



This special issue of the *Bulletin* focuses on efforts to assist residents and restore essential services following the devastation by Hurricane Sandy.

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## NYCHA Responds to Hurricane Sandy



Electricians work on a damaged electrical box at Coney Island Houses; plumbers install water pump at Red Hook Houses; and caretakers run hose from pump at Red Hook Houses.

*In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, NYCHA and its partners launched around-the-clock efforts to restore power, heat and hot water to nearly 80,000 residents in 402 buildings located in storm impacted developments. On November 19, 2012, NYCHA announced that power, heat and hot water had been restored to 100 percent of the affected buildings and that service had been restored to 97 percent of 699 impacted elevators.*

Frankenstorm, Superstorm – by whatever name – Hurricane Sandy, one of the greatest natural disasters to strike New York City, wreaked havoc on NYCHA’s 26 developments in low-lying areas, flooding basements; destroying boilers, electrical systems and other equipment; and leaving nearly 80,000 residents in 402 buildings in the dark, without elevators, heat, or hot water, and some with no water at all.

As this special issue of the *Bulletin* goes to press, power and basic services have been restored to all the affected locations, thanks to heroic efforts of NYCHA employees, with assistance from other City agencies, the military and private contractors.

The unprecedented tidal surge that flooded basements and even some first floor apartments in developments located in lower Manhattan, the Rockaways in Queens, and Red Hook and Coney Island in Brooklyn, brought to life a nightmare scenario. While NYCHA conducted emergency preparedness meetings with residents in the vulnerable areas over the past few years and updated emergency plans put in place, the full magnitude of

the storm’s destruction and impact on public housing residents could not have been fully anticipated.

Nonetheless, those plans and preparations to ensure the safety of Zone A residents and protect, as much as possible, buildings and equipment, made a crucial difference.

### Emergency Response

Well before the hurricane struck, NYCHA’s emergency response sprung into action, bolstered with lessons learned from Hurricane Irene that struck just 14 months earlier.

Following Mayor Michael Bloomberg’s call for mandatory evacuation in Zone A areas, staff was mobilized at every affected development to alert residents with bull horns, post warning flyers in lobbies and elevators, send automated phone calls in multiple languages, and to knock on every apartment door to urge residents to evacuate ahead of the storm. The Family Services Department and other staff consulted lists of residents with special needs to ensure that additional assistance was available,

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## Bulletin Board

The Bulletin Board posts information about events, policies and programs.

### How to Donate to Hurricane Sandy Relief Efforts

As a means to support Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, a city-wide payroll deduction program has been established. This program allows City Employees to set aside a portion of their paychecks to aid in this effort. The Mayor’s Fund to Advance New York City will ensure that 100 percent of contributions are directed to reputable organizations providing relief in response to the hurricane’s devastating effects.

NYCHA employees who wish to participate may specify a one-time deduction from a single paycheck, or a recurring amount to be deducted from a series of paychecks. These payroll deductions will exist over four bi-weekly pay periods.

NYCHA employees may sign up through NYCAPS Employee Self Service as follows:

1. Log into NYCAPS at [www.nyc.gov/ESS](http://www.nyc.gov/ESS)
2. Under the Payroll and Compensation folder, click the Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund.
3. Enter the appropriate information and click the Submit Changes button.

Employees without computer access may complete form #124.165 - Deduction Form Hurricane Sandy Relief Fund. The Payroll Division will make the appropriate payroll deduction on your behalf. Completed forms should be forwarded to the Payroll Division at 90 Church Street, 6th floor, or faxed to (212) 306-8000. Questions about the program may be directed to ASK HR at (212) 306-8000.

### New York City Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

As NYCHA continues to respond to the impact of Hurricane Sandy, many employees may also be coping with personal loss as well as stress related to long work shifts and difficult conditions. The holiday season may also present demands that are stressful for some of us. Free, confidential assistance is available from the New York City Employee Assistance Program by calling the new temporary location at (212) 693 – 2678.

### Hurricane Sandy Annual Leave Donation Program

Hurricane Sandy had a devastating impact on the residents of the City of New York and surrounding areas, including many NYCHA employees. The NYCHA team has done a fantastic job in getting our properties cleaned up and running for the benefit of our residents. Now employees have an opportunity to demonstrate their support for their co-workers who suffered the most devastating consequences of Hurricane Sandy, the catastrophic loss or damage to their home.

The Hurricane Sandy Annual Leave Donation Program will allow employees to voluntarily donate one or more annual leave days to a general leave bank from which eligible employees may draw to cover leave days needed to address the reconstruction of their homes.

Eligible employees are those whose home was coded as level “Red” or “Yellow” by FEMA, the NYC Department of Buildings or other government agency using a comparable coding system. These employees may apply for a maximum of twenty (20) annual leave days from the Hurricane Leave Bank, for time used to address the reconstruction of their primary residence.

For specific information on how to donate time or request the use of time through the Hurricane Leave Bank, please review the program guidelines posted on the Employee Portal or contact ASK- HR at (212) 306-8000. All completed applications with supporting documentation should be sent for review to the Human Resources Department, 90 Church Street, 5th floor, Attn: Wendy Alexander.

The deadline for enrollment in the program is January 31, 2013.

Thank you in advance for your participation in this critical effort.

#### NYCHA Employee Bulletin

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Member.....	Margarita López
Member.....	Victor A. Gonzalez
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### Floating Holiday

Employees who are entitled to a “floating holiday” during calendar year 2012 for Lincoln’s Birthday are reminded that this paid holiday must be used during this year (with prior supervisory authorization), and cannot ordinarily be carried over to the next year.

