

Urban Fellows take on Washington, DC

David Eisenman,
Department of
Small Business
Services



When the Urban Fellows left New York City for Washington D.C., amidst all the social upheaval of the "Occupy Wall Street" protests, we were pleasantly surprised to see an "Occupy Washington" encampment outside of the building housing the NYC Office of Federal Affairs—which was home to many of our seminars. And if that was any sign of what we'd encounter in Washington D.C., we knew that we'd be in for a fascinating visit.

During this American Express sponsored trip we were privileged to meet speakers from various public sector backgrounds and enjoyed lectures on federal politics, policy, and government affairs. But the trip wouldn't have been an Urban Fellows experience without learning about some local innovations along the way.

Before we had even arrived in the District, we stopped at New Beginnings – a City-operated juvenile justice facility in the Maryland suburbs whose unique approach to youth detention was spearheaded by Vince Schiraldi who has since become commissioner of New York City's Department of Probation. But Schiraldi's impact on the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services remains clear. The tour of the new facility, which includes communal spaces and buildings designed to enhance

safety and security, as well as a walk through of its predecessor—the decrepit Oak Hill Youth Detention Center, just a short car ride from the new facility—allowed us an unparalleled view of the intersection of social policy and the built environment.

Upon arrival we were immediately whisked into a conference room for our first seminar – a conversation with two former fellows. Greg Butler, who worked at the NYC Health Department during his fellowship year, managed to give us a presentation that was both powerful and pragmatic by describing his post-fellowship career – which ranged from work with the NYC Health Press Office during the 2001 subsequent anthrax scare to graduate school and environmental management.

Many of the economically and geographically inclined Fellows were particularly excited to meet Bruce Katz, Vice President and founding Director of the Brookings Institute's Metropolitan Policy Program. Considering his 9 AM seminar slot, Katz gave fellows an impressive shot of energy by discussing the work and mission of his world-renowned urban research program housed at one of the country's leading think tanks. Although Katz produces policy recommendations to urban leaders and innovators around the world, he refuses to stop pushing forward: Katz's newest favorite tool (like many of the Fellows) is none other than Twitter.

And lest we might become too inured in the scope and intrigue of federal-scale policy, our city

continued on page 2



Fellows met with Jacqueline A. Berrien, chair of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Note from the Editors

February marks the halfway point in our fellowship. We've had the privilege to meet commissioners, public leaders, and advocates to hear about the work they do and the principles that guide their decision making processes. We're learning how to navigate a complex political arena, when to contribute and when to ask questions. Despite differences in work, office culture, or schedule, we are all learning what it means to be a part of

the government that supports the best city in the world.

Urban Fellows exemplify a very particular kind of leadership that involves humility, collaboration, an open mind and a desire to build on past success. Those are qualities we encountered in the people we met during our visit to Washington D.C which David Eisenman (SBS) gives a detailed view of in our lead story.



Faith Brigham
NYPD
Counterterrorism



Matthew Vann
Mayor's Office of
Immigrant Affairs

Day in the Life: OCHIA

By Carin Whint



The Office of Citywide Health Insurance Access (OCHIA) is a unit within the City's Human Resources Administration Department (HRA) that assists New Yorkers with public services. First established in 2000 under Mayor Giuliani as the Mayor's Office of Health Insurance Access (MOHIA), and later as an agency by Mayor Bloomberg in 2006 through executive Order 88, OCHIA has enabled many eligible individuals to obtain health insurance. OCHIA's Executive Deputy Director, Marjorie Cadogan, is also involved in facilitating some special initiatives under the directives of HRA's commissioner, that deal with employment programs for individuals with criminal histories—exposing them to social service benefits that are available to them.

Specific to OCHIA, is the provision of public health benefits and coverage. OCHIA's mission is to ensure that uninsured New Yorkers who are eligible for public health insurance are enrolled, while expanding access to private health insurance options for small business employees, sole proprietors and working individuals. To date, over 2.9 million individuals in NYC are receiving Medicaid coverage and the City has experienced its lowest rate of uninsured children among big cities at 4 percent.

As I reflect on my initial weeks at

this vibrant office, I recalled being very much engaged with the office's agenda and goals. I received a pleasant introduction to staff at the office's monthly meeting that same week, and then I was ushered-off to an internal meeting with my supervisor and her then assistant. During that meeting, my role at OCHIA was outlined, and my busy schedule unfolded.

For the following two weeks, I attended several meetings with OCHIA's partners, which included the Department of Correction, Department of Probation and HRA's VendorStat participant work group. These meetings were centered on establishing the City's benchmarks for its Back to Work programs, and for me, it was simply learning much about the detailed preparations that are involved in creating successful outcomes for the City's programs.

I have enjoyed the opportunity for growth and development that my supervisor has exposed me to. I have taken on positions at monthly community based organizations meetings, and planned and executed my first quarterly training session for vendors that are contracted by HRA. I attend

continued on page 2

The NYC Urban Fellows Program is sponsored by The City of New York and administered by the Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS). The program is designed to introduce America's finest college students and graduates to local government and public service.

Edna Wells Handy, DCAS Commissioner
Maria DiPaola, Chief Human Capital Officer
Barbara Simmons,
Director of Fellowship Programs
Jaida S. Reilly-Cornice,
Assistant Director
of Fellowship Programs



Day in the Life: DoITT

By Ravi Singh



"I think this Agency [the Department of Information Technology and Telecommunications, DoITT], is going to have a greater impact, not just in the next four years, but for a few decades going forward, than maybe any other," said Mayor Bloomberg in 2009. In a world economy that is becoming more reliant on the Internet and technology, it becomes essential for the City to have state-of-the-art technology.

