

THE URBAN CHRONICLE

NYC Urban Fellows 2010-2011

FALL 2010

AND THE 2010-2011 FELLOWSHIP BEGINS...

By Bethany Bowyer

In this Issue...

And the 2010-2011 Fellowship Begins...	1
Getting the Lowdown on Downtown	2
A Visit to the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center	4
Fellows Explore NYC	5
A Lasting, IMPACTing Impression	6
Fellows Volunteer During New York Cares Day	7
Alumni Spotlight: Vicki Johnson	8
An Inside Look Into the Fellowship	9
Fellows Visit the Brooklyn Navy Yard	11
UF Seminar Schedule	12



The Fellows visited City Hall during the first week of the program.

THE NEW YORK CITY
**URBAN
FELLOWS
PROGRAM**

The Fall 2010 issue of The Urban Chronicle contains many of the events and activities that took place during the month-long Urban Fellows Orientation.

We began embarking our nine-month journey one by one as each Fellow made his or her way up to the 24th floor of the Municipal Building. As we each filed into the conference room to take a seat, we were excited to meet one another and hear about what made each of us unique and worthy of the opportunity to be part of the program. Whether some of us were trying to remember faces they had seen during our March interviews or introducing themselves to the person they sat next to, one thing was clear: we were all thrilled to be there.

An amazing thing about the Fellows is the variety of backgrounds we each have. Some of the Fellows have grown up or gone to college in New York City; some came from across the country. While some of us see our placements in the program as an incredible jumpstart to our careers, others are amazed with the Urban Fellows Program and what it means. It was in this intensive, month-long orientation process that we were able to get to know one another. We gained a deeper understanding of each other's passion for public service even without the title of a department or agency to define our roles.

Our orientation began with paperwork, which included a quiz about New York City government. We were then organized into groups to educate one another on the details of the City. We covered everything from the evolution of the City Charter to the cycle of the City's budget. While it seemed at the time that we may have known everything we needed to know about New York City, it soon became clear that there was much more work ahead.

GETTING THE LOWDOWN ON DOWNTOWN

By Patrick Malloy

Downtown Manhattan is just Wall Street, skyscrapers, and people in suits, right? Indeed, we found all of those things to be true as our 26-person, suit-clad Urban Fellows group set out on an historic walking tour of Downtown Manhattan during our orientation. Guided by Mitchell Paluszek, Deputy

General Counsel for Personnel of the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services, we saw that there's a lot more to it than meets the eye.

"We won't forget that we're surrounded every day at work by 400 years of religious, political, and economic history, and we'll certainly never look at Downtown the same way again."

The recent uproar about the Park51 Community Center near Ground Zero might be the first thing that pops into many people's minds. We stopped by to see the site for ourselves. It was crowded with people and press and we decided to move on.



Fellows walked around the area near Ground Zero.

Controversy isn't new to Downtown, however. As we passed City Hall, Paluszek noted that a lot of people felt it was too far outside of the central city when it was built in the early 1800s. We're probably all comfortable saying the idea is laughable now – skyscrapers, including what was the tallest building in the world until 1930, surround City Hall – but it reminded us that it

took a long time for Downtown to become what it is today.



Mitchell Paluszek guided Fellows during the Lower Manhattan Walking Tour.

That's not to say that it hasn't been important for centuries. George Washington's statue on Wall Street is hard to miss, but most people don't know why it's there. Indeed, George Washington's image pops up all over New York, so the statue seems unremarkable. Paluszek explained that our first president was actually inaugurated on that very spot! And though Aaron Burr might have shot Washington's Secretary of the Treasury, Alexander Hamilton in New Jersey, Hamilton's grave lies squarely in the middle of Downtown just a few blocks from where Washington became president.

As long ago as Washington's presidency was, Paluszek was quick to remind us that Downtown's history goes back even further. Just where we would least expect it, at the edge of Chinatown, is a 17th Century Jewish cemetery. And near the end of our tour, we learned about the African Burial Ground, where over 400 slaves and free Africans were buried during colonial times in what used to be outside the city limits.