### NYCHA Holiday Party

NYCHA’s 2012 Holiday Party is scheduled for Monday, December 17, 2012, from 6:00 p.m.-10:00 p.m. The Holiday Party will be celebrated at the Surrogate’s Court, located at 31 Chambers Street in Manhattan. NYCHA has ensured the lowest ticket price ever at \$20 so that as many employees as possible can attend. For additional information see the Employee Portal’s Bulletin Board or posted flyers with contact information.

## Coney Island — “The Beach is in the Basements”

On November 6, Election Day, staff at six Coney Island developments were struggling with the initial impact of Hurricane Sandy – pumping 20 or more feet of sea water out of boiler and electrical meter rooms and bulldozing mountains of sand back toward the beach. Describing the horrendous conditions that the hurricane left in its wake, one Borough Director simply said, “The beach is in the basements.”



“Show the love,” one employee said as staff prepare to begin clean-up assignments under extreme conditions at Coney Island Houses and surrounding developments on Election Day.

Seven days after Hurricane Sandy inundated Coney Island with ocean water from the south and bay water from the north, employees that worked 12- or 24-hour shifts for days assembled at 8:30 a.m. outside the Mobile Command Center at Coney Island Houses to get their morning assignments.

It was November 6, Election Day, a scheduled day off for most employees. But for property management and skilled trades staff from several boroughs, there was no pause in the efforts to restore essential services for families living in Coney Island Houses, O’Dwyer Gardens, Surfside Gardens, Gravesend Houses, Carey Gardens and Haber Houses, a seniors-only residence. Staff at all levels were painfully aware that these residents were still living in the dark, without heat and hot water, and for some above the eighth floor, with no running water at all.

For Surfside Gardens Caretaker J Lamont Jones, who lives in Coney Island Houses, Hurricane Sandy began on “the Sunday before the storm.” That is when he and other property maintenance staff went door-to-door

warning residents to evacuate in buses that were already waiting at the development. Unfortunately, he said, not many residents were willing to leave their homes.

Two days later, “The whole place was turned upside-down, with four feet of sand and 20 feet of water in the basements,” Mr. Jones recalled. “We walked down the buildings in the dark, checked on residents, and took out the garbage to keep hallways clear.” For some homebound residents in Coney Island Houses, he said, staff carried water up the dark stairwells as far as the 14th floor.

“We’re doing our best to get things together,” said Surfside Gardens Housing Assistant Crystal Anderson, who described how employees worked in the dark hallways in teams of three. “One holds the flashlight, one works with a broom and dust pan, and one carries bags for clean up. We also help people up and down the stairs,” she added.

### “This is Personal”

Walking from the mobile command center with his plumbing team to their first morning assignment, Plumbing Supervisor Pete Bencivenga insisted, “My staff here are the heroes of Coney Island. They’ve been working three days straight moving the contractor’s pump to different buildings to pump basements, some with 33 feet of water.” The power of the water washed out cinder block walls and knocked down steel boiler room doors, he said.

“For me, this is personal,” said Plumber’s Helper Sam Rivera, who grew up in Surfside Gardens. “I’m concerned for families, the children and elderly, and we want to do our best.



Plumbers Sam Rivera, Neil Desposito, and Lenny Tusa, who Supervising Plumber Pete Bencivenga called the heroes of Coney Island.

We’re using our own vehicles here to help move equipment around.”

“It takes days to pump out these enormous basements,” Mr. Bencivenga added. “Even one week later, in some buildings we’re still pumping.”

At a nearby building, Supervising Electrician Robert Mendez and his team were also hard at work testing and checking equipment to make sure Con Edison can safely ‘throw the switch.’

“We’re opening up panels in electrical meter rooms, cleaning mud and debris off electrical equipment, checking or replacing blown fuses and spraying contact cleaner to prevent rusting of metal parts,” Mr. Mendez said without barely a pause. “My staff is working here on a day off in the cold and dark. Instead of taking care of their own homes, they’re working to restore power for residents and no one’s complaining,” he proudly said.

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Bronx Mgt. Dep. Director Angela Gadson, Bklyn. Mgt. Director Marguerite Mann, and Man. Mgt. Director Sheila Pinckney coordinate the Coney Island recovery operation from the Mobile Command Center.

## Hurricane Response *(continued)*

when needed. Buses stationed at each development were ready to bring residents to evacuation centers.

Despite these efforts, however, relatively few residents were willing to leave their homes. "People didn't take our warning seriously," said Member Margarita López, who accompanied early warning staff to Far Rockaway where, just one year ago, she led an Emergency Preparedness campaign. "After evacuation warnings for Hurricane Irene," which was far less destructive than expected, "people did not believe that their lives could be at risk," she said.

In advance of the storm, NYCHA engineers assessed building structures and staff secured scaffolding and equipment. Hundreds of boilers were shut down to protect them from flood damage and almost 400 elevators were shut down to ensure that residents would not be trapped during a power interruption. In many neighborhoods, Con Edison cut off power in advance of the storm to protect circuits from damage from salt water.

Nonetheless, the storm took an unprecedented toll on boilers, electrical systems and equipment from 20 feet or more of corrosive sea water that flooded more than 402 buildings.

