



**FINANCE
NEW YORK**
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DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE
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REVE NEWS

FINANCE'S MONTHLY NEWSLETTER • AUGUST 2006 • VOLUME 3, NUMBER 4

Summer in NYC – Something for everyone!

The dog days of summer are those hot, sultry days during the period between early July and early September. The dog days are named for the so-called Dog Star, Sirius, which rises and sets with the sun. In the first half of the 1500s the ancient Romans called this phenomenon dies caniculares, which translates as “dog days.”

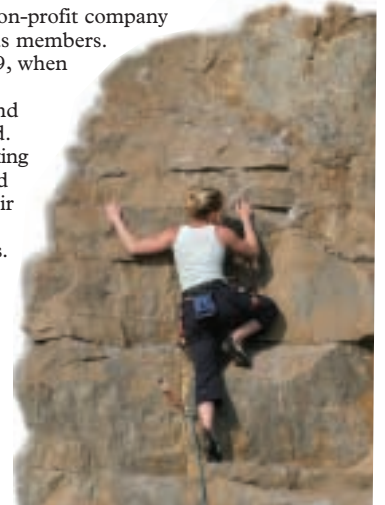
As we pass through the dog days of summer and into back-to-school mode, many of us will be looking to take some time off for a day trip or other short vacation. No matter where you live in the City or what your interests are, there are plenty of activities to enjoy. In fact, a quick trip to the Internet yielded over 426 items of interest taking place in all boroughs in August – everything from museums to sporting events to free Friday night concerts. One of the more stimulating activities for kids takes place at the North Meadow Recreational Center, where youth ages 8-17 can join the Central Park Conservancy at the indoor climbing wall. Climb-On! is a four-session climbing course that covers technique, equipment, and belaying.

There are two portals that can be helpful in your search, either of which will help you plan an itinerary to suit your needs and your pocketbook. New York's government website is nyc.gov. Once there, click on “visitors” and start planning. You will find information about the city (including maps) and suggestions for things to do. When you go to that site, you can access information directly, or you can link to another website belonging to NYC & Company, the official tourism and marketing organization for New York. In fact, you can link directly to a site devoted to activities for youth at www.nyc.gov/html/dycd/home.html.

When you logon to nycvisit.com, go to the “Calendar of Events.” You will be pleasantly surprised at how many things there are to see and do right here at home.

NYC & Company is a private, non-profit company with more than 1,800 businesses as members. They have been around since 1999, when two other organizations, New York Convention and Visitors Bureau and New Yorkers for New York, merged. NYC & Co is dedicated to promoting the City's image through tourism and major events like conventions. Their website has plenty of information and goes beyond the five boroughs. You can pick one of the existing itineraries or design your own.

So, click on one of the sites! Whether you decide to enjoy the 52 acres of the Botanical Gardens, ride the Cyclone at Coney Island, visit one of the 1700 parks and playgrounds, or visit the National Track and Field Museum, have a great time!



Finance Employees Win Service Award

Three outstanding Finance employees were recently honored with Service Awards for their extra efforts and excellent customer service.



Commissioner Stark with Manju Bala

On June 22, 2006, in a ceremony in the Customer Assistance Unit hosted by *Commissioner Martha E. Stark*, *Manju Bala* and *Alba Nazario-Serrano* received recognition for their many years of excellent service – 40 years between them! Both women have spent their Finance careers on the phones assisting members of the public who have parking ticket or property tax problems. They were both nominated for their patience, their ability to explain issues clearly, and their

willingness to find the right answer to property owners' or respondents' questions. No matter what the challenges – and 40 years of speaking to the public must contain thousands of challenges – Manju and Nazario remain calm as they help caller after caller and always go the extra distance to help.

On July 20, 2006, *Adyna Gamboa*, (Administration) received a *Service Award* at an Administration Division ceremony also hosted by the Commissioner. Like Manju and Alba, Adyna works to assist others, but, in her case, her “customers” are other Finance employees. Adyna was selected because of her exceptional work with the Training and Special Projects Unit. Adyna created interactive training games, visuals, and other materials that added great value to the Your Right to Know/Office Safety & Health (RTK) program, and she worked hard to expand the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) workshops. In addition to developing innovative training materials, Adyna helped coordinate the enrollment of Finance employees in DCAS Citywide training center courses.



Adyna Gamboa

In her two years at Finance, Adyna has put her skills and “can do” attitude to work to provide excellent service to the Finance Training and Special Projects Unit and to the Finance employees who attend training programs. For all her work, she earned this award.