And so our tour came to an end at the steps of the Tweed Courthouse, once a powerful symbol of corruption but today the headquarters of the NYC Department of Education. Now that orientation is over, we all put on a suit each day to work in a skyscraper near Wall Street, embodying most people's first impression of Downtown. However, thanks to Mitchell Paluszek, we won't forget that we're surrounded every day at work by 400 years of religious, political, and economic history, and we'll certainly never look at Downtown the same way again.



Fellows were excited to meet each other during Orientation.



Sydney Thomas and David Ullman participated in a group presentation regarding New York City agencies.



The Fellows met Urban Fellows Program Founder Sigmund Ginsburg during the first seminar.

AND THE 2010-2011 FELLOWSHIP BEGINS...

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Our two weeks of interviews began. By the end of these two weeks, most of us had participated in over 30 interviews. Not only did this opportunity serve as a crash course in learning the streets of lower Manhattan, it gave us great insight into how every department and agency interacts to form the great City of New York. We were each amazed to see departments that we had only read about and were taken aback when we learned of an agency that we had little knowledge of. We recognized immediately that this privilege of seeing so much was rare and that most New Yorkers – even City employees – hardly ever get the chance to do what we were doing.

By the end of the process, we had all become skilled in introducing one another: where we were from, what school we went to, and what we were interested in. The suspense leading up to our placements was nerve-racking at times. However, we knew that wherever we ended up, we would be learning a lot and that we would be proudly committing ourselves to public service.

A VISIT TO THE CHARLES B. WANG COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER

By Lisa Jahn

A site visit to a local community health center was organized to show Fellows how a non-profit organization can truly serve the local community while working closely with other partners. On a sunny September afternoon, 26 excited Urban Fellows set out to Canal Street in search of the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center. As we entered the large conference room, we were greeted with smiles by Regina F. Lee, Chief Development Officer, Betty K. Cheng, Chief Operating Officer, and Dr. Perry Pong, Chief Medical Officer along with a wonderful array of pastries, fruits and coffee. The Center is a powerful example of a community organization that maximizes its effectiveness by cooperating with federal, state, and city government on many different levels, from funding to providing services. A recent example is a small grant from NYC Small Business Solutions for staff training. The grant improved their staff's ability to provide assistance to Asian American communities, which due to cultural, linguistic, education and/or financial barriers, lack access to basic health care services and health education. After we settled in and broke bread, Regina F. Lee began explaining the clinic's mission and humble origins.

"As the tour came to an end, I contemplated the key to the clinic's success. Is it enough to want to be a public servant?"

In 1971, a group of volunteers organized the first ever 10-day Chinatown health fair. Based on the tremendous community response, the volunteers established the Chinatown Health Clinic. The center opened its doors to the community in the fall of 1971,

operating out of a donated space. Over the next six years, doctors, nurses, social workers, students and many others provided free services. Today, the clinic is largely funded by donations, grants and contracts. For the past thirty years, the Chinatown Clinic now known as the Charles B. Wang Community Health Center provides affordable services in internal medicine, women's health, pediatrics, dental, mental health, social work, health education, health advocacy, health careers training and research. The Clinic has received multiple awards and was the only clinic in New York City recognized by the National Committee for Quality Assurance in 2009.



Fellows discussed public health issues at the Charles B. Wang Community Center in Chinatown.