One asset that held up remarkably well in the onslaught was the determination of NYCHA employees who

**From a NYCHA Press Release Issued on November 18, 2012**

"The New York City Housing Authority has successfully restored power, heat and water to all buildings affected by Hurricane Sandy. NYCHA has also restored elevator service to all buildings that were impacted by the storm, or 679 of 699 impacted elevators. The remaining elevators will be in service over the next few days. NYCHA installed over 100 generators and over 24 temporary boilers brought in from across the country to provide essential services to public housing residents. The Housing Authority utilized thousands of employees and hundreds of contractors, and partnered with utility companies and agencies from the City, state and federal government to restore the services...

"The restoration of power, heat and hot water is a huge achievement for NYCHA staff who have been working around the clock to bring these services back to our residents," said NYCHA Chairman John B. Rhea...

"After Hurricane Sandy hit, there were 402 buildings without electricity and 386 buildings without heat and hot water affecting approximately 80,000 residents, and all have been restored to service. These buildings systems experienced extensive corrosive damage to their boilers and electrical distribution equipment as a result of flooding from the storm."

made their way to developments and other work locations despite trans-



Chairman John B. Rhea visits with employees at Gravesend Houses in Coney Island.

portation disruptions, often putting the welfare of residents before the needs of their own families.

Before power could be safely restored to buildings, staff — often working in the cold, damp and dark —

had to pump out basements and assess boilers, electrical systems, elevators and other equipment.

The articles in this issue bear witness to NYCHA's all-hands-on-deck emergency response and restoration efforts at three of the most affected areas: Coney Island and Red Hook in Brooklyn, and Far Rockaway in Queens. These stories only can suggest the massive effort undertaken by staff to get affected developments up and running, and return normalcy to residents' lives, following one of the most violent hurricanes ever to confront the City.

Through their heroic response, employees at all levels have written a proud chapter in the Authority's history.

## Coney Island *(continued)*

### "The Beach is in the Basements"

Inside the welcome warmth of the mobile command center, conditions were still difficult. "We've been here since Saturday working 12-hour shifts," said Bronx Borough Deputy Director Angela Gadson. "I worked at the gas outage at the Polo Grounds but this is far worse. We're getting information directly from the field to update the Executive Department and let them know what equipment and materials we need to restore service as soon as possible."

"This is eye-opening. The beach is

in the basements," said Manhattan Borough Director Sheila Pinckney. "It's amazing to see residents living under these conditions. But they are resilient and they stayed because they love their homes."

Between non-stop phone calls and staff directives, Brooklyn Borough Director Marguerite Mann provided the latest update. "We've made significant strides pumping out basements, and had success restoring power to Gravesend Houses, Haber Houses' three seniors buildings, and two buildings at Carey Gardens. Now we're focusing to restore power at Coney Island Houses, O'Dwyer Gardens and Surfside Gardens."

Asked to comment about staff's efforts, she replied, "We're working at the top of the emergency response demands. Staff is tenacious, working around-the-clock to assist residents. Because of limited gas, we have teams transporting employees to the job and many came in after working a full day at their regular locations."

Noting important assistance provided by the Army Corps of Engineers, the NYC Fire and Police Departments and even out-of-state vendors, Ms. Mann concluded, "We really are dealing with something never faced before but we're working hard and doing everything to get the job done." **B**

## “Good Morning, NYCHA Calling”

### Employee Volunteers Survey Residents at Red Hook Houses



NYCHA Department of Family Services Director Nora Reissig briefs more than 200 employee volunteers on how to survey residents' status prior to leaving on buses for Red Hook Houses.

*With assistance from Eric Deutsch*

“Good morning, Housing calling.” This greeting resounded throughout Red Hook East and Red Hook West Houses on November 13. The visitors were more than 200 NYCHA employees that volunteered to go door-to-door at the Red Hook Houses to check on every resident, as part of NYCHA’s efforts to assist residents who still were coping with the devastating effects of Hurricane Sandy.

The volunteers from central offices and many other work locations were divided into 28 teams that included a social worker, nurse from Visiting Nurse Service (VNS), an experienced NYCHA Family Services Department employee, and others, including a Spanish-speaking employee.

#### The Yellow School Bus

After an orientation where Commissioner Margarita López and Gener-



Employee volunteers speak with residents to assess their needs. The survey results from every apartment in Red Hook Houses was recorded by the volunteers and transmitted that afternoon by IT’s on-site digital van to central office for possible follow-up.

al Manager Cecil House thanked staff for their efforts, and Family Services Department Director Nora Reissig gave an overview and “how-to” for the door-to-door visits, the employee volunteers boarded school buses to head over to Red Hook.

“I lost everything myself so I wanted to help others,” said Dennis Kandell, director of the Soundview Senior Center in the Bronx.

There were many personal stories and reasons why NYCHA employees chose to help. “It was hurting me not to help and now I can,” said Susan Howell, a trainer in NYCHA’s Human Resources Department, who had once been a Property Manager at Red Hook East.

“This turnout is fantastic and will show residents that all NYCHA employees care,” said Stephanie Rowe in the Family Services Brooklyn Office, who lives in O’Dwyer Gardens in Coney Island, Brooklyn, another hard-hit area.

“Some of these people are living day by day, expecting someone to help them,” said Emergency Services Director Conrad Vazquez, who was already at Red Hook Houses when the buses arrived. “Sometimes their need is as simple as seeing that they are not forgotten, and other times it can be a medical necessity,” he noted.

