



Housing Court Liaisons Dextra & McKinnon: Court Staff say "Their Word is Gold"

As court liaisons of HRA's Rental Assistance Unit stationed on-site at Brooklyn Housing Court, Franz Dextra and Leslie McKinnon work as a team to help tenants with rent arrears resolve payment issues without eviction. They are well known in the world of homelessness prevention for their expertise and dedication in achieving solutions in difficult cases that are honored by all parties. On March 20th, they were among six New York City employees honored with the prestigious Sloan Public Service Award.



left to right: Leslie McKinnon, Franz Dextra and Commissioner Robert Doar.
Photo: Donovan Gopie

The Sloan Award, given by the Fund for the City of New York, includes a \$7,500 cash award to each winner. Messrs. Dextra and McKinnon were celebrated with a ceremony and buffet during lunch recess at Brooklyn Court and at the evening Citywide ceremony at which Mayor Bloomberg presented the awards.

Commissioner Doar welcomed the many Housing Court judges, administrators and tenant and landlord attorneys who came to honor the two liaisons at the lunchtime ceremony. "I am so proud to be here to say 'thank you'," he said to Dextra and McKinnon.

Many court officials described the standing Dextra and McKinnon enjoy among the parties whose interests they help mediate. Administrative Judge Fern Fisher summed up the importance of successful mediation in housing disputes. "The future is conditioned on how we deal with housing. Without a home, families disintegrate. Keeping a roof overhead is pivotal in family life," she said.

The two liaisons thanked their colleagues for the mentoring they received and the opportunity given by their court to prove their credibility.

At the evening ceremony, Mayor Bloomberg praised New York City employees. "The City works because of the dedication, imagination and flexibility of the 300,000 people who work for NYC. We have a deep and talented workforce," he said.

NEW HOUSING PROGRAM WILL REWARD WORK AND SAVING

The Department of Homeless Services (DHS) has launched a new housing subsidy program, Work Advantage, to help homeless New Yorkers move beyond the shelter system. Work Advantage builds upon Housing Stability Plus (HSP), New York City's first rental subsidy program pioneered by HRA to help families find their way out of the shelter system into permanent by rewarding work with time-limited rental subsidy. HRA pioneered HSP at a time when the only route to securing housing was to spend years in the shelter system waiting for a Section 8 voucher.

Work Advantage will provide a near-100% rental subsidy for one year with a second-year extension possible. Those enrolled will need to place 20% of the rent saved in a savings account that will be matched by the City when they leave the program. When rental assistance ends, their savings will have doubled, giving families an extra means of support.

Commissioner Doar was present with DHS Commissioner Robert Hess on April 25 when he announced the Agency's new program. "HRA is committed to being a full partner in providing the work supports and tools necessary to get and retain employment and housing," Commissioner Doar said.

HRA Program Updates

HASA's WAVERLY MODEL OFFICES OPENS

The HASA Waverly Model Office opened on April 12. Staff and clients are very pleased with the innovations to customer service achieved through the model office service process and with the renovated service areas. Waverly is the program's oldest office serving New Yorkers with HIV/AIDS, dating to the 1980s when HRA established the Division of AIDS Services. Waverly's conversion is a special milestone, marking the commitment of HRA staff who have worked through the years to achieve the quality of service and care now possible to New Yorkers living with HIV/AIDS through HASA.

FIA's LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

FIA's Office of Policy, Procedures & Training created the LDI program to help FIA managers develop skills to become effective leaders. Each year so far, twenty FIA managers ranging in level of responsibility, selected according to critical program need, take part in a series of workshops meeting twice monthly. The curriculum explores diverse topics and enables managers to build their full spectrum of leadership skills. Both Commissioner Doar and First Deputy Pat Smith attended the LDI completion ceremony. Commissioner Doar spoke at length on the necessity of good communication. He commended OPPT for organizing LDI and for its goal, which is "to build leaders that we want to follow."

OPPORTUNITY GROWS IN BROOKLYN

The Brooklyn community will be further introduced to the resources of the Bushwick Model Office on May 30 when the newly opened model office holds its first job fair from 10 AM to 4 PM. So far thirty employers have been recruited who will be meeting Back to Work job applicants to fill a diverse range of openings.



HRA Perspective Monthly Bulletin

Published by the City of New York Human Resources Administration/ Department of Social Services

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Event Calendar

AIDS WALK 2007



We Can Change the Course.

Sunday, May 20, 2007 Central Park
 HRA has set its goal at raising \$20,000 for research, prevention and treatment of AIDS. Be part of HRA's commitment. Donate, raise funds, walk with HRA or sponsor a walker. **Register and get more information at hraaidswalk@hra.nyc.gov or call HRA's AIDS Walk Committee at 212-620-4754. Don't wait. Act now.**

HRA BLOOD DRIVES
 HRA staff contributed a total of 212 pints of blood from January 25 through March 23, 2007. The N.Y. Blood Bank thanks all who have participated.

Donate blood at these HRA locations in May:

Friday, May 11, 2007, MICSA Headquarters, 330 West 34th Street, 2nd Floor, from 9:00 AM to 2:30 PM. To make an appointment, call Floyd Martin at (212) 630-1089.

Thursday, May 17, 2007, Linden Job Center, 45 Hoyt Street, 5th Floor, Room 525, from 11:00 AM to 4:30 PM. To make an appointment, call Maria Ruparsic at (718) 237-7331.

PAI LUNCH & LEARN WORKSHOP
Trouble getting to sleep?

Tuesday, May 15, 2007, HRA headquarters, 180 Water Street in the 16th Floor conference room, 12 PM. Michael Rizzitiello, manager of St. Vincent's Hospital Sleep Center, will speak on Sleep Disorders.



Take Our Children To Work Day

On Thursday, April 26, HRA warmly welcomed staff children who came to learn about their parents' jobs and workplace, and also to give some thought to their own goals and ambitions.

The theme of this year's celebration was "Revolutionizing the Workplace," and coordinators throughout the agency challenged themselves to create entertaining activities that encouraged the children to think about their individual roles within their families and community and to imagine their roles in the future.



Counter-clockwise from top: 180 Water welcomes staff children; Examining the evolution from the first Victrola to the MP3, from manual typewriter to laptop, Labor Relations hearing officer Nettie Grandison challenged her workshop to imagine ideas of their own for the future workplace; Starting out with a self-inventary questionnaire, OSR special projects director Barbara Woods invited the group to map out a picture of themselves twenty years from now. As their pictures became clearer, they shared their visions from the podium; Staff offered hands-on learning. Aileen Cruz got a lesson in computer design from graphic artist Ivan Celin.



ACCESS NYC Expands with Seven New Programs

ACCESS NYC (www.nyc.gov/accessnyc) continually become more helpful with new program and features. Now, users can screen for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), School Meals, Summer Meals, Disabled Homeowners' Exemption (DHE), Veterans' Exemption, NYS Unemployment Insurance, and Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) in addition to over twenty other City, State, and Federal programs. ACCESS NYC also helps residents find out how to apply for the programs, print applications, determine documents required, and search for office locations (please note, the HEAP application will be available starting with the 2007 - 2008 HEAP season).



Thousands of people have already visited ACCESS NYC to determine which programs they may be eligible for and how to apply. Have you visited lately?