Numbers and awards alone however do not provide a full picture of the heart and soul of this organization. Upon conclusion of our seminar, the fellows were divided into groups of his or her choice and received a tour of the facility. Those of us who toured the Women's Health division met the director, Rebecca Sze. Rebecca whisked us past a table where a woman provides insurance application assistance and through a heavy door into the Women's Health Center. The women's ward has several rooms, each equipped with the necessities to provide gynecological exams and pre/postnatal care. The walls were filled with collages of babies the clinic has delivered. Rebecca eagerly explained the services offered as she recounted her experiences with such passion and energy. The Fellows could not help but smile. Rebecca stated an important component for providing quality care is the clinic's recent conversion to electronic medical records. As the tour came to an end, I contemplated the key to the clinic's success. Is it enough to want to be a public servant? I think back to Rebecca, Regina, Betty, and Dr. Pong. Without them and their predecessors, there would be no clinic. It's not enough to have an idea--- it's about people, like-minded people working together everyday to make life a little more manageable for those who often suffer quietly. As Urban Fellows, we now have the opportunity to engage in policies that matter and affect the lives of every New Yorker.

FELLOWS EXPLORE NYC

By Mike DelBene

After an intense, whirlwind tour of City government during our two weeks of interviews and towards the end of orientation, this year's Urban Fellows were sent out on a citywide scavenger hunt to move Fellows outside Manhattan to enjoy the beauty and diversity of the whole city. Four Urban Fellows team competed to find "mystery" locations and accomplish specific tasks in the five boroughs. It was a timely diversion from looming

placement decisions for most of us, and it was another chance to get to know our "fellow Fellows" while taking in the sights, sounds, and tastes of New York. However, the weather did not cooperate; the four teams set out on the first rainy day of the program to see what the City had to offer and also outscore the other teams.

"All of us gained a greater appreciation for the sheer size of New York City while learning about the many types of diversity, from food to people to neighborhoods, which make this such a great place to be."



Team B took the A train to its northernmost station.

Each team took its own approach to conquering the seemingly insurmountable list of challenges, but the rain put three of the teams on the same path – Staten Island. There was only one task "in" Staten Island. The ferry and the hour-long trip offered shelter from the rain.

Each team had its own adventures including spending time at Brooklyn's Gowanus Yacht Club, scoping out the animals at the Bronx Zoo, exploring the ethnic fabric of Queens, and spotting cabs and Starbucks in Manhattan. Teams traveled by foot, by boat, by train, and even by car between far-out Flushing, Queens, to the northern tip of Manhattan, to coastal Coney Island in Brooklyn, and to the far reaches of the Bronx. While each team took a different approach to this daunting task, all of us gained a greater appreciation for the sheer size of New York City while learning about the many types of diversity, from food to people to neighborhoods, which make this such a great place to be.

On Thursday, as we all anxiously waited to find out where each of us would work for the next eight months, each team shared its story before a panel of judges. Teams recited poems detailing their trek through the five boroughs; others detailed their discoveries with videos and picture slideshows. One team shared its "Real World" experience including the requisite intra-team drama; another visited a Fellow's home in Queens. The winning team shared a video montage of their adventures including an original rendition of "I Want to be a Commisionaire" and a remix of "Bad Romance." All in all, we fought the rainy weather, gained a new perspective of New York City, and had fun exploring our new home with new friends.



Fellows explored New York City by participating in a scavenger hunt.

Urban Fellow Community Service Section

A LASTING, IMPACTING IMPRESSION

By Raquel Vazquez

This year, the Urban Fellows Program formalized a partnership with IMPACT Coalition and agreed to make significant contributions to the organization's events and tournaments by volunteering their time and expertise.

"While I had volunteered for the morning session, I was moved by the strength and conviction of the students and was inspired to stay until 7 pm."

The IMPACT Coalition, also known as the Improving Mentoring Practices and Communication Techniques Coalition is a non-profit organization founded in 1991 by Will Baker to encourage mentors to engage urban public school students in debate. Besides developing their debating skills, participating students receive mentorship from a liaison from their school who orchestrates the school team and monitors individual performance. Students receive a debate topic on a national policy issue and are allotted time to prepare for the tournament, at which they present their arguments.