As an Urban Fellow at DoITT, I'm working on projects that will fundamentally shape the future of New York City. DoITT is responsible for: making local government more transparent and accountable; implementing state-of-the-art technologies; and collaborating with other agencies and businesses to develop innovative ideas that improve quality of life in New York City.

One of the ways DoITT does all this is by focusing on information technology (IT). What is IT? IT involves using computers to transmit data across a network. DoITT supports a network that can transfer enormous amounts of information quickly, securely, and reliably. DoITT hosts data servers, maintains an emergency wireless network for first-responders, and sustains NYC.gov—the main government gateway to New Yorkers. It also designs programs that support civic innovation, like the Big Apps competition.

I work directly with the Chief-of-

Staff for Commissioner Carole Post. In the first week I was drafting and designing the awards booklet for DoITT's annual awards ceremony for the best technology projects in the City. As weeks progressed, I was sitting in on a meeting inside the headquarters of Google NYC for a discussion about a DoITT project. On some days I'm designing the mock-ups for our 2011 annual report, while on others, I'm having face-to-face interactions with local and federal policymakers.

One project I've been working on that's been most fulfilling is the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program (BTOP). The program is part of a national effort to expand broadband technologies throughout the United States. In 2010 DoITT received a \$40 million dollar grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce to expand broadband access to underserved communities in New York City. The BTOP grant provides funding for computer centers and computer classes throughout the City. I'm taking the lead on an outreach campaign: I'm visiting our partners, like the Brooklyn Public Library and the Department of Parks and Recreation, and I'm interviewing patrons about their experience with BTOP. My team is planning to generate public awareness about the BTOP this spring.

On a regular day at DoITT, we are imagining the future of the City, and taking actionable steps to make sure that we are prepared for whatever comes our way. The projects and ideas that are implemented here become the model for the rest of the country and the world. Experiencing it all first-hand has been a privilege.

OCHIA is doing for the residents of New York City both in the areas of health care and in the facilitation of employment opportunities for individuals who may have a criminal history record—a limiting factor in their chances of employment and reentry into their communities.

ways new laws might affect City funds, programs, and safety.

Of course, there was time to see the sights as well. DC's attractions present a different kind of monumentality from the skyscraper canyons of New York City. Nighttime excursions to the Mall were supplemented by museum visits and other exploring of cultural establishments.

At least one fellow was so struck by the scale and majesty of the Lincoln Memorial that she grew misty-eyed. As for me, visiting one of my homes was fun – but it's better to be back in New York City.



Natan Vega Potler
Law Department,
Family Court Division

How have your previous jobs and experiences prepared you to become an Urban Fellow?

Although I majored in Cognitive Science in college, I was fortunate enough to study under two extraordinary professors of political theory and urban policy. They provided me with a theoretical framework to apply to my current position as an Urban Fellow. In addition, my neuroscience research experience has sharpened my analytic skills, which have assisted me in my current juvenile justice research.

What is a New York City excursion you have taken this year?

One of my greatest excursions was an accident. On an evening Q train, a newly arrived transplant to New York and not yet certain which trains traveled above ground, I noticed a change in the light and looked up from reading Bloomberg by Bloomberg (required for my Speechwriting placement) only to gape at the sudden spread of Long Island City, the East River, then midtown Manhattan, all glittering into the sunset. In this city, somewhere new is only a station away.



JP Allen
Mayor's Office,
Speechwriting

What has surprised you the most about New York City since you began the fellowship?

The people. I have noticed the subtle ways that New Yorkers display empathy, help each other, manifest a sense of community, and enshrine their love for each other. In a city of over 8 million, it is amazing what you can see if you look deeper.



Malina Tea Tran
Department of
Transportation

Which Urban Fellows seminar have you enjoyed most?

I haven't met many New Yorkers who can't think of at least one thing wrong with the education system in NYC. One thing we're doing right, though, is providing students who fall out of the NYC system with a second chance. Talking to Chanelle Figueroa and Sara Green who work for District 79, which focuses on creating, administering, and managing alternatives for students who are no longer on the standard educational trajectory, but are seeking a meaningful education, challenged me to think about the issues that come with a standard curriculum and the possibilities to address these issues.



Sairah Anwar
Department of Small
Business Services

If 2011 was the year of occupying, what do you think 2012 will be the year of?

The year of the immigrant! With the Supreme Court's recent agreement to decide on the constitutionality of Arizona's anti-immigrant legislation, increasing support for undocumented students seeking higher education, and the growing realization that immigrants make significant contributions to local economies, I'm optimistic that the political tide may finally turn in favor of immigrant youth and their families.



Dan Wallace
Mayor's Office of
Immigrant Affairs

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meetings and working group sessions—getting an opportunity to voice my opinions on topics that stem from criminal records disclosure, to mental health care and child support payments.

I am impressed by the work

Eisenman continued

colleagues were right there to give us perspective and show us how relevant federal policy is to New Yorkers. Michelle Goldstein and the staff of the NYC Office of Federal Affairs were gracious enough to give us a run-down of their daily lives lobbying on behalf of the Big Apple – and the interests of many large cities nationwide. These interests extend beyond what many may consider to be the traditional issues of urban policy – housing, social services, and infrastructure. Their job is to delve into legislation to explore the often-clandestine

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FELLOWS AROUND TOWN

New Beginnings Youth Facility (Laurel, MD)
US Department of Housing and
Urban Development (Washington, DC)
Brookings Institute (Washington, DC)
NYC Federal Affairs Office (Washington, DC)
Blood Donation through New York Blood Center
Income Tax Preparation through New York Cares
and IRS Vita Program
Mulching Christmas trees at
Prospect Park with NYCares
Possibility Project (a performing arts non-profit)
Citizen test prep with immigrants at
Northern Manhattan Immigration Coalition
HOPE Survey through DHS (all five boroughs)