much of a firefighter as anyone else.”

Abdel, who spent most of his career at FDNY in Squad 18, says that he “could not ask for a better experience.” He recounted numerous ways that his colleagues tailored meals to match his Muslim faith. Abdel also contributes, hosting a going-away party at his Squad on Ramadan, at a time when he was fasting. He believes that the best way to advance through the ranks is

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Recruitment Efforts Exceed Our Goals

This year, our administration has seen the most diverse recruitment pool ever accomplished at FDNY. With the attendance of 8,903 events since January 2016 by 1,250 trained recruiters, record numbers were met for minorities who registered to take part in the firefighter entrance process. Overall, the number of firefighter applicants for this coming exam is 20% higher than the last exam administered approximately four years ago.

African-American, Latino and Asian recruits have increased by 15% to total 63% of this year's recruited class. The number of female firefighter recruits has increased by 7% with 80% of all women being non-white. In particular, Asian women have increased three times the number of firefighter applicants from four years ago to 228 firefighter applicants this year.



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Firefighter candidates attend tutorial sessions in preparation for the exam.

With a majority of applicants (70%) living in the five boroughs, 73% are non-white and 35% are African-American. Under the leadership of Deputy Commissioner Laura Kavanaugh and Assistant Commissioner Naeesah Noonan, FDNY surpassed the goal of having the number of age-eligible African-Americans living in the city match the number of recruits. With a target number derived from the latest census of 25% of the candidate class, an

extended deadline has led to close to 29% of the candidate class being African-American. The number of Hispanic candidates also increased to 27%.

The Department is thrilled with the success of its recruitment efforts and continues to encourage and support our recruits to prepare for the test this fall by offering free prep sessions to everyone. With that commitment, there is no doubt that we will transform our recruitment success into the best prep success of test-takers.

Julia Johnson,
Diversity and Inclusion Intern



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FDNY Phoenix Society's United Dragon Boat Racing Team on First Place in the Municipal and Non-Profit Races at the Dragon Boat Races in Flushing Meadow Park on August 12, 2017.

FDNY'S LGBTQ PRIDE IS A VICTORY FOR US ALL

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Firefighter (L131/L27 and L12) and U.S. Army Veteran, FDNY's first openly gay firefighter in 1998.

Mr. Ryan was also the first firefighter to march in the LGBTQ Pride March in NYC and successfully got FDNY to recognize FireFlagEMS as an FDNY line organization. In honor of her tireless service and dedication to the community, Firefighter Guinan was awarded FDNY's first Diversity and Inclusion Award. In her acceptance speech, Brooke mentioned that her father was disappointed when she became a trans woman because she would never be able to experience the "brotherhood" of firefighters that he experienced. Gratefully, Brooke experienced more than a brotherhood; she experienced an entire family.

"Growing up, I never thought I would be a firefighter because I was queer," Brooke shared afterwards. "Part of me felt like I needed to conform, while the other part of me felt like I needed to be

rebellious. I embraced this more rebellious side by coming out as a transgender firefighter and learned that I can be proud of who I am without conforming to a larger societal construct. Being different allowed me the opportunity to become FDNY's LGBTQ Outreach Coordinator, helping queer people feel more comfortable in the department. I'm happy that I get to serve as a liaison to ensure that our voices are heard, their needs are met, and FDNY is a place where we can find a family."

Event attendees enjoyed performances by Siren and Michelle Winters. Michelle performs at STRUT, an eclectic underground bar in lower Manhattan. Siren is an all-female vocal trio



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Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro (far right), next to Honoree Tommy Ryan and First Deputy Commissioner Robert Turner (center) celebrate the 2017 Pride March with other FDNY VIPs.

notable for their covers and mashups of tunes from and inspired by stars of the TV show, "RuPaul's Drag Race." Their performances included a cover of Bastille's "Pompeii".

Weijin (Gina) Leow,
Diversity and Inclusion Intern

First Responders

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Establishing trust. Officers say it is imperative that leaders set a positive example. Officers emphasize the importance of valuing strengths rather than weaknesses and saying the right thing “especially when the person subject to the criticism is not present.”

Second, we must establish supportive relationships. No one gets along with everyone all of the time, but “family” provides a solid foundation of trust and support that extends beyond being mere colleagues. Treating co-workers like family is unique to FDNY. This means that supervisors often offer support for their subordinates’ chal-

lenges both within and outside of the work environment. Officers insist that a “family” work environment requires a special commitment to work hard to help other people, to celebrate the occasions that are important, and to show up for recreational, ceremonial, bereavement, and other events.

Third, we must continue to endorse the excellence of our training. In order to teach, as well as to receive wisdom, we have to be aware that we each process information differently based on our varied experiences. Officers stressed that everyone comes to the FDNY with something special to share, which may not be readily apparent. These different gifts, talents and skills do not lower but raise the high standard of our training.

Fourth, we must keep in mind the community that we serve. Officers say that it is important to remember that the work that we perform is not about us, it is about the greater good of the community. We provide excellent service to all—regardless of our differences.

Fifth, we have to reinforce positive energy. All of our bureaus and units serve and

energize one another in order to provide New York City with protection, optimism and support. Our positive energy is not just for those we serve but also for each other—to give us all new faith, new hope and a new sense of pride and appreciation of our unique gifts, skills and talents.

Sixth, everything that we do is part of our individual commitment to succeed as part of a collective whole. The journey of inclusion is one of self-reflection, requiring us to be supportive of each other; treating others like valuable members of a team; and being open-minded and nonjudgmental. Being inclusive starts with us as individuals—realizing the potential or “calling” that we each have to contribute to the success of something much greater than ourselves.

**Cecilia B. Loving,
Deputy Commissioner/
Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer**



Fire Commissioner Daniel Nigro speaks to affinity group leaders at the Commissioner's Diversity and Inclusion Committee meeting.

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EMT Tuanika Brown rescues baby boy from train derailment in Harlem.

NY Daily News

FDNY Islamic Society

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by working hard on exams and training and hopes that everyone, those with diverse skin colors as well as those with diverse ideas, are able to contribute to the Department.

The short-term goals of the Islamic Society are to keep strengthening the organization by getting the word out and encouraging new members to join, as well as providing a means of support and communication between members. In the long term, he hopes to increase diversity and inclusion by facilitating dialogue between Muslim

and non-Muslim members of the department. Mohammed Abdalkwy, another member of the Islamic Society who has a multi-faith background, explained that the Islamic Society is not simply a way to find people you are already comfortable with; it is also a place where the diverse ideas of others can help you find yourself.

The Islamic Society is open to anyone interested in learning about Islam or connecting with Muslims within the Department. For any questions or to join, please contact FDNYIslamicSociety@gmail.com.

**Ahamed Hossain,
Diversity and Inclusion Intern**



Lt. Abdelrahman Abdelaziz and an FDNY fan.

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