During the morning October 2, 10 Urban Fellow volunteers arrived for the day's debate tournament in the Lower East Side. Many of us were

unprepared to see so many young, agile, and motivated students congregate so early on a Saturday morning to practice their speech and debate skills. From the moment we stepped through the school doors, we noticed middle school students in ties and professional jackets. They were truly dressed the part to make their mark as rising debaters in New York City public schools.



Students were excited to participate in debate sessions.



Students received awards after the tournament.

There are two teams of two students at each debate session on the day of the tournament. One team takes the affirmative position; the other supports the negative position. The students and teams are judged on their presentation and the preparation invested in the content of their arguments. Judges are trained in appropriate evaluation of debate techniques.

While I had volunteered for the morning session, I was moved by the strength and conviction of the students and was inspired to stay until 7 pm. It is important to stress that all students have the potential to reach goals beyond the expectations of others. Through outlets such as the IMPACT Coalition, students can become college-bound and develop skills that span problem-solving, critical thinking, and debate. I was touched to see so many intelligent rising stars dedicated to building these skills.

Urban Fellow Community Service Section

FELLOWS VOLUNTEER DURING NEW YORK CARES DAY

By Sydney Thomas



I woke up bright and early on Saturday, October 23 to travel from my humble abode in Manhattan to Public School 81 in Brooklyn to participate in the annual school beautification volunteer day sponsored by New York Cares. The long commute was made a tad bit longer since weekend subways are always a little slower than normal. I arrived to a sea of cheerful fellows whose smiles assured me that this was going to be a great day.

The mural turned out beautifully and I am pleased to know that my periwinkle flowers may brighten up the days of elementary students for years to come.

The Urban Fellow group was put in charge of painting a mural for the school playground. Lucky for us, the artist had already outlined the mural and our job was to fill in the colors as we saw fit. The mural consisted of a group of children holding a sign displaying the school's motto: "Teamwork Makes the Dream Work," a wall of flowers and a painter with a magical paintbrush. Of course I chose the flowers. We were given the artistic freedom to mix colors which was great because I was able to create and use my favorite color---periwinkle to brighten up the wall.

Albert Kramer, Raquel Vazquez and Sydney Thomas painted the flower mural.

We were joined by a group of Urban Fellow alumni volunteers for lunch, where we were able to discuss our Urban Fellow experiences. After lunch, some Urban Fellows were asked to help clean the school's basement which meant sorting through assorted boxes of old materials. Once 2 pm rolled around, we looked up and realized that our work was complete. The mural was beautiful and the basement was in a better shape than it had been in years. A group of children came over to help us put the final touches on our masterpiece. The mural turned out beautifully and I am pleased to know that my periwinkle flowers may brighten up the days of elementary students for years to come.



Fellows volunteered to beautify the school and completed a successful day at PS 81 in Brooklyn.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: VICTORIA JOHNSON

UF Year: 2001-2002

UF Agency Placement: NYC Office of Emergency Management

Current Position: Policy Director, National Commission on Children and Disasters

Responsibilities: Vicki leads the Commission's policy staff and developed the Commission's strategic plan. She provides oversight to the Commission's broad research agenda and stakeholder outreach initiatives. The Commission recently released its *2010 Report to the President and Congress*, which includes over 100 policy recommendations relevant to addressing children's needs as they relate to preparation for, response to, and recovery from disasters.



What did you remember most about being an Urban Fellow?

We were a very special class because on September 11, 2001, we witnessed the World Trade Center attacks together in front of the Municipal Building only a week after our first day of orientation. During the challenging weeks that followed, our class became very close. Considering most of us were new residents of New York City, you would have expected that one or several of us would have packed up and headed for home after such an experience, but everyone stayed and worked twice as hard.

What makes a successful Fellow?

I think courage defines a successful Fellow. A Fellow must be willing to take on new challenges and responsibilities that are often reserved for people with much more work experience and subject matter expertise.

Did the Fellowship influence your current area of interest?

Absolutely. Ever since my experience at OEM, I have worked in the field of emergency management and public health. I truly love what I do.

How did the Fellowship contribute to what you are currently doing?