NYCHA’s Information Technology team and Digital Van also were already at Red Hook. “We will transmit the results of every single apartment visit to the central office, where they can be assessed,” said NYCHA IT Chief

of Desktop Support Frank Cavaleri. “Some basic needs — like for food, blankets, water, medication, and other supplies — we are able to meet right here,” he said, while others may require coordination with outside organizations.

#### NYCHA Calling

Responding to the knock on her door, Miranda Reeves told staff that while she was anxious for light to be restored in the still-dark building, her two-year-old son, who was suffering from congestion, was returning home from a relative later that day. Social Worker Sandra Wynters quickly noted to arrange for a follow-up medical visit so the child would not have to go outside in the cold to a medical center.



Employee volunteers speak with a resident in a building where power has not yet been restored.

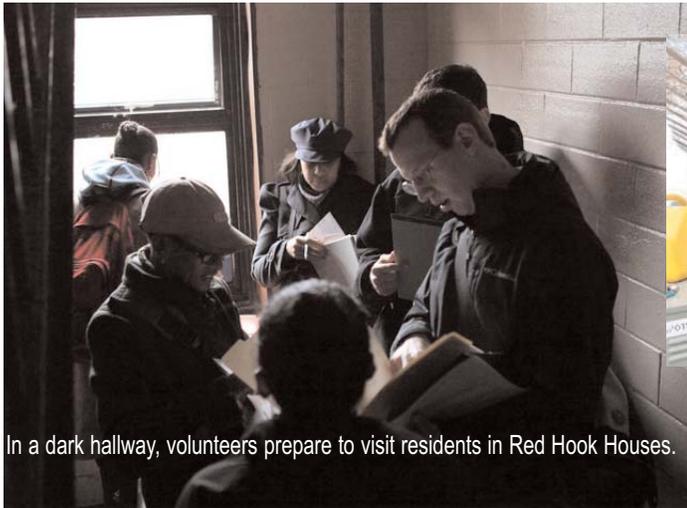
Hearing about other possible concerns for the child, she also provided Ms. Reeves with a phone number of an organization for further assessment. “It’s great to see people here,” Ms. Reeves said. She was worried about the impact that no lighting had on safety, and was relieved to learn that power was expected to be restored later that day.

At another building, residents Vilma and Justo Rivera were pleased to see the teams going door-to-door. “I like employees being here to help because it shows they care,” said Mr. Rivera. “They also came after the hurricane to give out flashlights.” Hearing that an assessment team would soon be at their apartment, the couple decided to go back so they could be home for the visit.

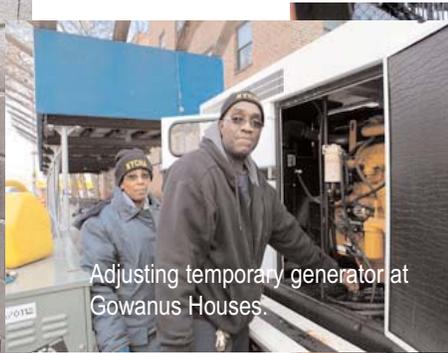
*(continued on page 7)*

# Photographers' Picks

NYCHA's Photo Unit did an amazing job documenting the hurricane recovery effort. Here are some of their favorite photos.



In a dark hallway, volunteers prepare to visit residents in Red Hook Houses.



Adjusting temporary generator at Gowanus Houses.



Pumping out the basement of Red Hook West.



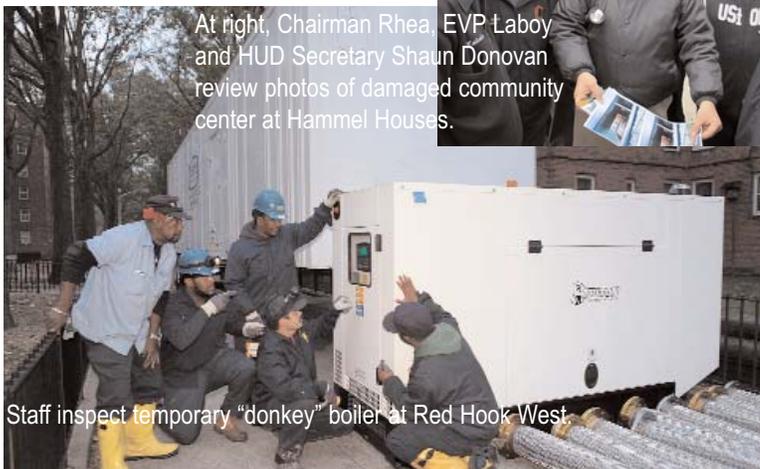
Electric burner giveaway at Ocean Bay Apartments.



GM Cecil House and EVP for Operations Carlos Laboy at post Hurricane Sandy resident meeting at Ocean Bay Apartments.



At right, Chairman Rhea, EVP Laboy and HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan review photos of damaged community center at Hammel Houses.



Staff inspect temporary "donkey" boiler at Red Hook West.



Employee mops up floor in at Gowanus Houses.

## Recovery Efforts Bring Jobs for Residents

Hurricane Sandy will soon bring an unexpected benefit to some of the residents that suffered most from its destruction. A \$7 million National Emergency Grant that NYCHA has received from the U.S. Department of Labor will be used to fill 378 positions such as caretakers and community outreach workers in NYCHA's Hurricane Sandy recovery efforts. Residents in impacted areas who lost their jobs as a result of the storm will be given top priority.