Thank you to Manju, Alba, and Adyna for their service to the public and their colleagues, and congratulations on being recognized with Service Awards!

Don't forget: Employees can always nominate coworkers for Service Awards. If you work with someone who consistently demonstrates excellent service to the public or to Finance employees, go to **FinanceNet** and click on Awards Programs.

Finance Consolidates Six Exemption Applications Into One Easy Form!

In the spirit of improved customer service, Finance recently published a new, consolidated application for homeowners seeking residential property tax exemptions. The new Exemption and Abatement Application for Owners replaces the individual applications for SIX residential exemption programs: Basic STAR, Enhanced STAR, the Veterans' Exemption, the Disabled Homeowners' Exemption (DHE), the Senior Citizen Homeowners' Exemption (SCHE), and the Clergy Exemption.

To read the full story, go to the pdf version of **ReveNEWS** on the Employee Services Page at **FinanceNet**, and click on Finance Consolidates Six Exemption Applications...

Finance Participates In Access NYC

Finance is excited to be part of a Mayoral initiative that streamlines the process of accessing information and services provided by the City's thirteen human services agencies. This program uses technology to ensure that New York City residents have easy access to health and human services to which they are entitled.

In December 2002, *Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg* convened an interagency task force charged with creating a more efficient and client-centered approach to the delivery of human services in the City through the use of technology. The task force laid the foundation for **ACCESS NYC**. The project, led by the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services, in collaboration with the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications (DoITT), Finance and other City agencies, is scheduled to launch in September 2006.

ACCESS NYC is an online screening tool that will enable City residents to determine their eligibility for 22 City, State, and federal programs. Among the programs are some within Finance's jurisdiction: Disability Rent Increase Exemption (DRIE), School Tax Relief (STAR), and Senior Citizen Homeowners' Exemption (SCHE). Customers will be asked to answer a single set of questions about their household, and the program will provide a list of benefit programs for which the household is potentially eligible. The customer will be able to print forms and applications, locate a convenient office, and find out what documentation is necessary to start the application process with the administering agency. The screening tool will be available in seven languages.

On August 7th, 8th, and 9th, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services and DoITT are hosting an ACCESS NYC Training Expo, which many of our staff will attend. Helping people access government services is a good way to make it easier for people to pay the right amount on time. Collaborating with other agencies on this exciting initiative will provide another valuable tool for achieving our goal.

What we do...

More Than Just Disciplinary Issues...

Timeko Hunte and Brenda Caldwell, from the Department Advocate's Office, both participated in one of **ReveNEWS**' first focus groups, which were conducted to see what our readership wanted to read in future issues. The group made many creative suggestions, one of which was the inclusion of essays from staff about how they experience their own units and/or divisions.

The staff from the Department Advocate's Office contributed the following:

The Department Advocate's Office is not solely there to investigate disciplinary cases. A lot of what we do is advise supervisors, managers and employees on ethics issues that occur in the workplace and on agency policies and procedures. We try to make sure that employees know what the rules are and why they are necessary.

Of course, we do handle disciplinary cases, and, for that reason, employees may see the Department Advocate's Office as an intimidating place. We want employees to know that every referral is carefully and thoroughly investigated and that all our cases are 100% confidential. For example, we verify sick leave documentation, investigate expired leaves of absence, and conduct interviews. We also investigate vandalism against City property and employee arrests. By holding employees accountable, the Department Advocate's Office demonstrates its commitment to making sure that employees treat each other and the public courteously and professionally. We help staff be more productive by clarifying and advising on what the Finance policies state, for example on work and leave issues. Our office tries to help by offering assistance to supervisors and employees so they can find solutions to lateness and absentee issues. This clarification of policies and solutions can help a staff member be a productive employee.

Although part of our work can be unpleasant, we find in the disciplinary process and the importance of enforcing policies consistently and fairly to guarantee a safe, comfortable workplace for all Finance employees.

Baby Contest Winners

The correct answers were:



Baby Number 3
Commissioner,
Martha E. Stark



Baby Number 5
Asst. Commissioner,
Sam Miller

We've heard a lot of buzz around the water cooler about which babies are whom and very positive feedback about the contest.

Only one entrant identified the correct photos of the two Cabinet members.

Congratulations to the winner – Chris Browne, Senior Director of Legislative Affairs (Communications and Customer Service). Chris will be receiving a stainless steel Finance travel mug.

There is no contest in this abbreviated August issue, but there will be a contest in the September issue. Let's hear from more staff. Take a stab at it...you never know, you could be a winner. You have to be in it to win it!