For the past several years I have held positions where I work with Congress and Federal agencies to identify policies, funding and programs that support disaster management at the state and local level. Having first-hand experience as an Urban Fellow working in the 9/11 disaster response and recovery effort has been invaluable. It would be difficult to understand and explain how federal policies in homeland security and emergency management impact state and local governments without experiencing the operational side of disaster management and the challenges state and local officials face.

"We were a very special class because on September 11, 2001, we witnessed the World Trade Center attacks together in front of the Municipal Building only a week after our first day of orientation."

Any lasting advice to current or future Fellows?

Throughout your career, build and maintain a strong professional network. Stay in touch with all of your former supervisors, colleagues and mentors and let them know how your career is progressing.

AN INSIDE LOOK INTO THE FELLOWSHIP...

What's the best thing about being an Urban Fellow?

"The Fellows are my new family away from home." *-Hiram Lopez*

"One of the best things about the Fellowship is that the supervisors are very enthusiastic and eager to mentor young people starting out in city government." *-Laura Miller*

"The best thing about being a Fellow is being surrounded by 25 other smart, ambitious, kind and innovative Fellows. Their experiences at other agencies give us a broader view of city government that we would not otherwise have." *-Marlee Ickowicz*

"Earning the opportunity that the Urban Fellows Program has provided us---the chance to impact the city." *- John Tully Gordon*

"Throwing myself into something new and welcoming the challenge." *-Jihan Jude*

"We are a group of motivated young professionals with dozens of Urban Fellow alumni around us in City government" *-Raquel Vazquez*

What has been the most interesting experience in your placement so far?

"I have been working on Stimulus Oversight, which gives me an internal view of stimulus administration. It is a great program that NYC has taken serious ownership of and become one of the leading cities in transparency and accountability." *- Jordan Chisholm*

"In my second week in the Urban Design and Art Unit of DOT, I attended an unveiling of an Urban Art Initiative on the Allen Street Mall. The piece reflects the diversity and history of the Lower East Side." *- Jocelyn Drummond*

"The federal CIO and New Orleans CIO visited in late October. Their visit offered an excellent opportunity to share best practices and to showcase DOITT's exciting projects." *-Nathaniel Little*

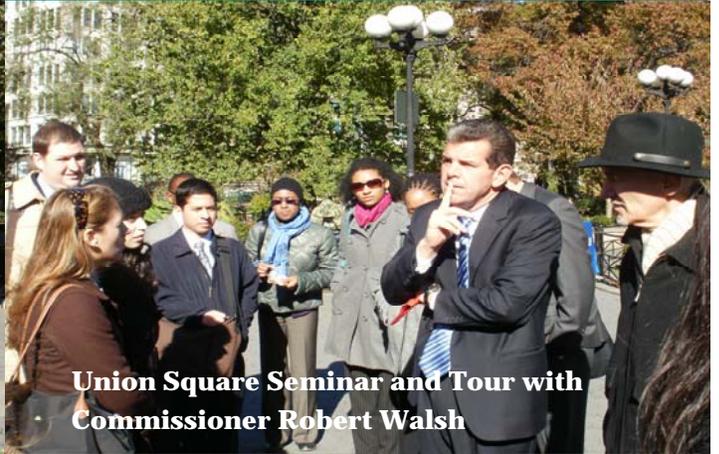
"Having the opportunity to tackle an issue that has never been done before." *-Albert Kramer*

"Working with a variety of stakeholders regarding issues with development of NYC's waterfront." *-Justine Johnson*