"This grant will enable us not only to continue our recovery efforts, but help affected residents recover from the financial impact of Hurricane Sandy," Chairman John B. Rhea said. "There is still much work to be done in our developments to clean and restore all areas affected, as well as ensure a safe living environment."

### NYCHA Calling *(continued)*

Later evaluation of all the assessment forms indicated the following:

- 256 families were in need of food and water, and had them delivered
- 121 families had a household member who needed medical attention, which was provided by a VNS nurse
- 44 individuals were in need of a prescription refill, which was called in by a VNS physician or nurse practitioner and delivered the same day to the person in need



Inside the mobile command center at Red Hook Houses are (l-r) Emergency Services Department (ESD) Administrator Alex Morales, Maintenance Worker Ignacio Tamborello, ESD Director Conrad Vazquez, and ESD Superintendent Verna Ferguson.

tioner and delivered the same day to the person in need

- Six individuals were transported to a hospital by a Fire Department of New York EMS unit.

Residents overwhelmingly were grateful for the concern and assistance provided by the volunteers.

To qualify for the 23-week temporary positions, residents must either have lost or been relocated from their home, lost their job as a result of the hurricane, or have been unemployed for 26 weeks or more.

Caretakers will perform general cleaning work and community outreach workers will connect residents to resources by being a part of door-knocking efforts and distributing flyers and leaflets, among other tasks.

NYCHA's Office of Resident Economic Empowerment & Sustainability (REES), in partnership with the Department of Labor and the Department of Small Business Services (SBS) will host pre-screening events for residents in Red Hook, Coney Island, the Rockaways and the Lower East Side to interview and process applicants. REES also is working with SBS to recruit residents for post-Sandy jobs at other City agencies by making direct referrals to those agencies.

The Family Services Department wishes to express its warm and heartfelt thanks to each and every NYCHA staff volunteer who assisted with the agency-wide supply distribution and door-knocking mobilization effort at Red Hook Houses on Tuesday, November 13. Almost half of a total of 2,878 households – 1,348 – were directly contacted. Over 250 families had food and water delivered to them. And, with our partners - Visiting Nurse Service of New York and FDNY's EMS Unit - another 121 individuals were provided immediate medical assistance and 6 were transported to a hospital. Your collective energy, focus and unity in accomplishing this herculean task on such short notice and in one short day, shows yet again that our residents' safety, health and well-being are the paramount priority and that, together, as in the words of Commissioner Margarita López, we ARE "Mighty, Mighty NYCHA!" Thank you all, so very much!

Nora Reissig

Director, Family Services Department



Inside the IT Digital Van are (l-r) Chief of Desktop Support Frank Cavaleri, LAN Network Administrators Charles Adeyanju and Victor Vigarito, Computer Technician Greg Delucia, and, at rear, Assistant Chief of Desktop Support Frank Iannone.

### The Management Office

"There have been lots of employees here for almost one week," said Tasha Smith, who has been Property

Manager at Red Hook West for nine years. "Even before this effort was formally organized, staff that was displaced from their normal work location came here to help, going door-to-door for food distribution and other assistance."

Noting that she did not go home until the first temporary boiler was installed, Ms. Smith praised her staff who, like herself, had worked 12-14 hour shifts since the emergency began. "I am very grateful on behalf of residents and staff to see the outpouring of concern for residents from today's volunteers," she said. "It shows that this isn't only a place to work but a home, too. It hurts to see the damage here but we must be strong for staff and residents alike." **B**

## Far Rockaway Food Run



Staff at Hammel Houses is more than ready for a hot lunch. From left are: Property Management Supervisor Kent Lloyd with Caretakers Alberta Bryant-Sneed, Charles Rivera, Michelle Martin, Kenya Bonds and George Bleau.

Nine days after Hurricane Sandy — and the morning after a Nor'easter made conditions worse — a blue van slowly made its way along Rockaway Boulevard in Far Rockaway, stopping at every storm-struck NYCHA development. Inside were two Caretakers from the Queens/Staten Island Property Management Department, 140 hot meals, and one *Bulletin* reporter. The daily “food run” was bringing lunch to hungry, cold and tired NYCHA employees working the 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. shift. Another run would go out later for employees working from 4:00 p.m. to midnight. Employees working a third shift from midnight to 8:00 a.m. made the recovery efforts in Far Rockaway around-the-clock, just like in NYCHA’s other Zone A areas.

### “We Pulled Together”

Approaching the van, Hammel Houses Property Maintenance Supervisor Kent Lloyd said the food was just in time. “We worked almost around-the-clock for about the first five days with no heat, light, hot water or elevators,” he said. “We brought residents blankets, food and baby formula from different charities. Now we have an emergency generator for lights and the elevator, but there’s still almost no gas or stores open. My staff couldn’t be better,” he said emphatically.

The food van had traveled about one-half hour seeing no lights or open stores before Hammel Houses, which shares a management department with Carleton Manor, came into view.

“We’ve been making runs to Rockaway since the first day of Sandy,” said Rhashon Davis, Caretaker J, as he carefully steered the van. “As much as the food is important, it’s also important just to show we care.”

Thinking of the difficult conditions he saw for residents and employees alike, Pellumb Skenderi, Caretaker J, remarked, “It touched me so much that when I go home, I still think about them.”

Hammel Houses Caretaker George Bleau, a 25-year veteran, had to work many overnight shifts to make sure that the emergency generator was safe. “The residents were desperate for light,” he said.

Back in the van, the two caretakers, who work as a close-knit team, mentioned, in passing, that they cancelled their vacation to work throughout the emergency, often for 12 or more hours at a time for days on end.