Interning At Finance...

A viewpoint by Emily L. Mayer

For many college students, one of the most difficult processes is to find a summer internship. With mounting tuition bills and living expenses, many students end up working jobs that offer little or no relevant experience just to get a paycheck, because they can not afford to work at an unpaid but relevant internship. The Department of Finance offers a great compromise: well-paid, fruitful internships that allow students like myself to get work experience as we build our resumes. From small liberal arts colleges to large public universities, the interns here at Finance are as diverse as the many facets of Finance itself. "My internship has been an amazing experience, one that I would always remember and reflect on in my future career. This summer internship taught me the importance of striving toward perfection in my tasks," says *Raymond Liu*, a sophomore at Carnegie Mellon University who is a double major in economics and decision science. Currently, he and intern, *Andrew Yuen* (a junior at SUNY Binghamton majoring in political science), are completing a manual of Bail Unit procedures in the Treasury Division. Andrew says, "Each day, I am surprised at how much I learn [from

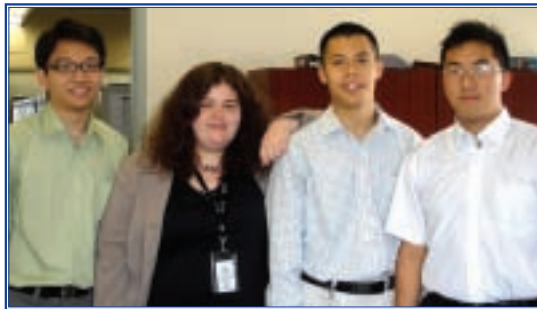
the internship]." These interns are particularly proud that their work will be used for years to come.

Very often, the value of an internship is a function of the intern's supervisor or manager. At the beginning of the summer, *Deputy Commissioner Robert Y. Lee* hosted an orientation for his eight interns to provide an overview of the agency's 22 divisions and the broader context of their tasks. The interns also attend Citywide seminars to explore different issues that concern the City.

My Finance internship has been so valuable that I have returned for my second, and, unfortunately, final summer. I have learned a great deal since I first came here after my sophomore year as an

economics major at Mount Holyoke College. Last summer, I worked in the Treasury Executive Unit in the Municipal Building. In that office, I found a great, supportive environment where I felt comfortable asking questions. Now, in Client Services, I feel the same and am impressed by the level of professionalism.

To read the full story go to the pdf version of **ReveNEWS** on the Employee Services Page at **FinanceNet**, and click on Interning At Finance.



L to R: Julius Yu, Emily Mayer, Andrew Yuen & Raymond Liu

Department of Finance Softball Team Trounces Department of Health



On Wednesday, July 19th, the Finance Softball Team took on the team from the Department of Health at Van Voorhees Park Field in Brooklyn - AND WE WON!

Congratulations to the team pictured above!

(Back Row, left to right) *Pam Parker-Cortijo* (Collections), *Owen Stone* (Communication and Customer Service), *Margaret Donadio* (Communication and Customer Service), *Lisa Mahuf* (Communication and Customer Service), *Steven Brown* (Sheriff), *Joddie Taylor-Brooks* (Executive), and *Fred Davis* (Sheriff).

(Front Row, left to right) *Laurie Kilpatrick* (Communication and Customer Service), *Michael King* (Adjudication), *Sam Miller* (Communication and Customer Service), *Martha E. Stark* (Finance Commissioner), *Diane Bratcher* (Executive), *Linda Pojero* (Adjudication) and *Gerry O'Connor* (Communication and Customer Service).

To see additional softball highlights, view the pdf version of **ReveNEWS** on the Employee Services page at **FinanceNet** and click on the photo.

Legislative Wrap-Up

In late June, the New York State Assembly and Senate passed much of the Department of Finance's legislative agenda. We offer congratulations to the staff that helped get the bills this far: *Assistant Commissioner Dara Jaffee* and the Legal Affairs attorneys who drafted the legislation; *Mike Hyman*, Assistant Commissioner, Tax Policy; Communications and Customer Service; *Carlton Butler*, Assistant Commissioner, Enforcement Division; and *Chris Browne*, Senior Director of Legislative Affairs, who coordinated the agency's efforts in Albany.

At press time several Finance bills are awaiting Governor Pataki's signature.

To read the full story go to the pdf version of **ReveNEWS** on the Employee Services Page at **FinanceNet**, and click on Legislative Wrap-Up.

REVE NEWS

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