PHOTOS FROM THE FALL



Union Square Seminar and Tour



Union Square Seminar and Tour with Commissioner Robert Walsh



City Hall Tour



City Hall Tour



Brooklyn Navy Yard Tour



CPR Training



2010 Urban Fellows Ice Cream Challenge!



FELLOWS VISIT THE BROOKLYN NAVY YARD

By Matthew Fischler

On a rainy Tuesday morning, 26 Urban Fellows donned Wellingtons and rain coats to embark on a tour of one of the largest historic industrial parks left in the City of New York. Piled in our vans we arrived at our destination with a sense of mystery-- through the rain and fog outside it was difficult to sense the enormity of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Today, the Navy Yard stands as one of the key manufacturing districts in the city limits with over 300 acres of land, 40 buildings and over 240 businesses. However, the Navy Yard has not always served such a diverse manufacturing population. Throughout the 19th and early 20th century, the yard served as the main naval port for military ships throughout the New York region. Our tour guide, Richard Drucker, Senior Vice- President of External Affairs at the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation explained to us the historic role it played in not only the city's history but also the nation.



Rachel Squire, Patrick Malloy and Michael DelBene rode the van on a rainy day during the Brooklyn Navy Yard visit.

In 1801, the Brooklyn Navy Yard was purchased by the US government to serve as a naval station to protect the growing economic and strategic power of the New York harbor. As the US became a growing global power, the yard became a center of employment for many New Yorkers who were hired to build and maintain building ships for the Navy's growing fleet. While only a few thousand people were employed in the yards in the 19th century, by World War II its workforce had grown to over 70,000 individuals. It became an important anchor for the surrounding Brooklyn communities. However, by the mid 1960s, the Brooklyn Navy Yard had lost its strategic importance, and was decommissioned by the Secretary of Defense in 1966. By this time, only 9,000 people were employed at the yards. With thousands of workers without the job, the city purchased the land and only 5 years later reopened it as an industrial park with the hope of attracting good manufacturing jobs to employ local residents for years to come. It is a shining example of the power of public-private partnerships.



Richard Drucker led the Brooklyn Navy Yard Tour.

Today the Navy Yard is a bustling hub of construction activity. As our bus weaved through the dozens of buildings, Mr. Drucker pointed out new buildings being erected left and right. Mr. Drucker excitingly described the technological advances of the new buildings, focusing on the innovative sustainability features incorporated in their designs. We were surprised to find out that the Brooklyn Navy Yard is the site of the nation's first Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold certified manufacturing warehouse.

While we enjoyed getting a tour of local buildings, our favorite moments that morning were talking with the hardworking women and men whose determination and innovation have led to the beginning of resurgence in the Navy Yard. It was particularly heartwarming to hear many business leaders discuss their commitment to the Navy Yards as a matter of responsibility to the community. In a tough economy when it's easier to outsource jobs to or move out of urban centers, it is exciting to witness a rebirth of manufacturing jobs located right in the heart of Brooklyn. As we headed back to work, we not only left with a greater appreciation for the history of the Navy Yard, but we left with a great admiration for the important work being done to solve the challenges facing job growth in our city.

FALL 2010 SEMINAR SPEAKER SCHEDULE

Sigmund Ginsburg, Founder, NYC Urban Fellows Program

Carl Hum (UF Alum), President, Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce

Brooklyn Navy Yard Visit with Richard H. Drucker, Senior Vice President, External Affairs, Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation

Union Square Presentation and Tour with Small Business Services Commissioner **Robert W. Walsh** (UF Alum) and **Jim Gabbe**, author of "The Universe of Union Square" and former president of the Union Square Partnership Business Improvement District (BID)

Cliff Mulqueen, Deputy Commissioner/General Counsel, New York City Commission on Human Rights

UPCOMING SEMINARS/EVENTS

*Trip to Washington, DC

Ronnie Lowenstein, Director & **Doug Turetsky**,

Chief of Staff/Communications Director,

NYC Independent Budget Office

Gene Russianoff (UF Alum), Senior Attorney,

NYPIRG and founder of the Straphangers Campaign

Raymond W. Kelly, Commissioner, New York Police Department

Please visit

www.nyc.gov/fellowships to find out more information about the NYC Urban Fellows Program.

The website also contains current *Agency Spotlights*.

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Edna Wells Handy, Commissioner

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