As the van pulled into Ocean Bay Apartments, a familiar looking employee warmly greeted the group; it was John DeCarlo Award Winning Caretaker Dale Lee. “It was a bit chaotic at first, but we pulled together to make sure we had what we needed,” she said even before she was asked. “The residents can be very patient.”

Property Manager Brenda J. Wells described the conditions for residents and employees as “extremely difficult, with no heat, hot water or power, and now exacerbated by the snowstorm.”

Many staff also are residents, “so they have been dealing with problems at home and at work. It’s a tough road but NYCHA staff are resilient and we shall prevail,” she said stoically.

Recalling the night of the storm, Assistant Property Manager Cynthia Adedeji Sutherland said she and other staff remained in the management office in the cold with just a few lights from the emergency generator. In the days following, staff that evacuated from Rockaway went to great lengths, she said, to find gas to get to work.

At Beach 41st Street Houses, where most buildings had electric and heat restored, Property Maintenance Supervisor Clayton McDonald said “A good decent meal means a lot to the staff because many of them have no



Staff at Redfern Houses pause for a quick photo as lunch is brought into the maintenance area. Af front and from left rear are Caretakers Luz Diaz, Robert Lawrence, Denitra Carter and Christine Nelson; SOG Carlos Maldonado, and Caretaker Sherwin Gowrie.

power at home and can’t really cook a full meal.” His boiler plant with four boilers was the only one in the Rockaway developments that was not submerged in water, he reported, with only the equipment needing to be replaced. With most power restored, the staff was working hard cleaning out basements, addressing grounds issues and “restoring janitorial standards.” There was more to say but the food van couldn’t wait— the lunches were getting cold!

Last stop, Redfern Houses, which had no heat and had power in only

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## A Message from Chairman John B. Rhea

Dear Colleagues,

The weeks since Hurricane Sandy reached New York have been some of the most trying in NYCHA's recent history, for both residents and staff. And yet, despite unprecedented damage and service disruptions, NYCHA employees from all over the Authority have met historic challenges with unbelievable grit, creativity, and dedication. As General Manager Cecil House announced today, we have restored electricity, heat, hot water, and elevator service to nearly 80,000 residents affected by the storm. We



have also transported countless seniors and disabled residents, delivered food, water, and other necessities to families in need, pumped floodwaters out of boiler rooms, inspected critical systems, and swiftly begun to clean, repair and restore equipment, offices and systems.

On behalf of Vice Chair Emily Youssouf and members Margarita Lopez and Victor Gonzalez, I want to thank you for the part you have played in meeting these significant milestones. In doing so, we recognize that many of you have been working around the clock to ensure the safety of our residents and restore important services to their families. What you have accomplished is an inspira-

tion to all of us who believe in public housing and in NYCHA's enduring commitment to the well-being of our resident communities. Importantly, we also realize that this effort has come at a real cost to each of you.

It would be impossible to sustain the kind of 24-hour recovery operation that we've built without time away from your families, not to mention considerable stress and hardship from the impact of the storm in your own lives. By now you will have received messages from our Human Resources Department highlighting resources and providing information for managing these extraordinary times; in the coming weeks NYCHA will be rolling out additional initiatives to support you during this trying period.

In the meantime, we all should take pride in just how meaningful our work is to New York City. There is much more to accomplish for the families we serve, and we will be dealing with the storm's aftermath for months to come — as all of us have been transformed by Sandy one way or another — but because of you, thousands of families are on the road to recovery.

Thank you again for all you've done and will continue to do!

John B. Rhea  
Chairman of the New York City Housing Authority  
November 19, 2012

## Far Rockaway Food Run

*(continued)*

four of the nine buildings. Property Manager Donna Jones said, "It was a hardship just for employees to get here. Once here, some worked by flashlight to take out garbage in dark buildings, walked down stairhalls to make them safe for residents and cleared out grounds drains, sometimes not just in water but in damp uniforms, too, since their locker room was also flooded."

Indicating the tremendous loss of equipment in all the storm-struck developments, Ms. Jones itemized the loss of computers, phone lines, file cabinets and desks "which were all under water," as well as a grounds truck and tools.

Supervisor of Grounds Carlos Maldonado, a 17-year veteran, said pumping out water from basements

was the biggest concern and called the ongoing work at the development a group effort. "I'm very proud of the staff. It is very hard communicating and working under these adverse conditions."

Property Maintenance Supervisor John Kline was glad to see both the U.S. Army and the Marines at Redfern. The military had the giant pumps needed to pump out the basements, where boilers and electric meters were destroyed. The Army Corps of Engineers installed the temporary generators. Once they were on, elevator mechanics could adjust elevators to run properly.

Back at the property management department in Jamaica, Queens/Statens Island Borough Director Pat Lawler could hardly pause from coordinating the recovery effort in two boroughs. Appointed to the position just in time for Hurricane Sandy, and remember-

ing last year's response to Hurricane Irene, she wryly observed, "Mother Nature just keeps on giving." **B**



Working with NYCHA staff at Redfern Houses, members of the NYC Police and Sanitation Departments, along with the military, contributed their resources and expertise to restore basic services to residents.



No coverage of NYCHA's Hurricane Sandy response would be complete without employees' comments on the Chairman's Blog, which is a well-established part of NYCHA's ongoing conversation. As always, staff used the Blog to report their own experiences, remark on colleagues, and comment on NYCHA's operations. Following is a sampling.

