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

May 12, 2022 — New York City Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol and First Deputy Commissioner Christina Farrell presided over a graduation ceremony for the nine graduate students who completed the 2021-2022 John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service. New York City Mayor Eric Adams also delivered remarks to this year's graduates, highlighting the importance of careers in public service. The graduation ceremony was held Wednesday, May 11, at the agency's headquarters in Brooklyn. The 10th annual graduation returned to in person after two years of virtual ceremonies to comply with COVID-19 social distancing guidelines. A recording of the graduation is available on the agency's [YouTube channel](#).

The nine fellows, who are graduate students from New York University, New York Medical College, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Pratt Institute, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and the University of Denver, completed a nine-month fellowship focused on emergency management at five City agencies and the American Red Cross in Greater New York.

“The John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service offers the next generation of public service employees a great opportunity to learn from experts in their field, the role that each agency plays during and emergency, and how resources are shared when New Yorkers need them the most,” said **NYC Emergency Management Commissioner Zach Iscol**. “We are proud to be part of the legacy that John D. Solomon began, and the example it sets for New Yorkers and public service members.”

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 New York City Community Emergency Response Team (NYC CERT), John was a passionate advocate of emergency preparedness and resilience.

“During the past decade, from Hurricane Sandy to the pandemic, John D. Solomon Fellows have met every challenge. This year’s amazing class of Fellows is no exception,” said **James D. Solomon**, the brother of the late John D. Solomon. “Congratulations to the John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service on its momentous 10th anniversary. John’s family and friends are deeply grateful to the Fellows and to the Program’s nearly 100 alumni for their immense contributions to John’s beloved New York City and for enabling us to glimpse his passion and purpose through theirs. To New York City Emergency Management, we thank you for creating a remarkable program genuinely worthy of its namesake.”

During the nine-month fellowship program, fellows represented their respective agencies at virtual and in person meetings, undertaking various individual and agency-directed projects. The

2021-2022 class of fellows went beyond the call-of-duty, assisting New Yorkers during one of their most challenging times. Joseph Yun, a graduate student at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, supported projects like research for deployable flood barriers for residents in East Elmhurst post-Ida, as a fellow with the Department of Environmental Protection. Yun was also a guest speaker during NYCEM's Community Preparedness Annual Symposium, where he represented the Korean Community Services of Greater New York.

"My time with the John D. Solomon Fellowship and the Department of Environmental Protection has provided me much needed knowledge, experience, and network. Understanding the depth and complexity of the work that is involved, especially at DEP, has been rewarding as a graduate fellow and at work as well," **Joseph Yun said**. "This opportunity has allowed me to learn and participate in the field of emergency management for New York City. Thank you to the organizers and staff who make this fellowship a reality."

Fellows also engaged with businesses and organizations throughout the pandemic, helping to support their emergency planning. Seth Kerr, a graduate student at New York University, was assigned to the NYC Emergency Management's training, exercises, and Emergency Operations Center, where as a fellow he was the lead on developing a tabletop exercise on power outages.

"One of the biggest surprises to me about the fellowship was seeing how multifaceted NYC Emergency Management was as an organization," **Seth Kerr** said. "It's a relatively small city agency that 'punches well above its weight' and serves as the city's 'Swiss army knife'."

"Every year we are honored to welcome graduate students from around the country to be part of this fellowship, from which many of them are able to foster lifelong connections with their fellows and agency representatives," said **Ira Tannenbaum, deputy commissioner of external affairs at NYC Emergency Management**. "The John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service is an introduction to roles in public service, and to the countless ways everyday New Yorkers play in helping those in need."

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 88 fellows over 10 years into 14 different New York City agencies and organizations, representing close to 40,000 service hours. Over 42 percent of fellowship alumni have moved on to careers in New York City or New York State government.

Zahnay Gates, a graduate student at New York University, was also among the nine fellows honored at the ceremony. Gates, assigned to the American Red Cross in Greater New York, wanted to be a Solomon fellow to learn about the emergency response cycle from preparedness to response. "When I lived in Florida, I saw too many cases of people not knowing what to do during or after emergencies. With the Red Cross, I was able to work on their Share the Red Event, that hosts emergency preparedness and response events for community groups," **Zahnay Gates** said. "The fellowship was a great opportunity to see the level of coordination among multiple departments and agencies in the response and recovery cycle."

The 2021-2022 John D. Solomon Fellowship for Public Service graduating class members are:

- **Zahnay Gates**, New York University, American Red Cross in Greater New York;
- **Taylor Gerber**, New York Medical College, NYC Department of Education;
- **Esmeralda Huerta**, New York University, NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene;
- **Seth Kerr**, New York University, NYC Emergency Management – Training, Exercises, and EOC;
- **Elizabeth Chase Loudermelt**, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NYC Emergency Management – Public/Private Initiatives;
- **Joselyn Molina**, New York University, NYC Fire Department;
- **Leanna Molnar**, Pratt Institute, NYC Emergency Management – Hazard Mitigation;
- **Joseph Yun**, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, NYC Department of Environmental Protection;
and
- **Katherine Zapata**, University of Denver, NYC Emergency Management – Intergovernmental Affairs.

The next fellowship for the 2022-2023 academic year will begin in September 2022. 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 nine graduates, visit <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/em/about/meet-fellows.page>.

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