#### The NYCHA Family

I am a long time NYCHA employee (20yrs+) and I have never been prouder of being one. Here's to you my fellow NYCHA employees who stepped up and whom worked tirelessly assisting those in the shelters and distributing food. A great portion of the shelterers were from evacuation Zone A, which covers a huge NYCHA area. It's nice to see how we were taking care of our own, the way we use to. I'd like to send a special shout out to those few NYCHA employees who made it to those devastated developments and were assisting in whatever ways they could days before the organizations were able to get there.

Anonymous

Anonymous

#### WANTED! MORE COMMITTED VOLUNTEERS!

As a Coastal Storm Volunteer I ensured my family was safe, then I proceeded to assist first hand with displaced families and personnel alike... I worked around the clock from Sunday 10/28 through Thursday 11/1 to ensure that people were safe & secure in the facility that we were housed in. While the location was deemed an Evacuation Center/Hurricane Shelter, it was not equipped with a generator. So, yes when Sandy hit we were in the dark and cold! Nevertheless, because we kept an open line of communication & professionalism with all, our facility remained incident free, even without light and amongst strangers. Moreover, as a resident of Staten Island, I am not standing on the sidelines, I am part of the devastation. This was a very humbling experience. So I reach out to all of my fellow NYCHA employees, and ask that you volunteer your time in any capacity that you can. Trust me, it is greatly appreciated by SOMEONE! So for the future, please sign up to VOLUNTEER, somewhere somehow.

Zatarsha Barrett

Human Resources

#### Staff Recognition

I would like to recognize the efforts of two staff members in the General Ledger Division of the Accounting & Fiscal Services department in the days after Hurricane Sandy. On Friday, November 2nd, Zahra Mollaahmad traveled for over three hours to perform essential functions in the Oracle financial system at the command center at 90 Church Street. Another staff member, Isiaka Lawal, participated in the tenant outreach that took place at Red Hook Houses on Tuesday, November 13th. Both employees should be commended for their dedication and commitment to NYCHA.

Dan Frydberg

Accounting & Fiscal Services

#### A Humanitarian Employee of NYCHA

I would like to shed light on an employee whose humanitarian efforts from the aftermath of Sandy has shown how a person can make a difference in people's lives. David Weaver is a carpenter who works on Staten Island under Qns/SI mgmt. On his time off he has been a continual volunteer team leader that has been helping families throughout the decimated South Shore areas of Staten Island. Through his leadership and efforts he has been leading other volunteers remove debris, take down damaged walls and anything else that can help families in need prepare for the rebuilding process. Many people do not have the resources to hire workers to do the work and his efforts will take that stress off of the homeowners who have been dealing with this devastating process. As I'm sure that there are other employees who have been helping in many ways, I wanted to take time out to honor a NYCHA worker in my crew that has always gone the extra mile on the job & off. Thanks Dave! You do make a difference.

Anthony Conrad

Queens/SI Property Mgt.

#### PROUD OF NYCHA EMPLOYEES DURING AND AFTER THE HURRICANE

I want to commend all NYCHA employees for their endless efforts and perseverance before, during and after Hurricane Sandy. My Caretakers did an exceptional job cleaning up debris, removing fallen branches and tree barks and assisting staff and residents. One of my Housing Assistants went to a nearby pharmacy to re-fill a prescription for a senior resident whose high blood pressure medicine was finished. She took the medicine back to the resident's apartment. My other Housing Assistant assisted me with my seniors in calling and visiting them to ensure that they were OK. Two Caretakers and a secretary cooked some home made food for the staff to eat on 3 nights. I am absolutely proud of the fact that most of my staff appeared at work and remained on the job. We had little sleep since our concern was the safety of our residents and minimal damage to our development. A secretary worked the telephones past 4:30 p.m. to answer residents' calls and inquiries and ensure them that "we were OK."

Barbara Rosa

Manhattan Property Mgt.

#### Employees from Other Depts Reporting

As I read the Blog postings I am surprised at the amount of employees saying they could not report to other locations or were turned away. The days after the storm I had many employees report to Douglass because they lived in the neighborhood. These employees were from Family Services, Tram Caretakers, Procurement Analysts, etc. There was a place on the attendance sheet that we had to submit daily specifically for those employees not regularly assigned to your location. We appreciated the extra help they gave us with clean up and translation, etc., and I believe they appreciated being accommodated. I guess communication got broken down in some instances. By the way every employee did a great job during and after the hurricane. If nobody else has said it to you I will. Stay strong and focused NYCHA we still have alot to do.

Joe Militano

Manhattan Property Mgt.

Take part in NYCHA's conversation. Blog your constructive comments on the Employee Portal. It's easy.

## "How Are You Feeling?"

"There has been tremendous concern at all levels of the Authority about our employees due to what we were hearing about the overwhelming impact," said Human Resources Director Jane Bura-Drago. She was referring to the hardship that employees have suffered from the devastation of Hurricane Sandy. "We wanted to reach out to those most affected in a personal way, not just by letter."

That is the reason more than 200 employees contacted at work by phone have been asked the somewhat surprising but welcome question, "How are you feeling?," by one of 10 Human Resources volunteers.

Human Resources asked each department to compile a list of those employees impacted by the storm and their post-hurricane status. Many of the employees on the list live in Zone A areas.

"Every time one of the HR volunteers talks to me about their conversations," Ms. Bura-Drago said, "their faces brighten. I actually think the calls do some good for everyone because they bring the NYCHA community closer together."

"People have been very appreciative of our efforts," said Customer Service Manager Wayne Shapiro, one of the volunteers. "A relatively small number of staff actually lost their homes, or had them become uninhabitable. Mostly they suffered the same problems as residents and others in the low-lying areas, with no power, heat or hot water, sometimes for weeks."

"I was really impressed with the way people were coping and keeping a positive attitude," said Deputy Assistant Director Deborah Altman. "We let everyone know about the City's Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which has professional counselors that can meet with employees."

A wealth of other referral information on the City's recovery assistance operations was also provided during the calls, based on employees' needs.

In addition to the information, "it's important just to let people know

they're not alone and that we are aware of their needs and appreciate their coming to work and helping residents while dealing with their own families' problems," Ms. Altman said.

Vickie Epner, a Labor Relations Analyst and another volunteer, said it was "a release for employees just to



HR volunteer Vickie Epner speaks with an employee seriously affected by the hurricane. With her are (l-r) Deputy Director David Marcinek, Director Jane Bura-Drago and Customer Service Manager Wayne Shapiro.

express their frustrations." Employees she spoke with, some of whom had flooding up to their first floor, were concerned about damaged homes, ruined cars and furniture, inadequate insurance coverage, and insufficient

payments from FEMA, which could require employees to spend life savings to replace or repair what was lost.

"There's no question that destruction from the hurricane disrupted our employees' lives to an enormous extent," Ms. Bura-Drago said. Human Resources coordinated with EAP to have their counselors at work locations, including morning muster at developments in the storm-affected areas over several days, offering support to employees suffering from stress or in need of referrals for various assistance.

"It's important to recognize that all employees have been affected in some way, not just frontline staff," Ms. Bura-Drago said. "Just as our employees have all contributed in different ways to NYCHA's massive recovery effort, they have also been affected in different ways, physically, mentally and emotionally."

On November 29, the City's EAP conducted two special presentations in the Ceremonial Room on reducing stress in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy (see below box).

### Employees Learn About Stress at Mid-Day Presentation



Tim Sheahan

"Stress is different for everyone, with different situations," said Tim Sheahan, Deputy Director of the NYC Employee Assistance Program (EAP), at a mid-day presentation in the Ceremonial Room on November 29. Although many kinds and causes of stress were discussed, the title on the flyer expressed what most people had in mind: "Reduce Stress in the Aftermath of Hurricane Sandy."

The kind of stress caused by natural disasters and other life-threatening situations is called Traumatic Stress. "There are no one-size-fits-all solutions for managing stress," Mr. Sheahan said, "and every individual must find the coping mechanisms that works best for them."

For individuals that were early responders, adjusting back to a normal, less exciting routine may sometimes be difficult. However, "even people who think they weren't affected probably were because events [like Hurricane Sandy] make us all feel less safe and secure. Our priorities can shift and we may call our assumptions into question."

Symptoms of stress can vary greatly, from an inability to concentrate, headaches, and feelings of anxiety or anger to depression, changes in sleep patterns and even drug or alcohol abuse.

Men and women may handle stress in different ways. Women are more likely to talk about their feelings with friends, while men may use exercise (which is good for everyone) to release pent-up anger or feelings of depression. Other important coping mechanisms include: deep breathing, muscle relaxation, optimizing sleep and being certain to schedule in much-needed leisure time.

The most effective work cycles include taking a break or at least changing your task after about 1 1/2 hours. Scheduling vacations in advance so you can look forward to them and other leisure activities also can help us handle stress.

**You may contact the EAP for inquiries about confidential counseling at (212) 693-2678.**



## Message from GM Cecil House

November 19, 2012



Dear NYCHA Colleagues,

I am happy to let you know that over the weekend, we restored heat and hot water to all NYCHA residential buildings impacted by Hurricane Sandy. We also have elevators working in all of our buildings. With the restoration of heat, hot water, and elevator service over the weekend and electricity last week, we have now

restored essential services to all of our buildings. I join with the NYCHA Board and our residents in expressing appreciation for the time and effort you've invested in making this happen. Confronted with a storm of historic proportions that brought sweeping devastation, you did what was required to aid NYCHA families and restore essential services. Together, we accomplished something incredible. Thank you.

With the restoration of these services, we need to remain vigilant in order to keep these services in place. There is much work to do to ensure that permanent repairs are made to all of our buildings. If you become

**Editor's Note:** This message was sent on November 19, 2012, as NYCHA staff restored all essential services in the recovery operation from Hurricane Sandy.

aware that an essential service is not operating, please let a supervisor or the Customer Contact Center know so that we can address the issue as soon as possible.

I, and members of my team, will be meeting with residents of Red Hook, the Rockaways, and Coney Island today and tomorrow to discuss updates and information pertaining to their service restoration. While we have completed this phase of our recovery from Hurricane Sandy, there is still more that we must do to ensure the quality of life for our residents.

As the Thanksgiving holiday approaches, there are many ways we can express our gratitude and be inspired by the spirit of philanthropy. Last week, in partnership with One Hundred Black Men and Walmart, NYCHA handed out Thanksgiving dinners to 500 NYCHA families across all five boroughs. And this week we'll be hosting dozens of Thanksgiving celebrations at NYCHA Senior and Community Centers citywide. NYCHA employees clearly know how to rise to the occasion and show holiday spirit.

My best wishes for a happy, healthy, and restful Thanksgiving for you and your family!

Cecil R. House  
General Manager